

Tips for a Successful Resident Assistant Application

We're excited that you're interested in applying to be a Resident Assistant! To set you up for success, we've gathered some hints, tips, and tricks to help you throughout your application process. Below you'll find tips for securing a great reference, creating an effective résumé, writing strong essays responses, and preparing for an engaging interview. We hope that you find this guide helpful, and look forward to reviewing your materials!

Securing a Great Reference

- Ask your reference if they are willing to be a reference for you prior to listing them and submitting your application. References should never be surprised that you are applying for a position and they are going to be expected to talk about their experience knowing and/or working with you.
- In looking at potential people to use as references, utilize someone who can best attest to your work, volunteer, or leadership experience. RAs, former employers or supervisors are great examples of strong references. Avoid using family and friends if possible.
- Provide your references a copy of the job description to inform them what position you are applying for. References are better able to attest to your skills and abilities relative to the job you are applying for if you give them the information about the job.
- Ask them to tailor their reference to the position that you are applying for. The selection committee is better able to understand your transferable skills and experiences related to the position if your reference provides information about you in that context.
- Give your reference ample time to complete the form and let them know the deadline ahead of time (**January 5, 2016 at 12:00pm**).
- After they submit your reference, make sure to thank them! "Thank You" cards and e-mails are both professional ways to express your gratitude.

Creating an Effective Résumé

Getting Started

- First, make a list of everything you've done in recent history . . . really, everything! Include Co-Ops, internships, volunteering, jobs, academic projects, co-curricular activities, and involvement with on-campus organizations.
- Then, look at the job description. Highlight key skills, experiences, and traits that ResLife is seeking.
- Once you identify key skills, experiences, and traits and which of your experiences are most relevant, the hard part is over. Now, you just need to showcase the match on your résumé.

What Should NOT Belong

- Do not include your age, weight, height, religion, etc. These are protected categories that employers cannot ask applicants about.
- Do not include a photograph of yourself. Though you may think this will make you more memorable, some companies cannot accept résumés with photos due to Equal Opportunity Employment (EOE) regulations.
- Avoid using templates – these inhibit you from being creative and targeting your résumé to the position.
- Don't abbreviate important information, such as the name of your degree or organizations.

What Should Belong: Formatting and Details

- Contact information is key! Include your full name, e-mail, home address, and phone number at the top of your resume. This should always be the first information an employer sees.
- Education should be the first section on your résumé after your contact information. For most candidates in or graduating college, education is one of your biggest selling points.
- Spell out your degree and when you expect to complete it.

Example: **Northeastern University**, Boston, MA
 Bachelors of Business
 Spring 2016

- If you studied abroad, this should be included in your education section with the name of the institution attended, what courses you took, and the country in which you studied.
- After your education section, start listing out current and past work experiences. Make sure that each section has headings so your résumé is organized. For example, you may want to have a section titled, "Work Experiences."
- Work experiences should include the following:

1. Name of company or organization
2. Job title/position
3. Length of employment (if currently employed, list when you started working and that you're presently there)
4. A bulleted list of accomplishment statements that you fulfilled while working with the organization.

- Accomplishments are things you started, completed, worked on, created, developed, or made possible – things that happened because you were there. It can be a long or short-term project; something created or supervised with others, or by you. They're always specific, never general, and always things in which you played an active role, even if others worked with you.

Example:

Boston Summer Camps, Boston, MA
Summer Camp Counselor

Summer 2015-Present

- Developed crafts and arts activities for children between the ages of 8-12 years old
 - Facilitated large group activities and small group sessions
 - Responded to camp attendee emergencies such as homesickness, roommate conflicts, and overall wellness checks
 - Collaborated with outside organizations in order to ensure customer satisfaction
- Remember the difference between a task (which does not market you effectively) and the same situation described as an accomplishment.

