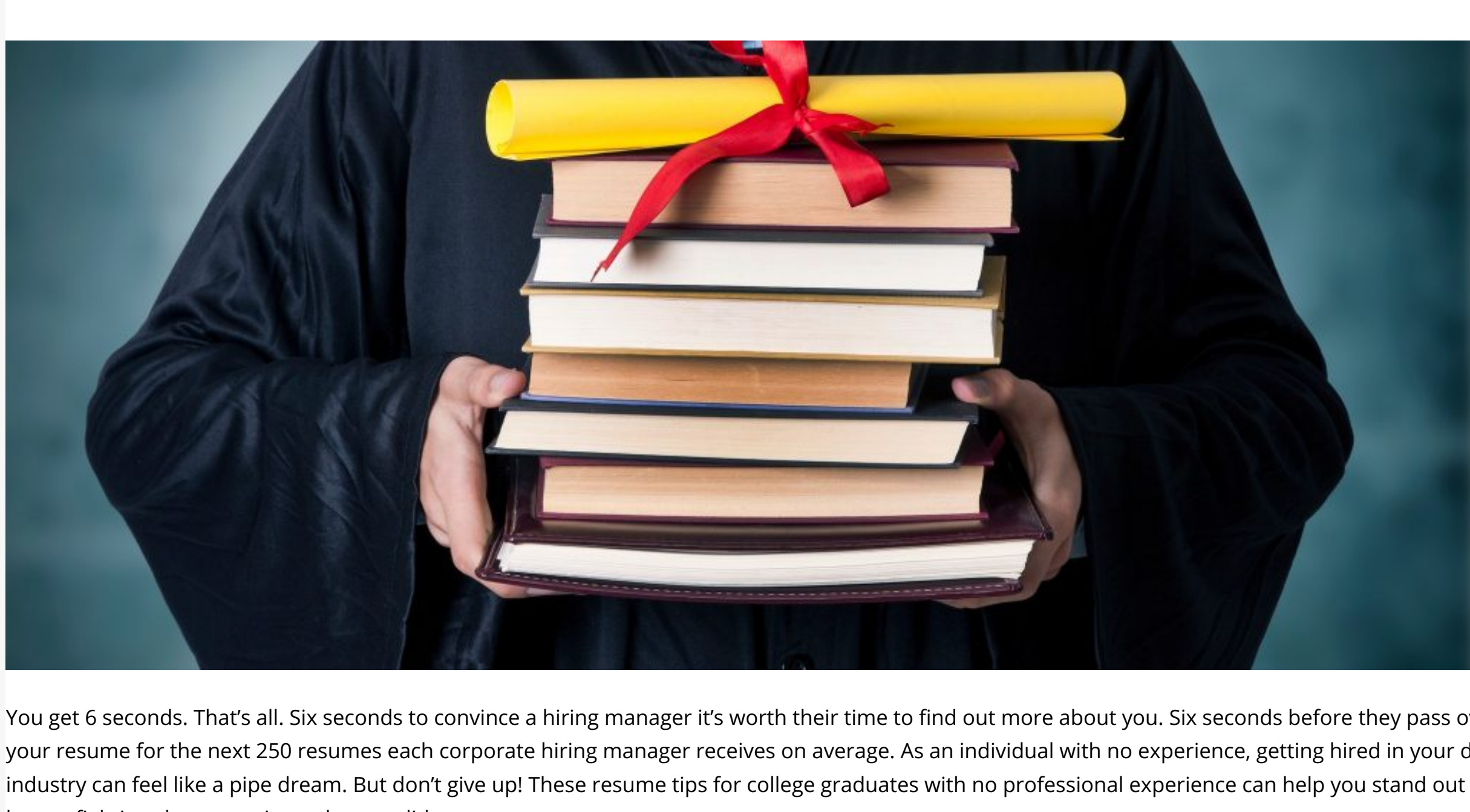


# Resume Tips for College Graduates with No Work Experience



You get 6 seconds. That's all. Six seconds to convince a hiring manager it's worth their time to find out more about you. Six seconds before they pass over your resume for the next 250 resumes each corporate hiring manager receives on average. As an individual with no experience, getting hired in your desired industry can feel like a pipe dream. But don't give up! These resume tips for college graduates with no professional experience can help you stand out and have a fighting chance against other candidates.

