



Guide for Adult Students & Career Changers

EXPLORING OPTIONS

These resources provide information about industries or careers you may be considering. Explore opportunities by researching the following topics: required training, job outlook, potential for professional development, typical work tasks, common work context, and salary information.

[O*Net](#) – Contains career descriptions, skill areas, work context, and more.

[Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) – Provides salary data, job outlook, employment changes, and educational requirements.

[MySkills MyFuture](#) – Offers careers with similar skills to your previous jobs as well as salary and training information and job listings.

[CandidCareer](#) – Penn State has a variety of pre-recorded informational interviews organized by occupation, major, and industry area.

[What Can I Do With This Major](#) – This resource provides a list of career options for various majors, as well as strategies for how to build marketable skills.

Informational Interviews – Reach out to practicing professionals to gain a more in-depth understanding of a career. Below are some sample questions:

- How did you become interested in this industry?
- How did you get to this role? What experiences should I look for as I build my resume?
- Tell me about your day-to-day responsibilities.
- What is one thing that surprised you about this field?
- What is rewarding about this position? How do you stay motivated?

DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS

As an adult learner and/or career changer, it can be challenging to balance your life inside and outside of the classroom. In order to make you as marketable as possible in your new career, you need to develop new skills, gain related experience, and learn how to discuss your qualifications with employers.

Experience comes from in a variety of forms including internships, volunteer experiences, classroom projects, research with faculty, clubs, and professional organizations. Speak with faculty members and staff to determine what activities will be beneficial for you to join and add to your resume.

TELLING YOUR STORY

RESUMES

Make your resume fit your experience. Recruiters scan your resume for keywords. Keep the most relevant information near the top. There are multiple types of resumes. Career changers typically use chronological or functional resumes.

Chronological resumes are the most common type of resume. They list your previous experiences in reverse chronological order starting with the most recent experience and then working backwards. If you use this type of resume, it can be helpful to include a “related experience” section heading as well as an “additional experience” heading. Some individuals will make their heading related to their industry, for example “Engineering Experience.”

Chronological Example:

Brandon Behrend

5552 Station Road, Erie, PA 16563 | 814-898-5555 | brb2587@psu.edu

EDUCATION

Penn State Erie, The Behrend College
Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering

Expected May 2020
GPA: 3.54

ENGINEERING EXPERIENCE

Intern, Integrated Networks, Erie, PA

May 2018 – Present

- Performed installation of troubleshooting of ISDN and fiber optic communication lines, Cat5e Ethernet and Cat3 analog voice lines
- Programmed Nortel, Avaya, and Merlin phone systems
- Updated customer building schematics using AutoCAD
- Collaborated with supervisor to propose and complete over 4 projects

Team Lead, Induction Motor Protection System, Penn State Erie, Erie, PA

January 2017

- Designed a system to protect an induction motor from single phasing and over temperature
- Collaborated with team of five to develop schematic plan and managed project objectives
- Implemented a thermistor to sense the temperature and disconnect the appropriate relays

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Manager, American Eagle Outfitters, Erie, PA

June 2014 – Present

- Provided positive customer experiences utilizing conflict resolution and upselling methods
- Monitor inventory and display merchandise appealingly
- Manage scheduling and point of sale totals

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- 1D and 2D Filter design stimulation
- Analysis using MATLAB
- Circuit design and layout using Capture/PSPice including PCB layout
- Programming in assembly for both the Motorola 68HC11 and MIPS instruction sets, as well as C++
- VHDL design stimulation using Synopsys VSS

Functional resumes highlight your skills and qualifications while deemphasizing your work history or gaps in employment. This type of resume allows you to easily highlight transferrable skills gained from class projects, volunteer experience, and previous employment. The functional resume begins with a summary of qualifications where you highlight accomplishments related to the position you are seeking. Create two-three relevant skill area headings and add bullets underneath each skill area heading to showcase those skills in action, for example “Customer Service.” These skill sections allow you to highlight your most relatable experiences. Then list your employment history briefly.

Functional Example:

Trina Tripp

5552 Station Road, Erie, PA 16563 • 814-898-5555 • trt2587@psu.edu

Summary of Qualifications

- Five years of professional management experience
- Background in event management, marketing, training, and coaching
- Strong communication and presentation skills; self-motivated, dependable, and detail oriented

Education

Penn State University, Erie, PA
Associate Degree in General Business

Expected May 2020

Relevant Skills

Management/Administration

- Manage staff of five to set monthly and yearly goals and deadlines for the department
- Prepare and review operational reports and schedules to ensure accuracy and efficiency
- Analyze internal processes and recommend procedural changes to improve operations

Marketing/Promotion

- Respond to requests for information from the media and customers
- Update and maintain content on company website
- Develop plans and materials to communicate company activities and goals

Customer Service

- Speak with customers directly to provide information about services and manage complaints
- Resolve customer service complaints utilizing strong customer service background
- Complete customer account notes and contract forms to ensure proper documentation

Employment History

Customer Service Manager, Time Warner Cable, Erie, PA

June 2013 – Present

Customer Service Representative, Time Warner Cable, Erie, PA

April 2011 – June 2013

Event Coordinator/Marketing, Wedding Catering Company, Erie, PA

December 2009 – April 2010

INTERVIEWING

When you are interviewing for positions, remember to stay positive. Share the aspects of your story you are proud of and make sure to relate how all of the varied experiences you have cultivated make you a qualified candidate. If you would like assistance to practice your interviewing skills, review our [interviewing resources](#) and make an appointment with the ACPC by calling (814) 898-6164.