Example:

- Here's a task, duty, or responsibility like those that appear on a typical résumé:
"Wrote weekly reports on sales and submitted these to home office."
 - Now, as an accomplishment, the same information in selective detail:
"Completed 134 summary reports on sales including weekly volume, percent of increase, and new clients seen; received commendation from sales manager for accuracy and for never missing a deadline."
- Also, note the difference when an accomplishment is described using words that quantify and qualify:

Before: Responsible for United Way campaign

After: Directed United Way campaign successfully reaching a \$1.5 million goal

Before: Supervised front desk of the residence hall

After: Supervised eight front desk employees, ensuring excellent customer service to 150 residents

Other Things to Consider

- Do your best to keep your résumé to one page.
- Create a separate section called "Volunteer or Student Involvement Experience." This is a good supplement to your work experiences and should follow the same format as your work experience section.
- Your experiences and education should be listed in reverse chronological order (*most recent comes first*).
- Arrange the categories of your résumé in a way that focuses on your most important qualities, rather than waiting until the middle or end to mention them. Capture an employer's attention early!

Writing Strong Essay Responses

- Be succinct. *The word limit is a maximum, but also a resource – use all of the space that you're provided!*
- Tell your story! *Stories are relatable; invite the reader to understand you on a personal level.*
- Use specific examples. *This provides context for how you would react or handle any given situation.*
- Proofread. *Remember to check all grammar, spelling and punctuation before submitting.*
- Be unique. *Show us why you would be a strong, unique member of the RA staff.*
- Be authentic. *At the end of the day, your essay should have your voice and reflect your integrity.*
- Answer the question. *After you've finished writing your essays, go back and re-read the question. Then, make sure you've covered all parts, and your answer is thorough and clear.*
- Write with purpose. *Be authentic and confident, and show us why YOU want to be an RA!*

Preparing for an Engaging Interview

Before the Interview

- Make sure that you review the position description. Have a solid understanding of what the position entails, the general duties and responsibilities, etc. Talk with your RA, RD, or other members of the staff to have a thorough understanding of the position.
- Make sure that you are well groomed (showered, hair combed, etc.).
- Be light on wearing fragrances (cologne, perfume, aftershave, etc.). You do not want the scent of the fragrance to overpower your interviewers; it can be distracting.
- Make sure that you have a nice outfit that is well fitted and presentable. Avoid wearing any items that have any graphic designs or images. Additionally, avoid t-shirts, flip-flops, and clothes that are stained, ripped, or torn.
- Remove piercings and any gaudy jewelry from your face, clothes, etc. You want the employer to remember what you said and not be distracted by any jewelry or piercings that may be distracting.
- Be prompt and punctual; always arrive 10-15 minutes early for your interview.
- It is good to have something to write with and also to write on. A notepad and pen will always come in handy!
- Having a set of questions to ask the interviewer shows that you're interested in learning more about the role:

Examples:

- *What has been the most rewarding aspect of being an RA?*
- *What do you look for in a fellow co-worker or supervisee?*
- *What are strategies you have used to balance the RA job along with other responsibilities?*

During the Interview

- Be professional and friendly toward everyone with whom you interact throughout the interview process.
- Have good body posture; avoid slouching or laying back in your chair.
- Make sure that you give a strong, firm handshake to everyone. Avoid the dead fish grip or power grip.
- Speak clearly, with a confident tone. Do not speak too softly or too loudly. Speak at a tone and level that is conversational.
- Ensure that you make eye contact with your interviewer(s). If more than one person is interviewing you, make sure that you acknowledge and give everyone an equal amount of eye contact.
- Smile in your interview! This shows off your personality and communicates you are excited about the position.
- It's OK to use your hands while you speak. Talking with your hands can be a good way to let out the nervous energy. However, keep your hands in a contained imaginary box.

After the Interview

- Thank the interviewer(s) for the opportunity to interview for the position/job.
- Reiterate how excited you are for the position, and that you look forward to hearing back soon.