## Use a Professional Email

Recruiters and hiring managers meet your email address before they meet you. In fact, it's usually the first interaction anyone has with your application and sets that oh-so-important first impression. Whether they have an epic sense of humor or not, email addresses such as [TedBundyRules2023@hotmail.com](mailto:TedBundyRules2023@hotmail.com) or [SpongebobSexyPANTS@yahoo.com](mailto:SpongebobSexyPANTS@yahoo.com) do not make good first impressions.

With an email address like the ones above, it's likely they won't even open your message. If "tedbundyrules2023" really is your email username, don't ruin your chances with a job by adding that to your resume. Rather, create a new professional email such as [johnsmithseattle@gmail.com](mailto:johnsmithseattle@gmail.com) or [something similar](#). Use this account for professional emails, especially if you want to keep your fun email moniker. To ensure you don't accidentally send an email from the wrong address using your smartphone, download a separate email app. Make this app or your computer browser the only places you send anything from your professional account.

## Showcase Your Education

Earning your bachelor's degree (or higher) is an impressive achievement. Sure—it may not feel that way when the market is tough or all your friends from your graduating class are applying for the same jobs you are. However, according to the [U.S. Census](#), only 31.5 % of U.S. citizens hold a bachelor's degree. Therefore, a solid resume tip for college graduates is to showcase your education.

Although there are others who share your qualifications, a college degree is nothing to scoff at. Employers don't think so either, which is why many job openings require a degree. Nonetheless, you will face competition as you enter the workforce. So, how do you make yourself stand out among others with similar academic qualifications? You present aptitude better! After all, your resume is your personal marketing document.

When done well, your education, related awards, and activities will demonstrate your resilience, commitment, openness to learning, and ultimately the kind of full-time employee you would be. Even if you're an individual who graduated a decade ago, your achievements can boost your overall profile. Plus, your college awards and extracurricular activities can help you bond with potential hirers that went to the same school or were in the same sorority/fraternity. That's a bonus that only an exclusive number of people receive.

## Relevant Coursework

Relevant coursework can communicate your expertise to potential employers when little professional experience exists. But let's get one thing straight: Not all coursework is relevant. An often-followed, yet tiresome resume tip for college graduates is to include every single course. This is the definition of overkill. Instead, consider the specific job (ideally) or industry you are applying for/within. Ask yourself if you were the hiring manager, which course titles would make you a more viable candidate for an open position? Then list those. In many instances, the inclusion of coursework on a resume simply means list the course title. In other cases, you might consider adding 2-3 sentences about the class following the course title.

## Awards and Achievements

Accomplishments have the potential to set you apart from peers with the same academic background. Sometimes, they can give you a fighting chance against someone with more professional experience. Think about what you are most proud of during the last few years. Don't be afraid to boast! Boasting is one of the top resume tips for college graduates. With more well-known awards, you may be able to simply list a title for your recognition. If your award needs explanation, give a few sentences that describe what it is and why you earned it with precision.

Here are a few awards you might consider listing:

- Graduating with cum laude, magna cum laude, or summa cum laude honors
- Undergraduate research publications
- Volunteer-related awards
- 20 under 20, 30 under 30, etc.

## Scholarships and Fellowships

Scholarships make it clear to potential employers that you have noteworthy abilities in a specific area, such as academics, athletics, or arts. This usually means you not only have natural talent, but you were willing to pair that talent with hard work. Scholarships that require renewal depending on continued outstanding performance demonstrate a long-term commitment to going above and beyond—something potential employers can see translating to the workplace.

Replace professional work experience with internships, extracurricular activities, significant projects, volunteer work, and reframed personal experiences.

As you figuratively thumb through memories, run a filter for job-related skills. As you identify these skills, list them as bullet points with specific examples under the following topic heads.

Additionally, remember to quantify your achievements, whether you're listing internships, extracurriculars, or full-time positions later on.

## Include Research and Capstone Projects

Often, capstone projects serve as an opportunity for you to work within an industry to prove your abilities. While these are technically not internships or jobs, they're as close as you'll get without actually being employed. Incorporating these experiences is a vital resume tip for college graduates. Additionally, they provide one more chance to emphasize the skills you've built through your years in higher education. This list may include leadership, critical thinking, research, teamwork, and presentation. By completing undergraduate research, on the other hand, students communicate to employers that they can dive deeply into one area of interest, follow processes, and analyze data.

On your resume, briefly describe the project's purpose, methods and outcomes, and skills you picked up along the way.

## Pump up Your Internships and Volunteer Experience

Although temporary, the real-world experience that internships give college students is strategic. It provides direct experience in the career you want to pursue, and seeing it in your resume gives employers reason to hire you. Even if the internship was over a summer, hiring managers see success and your ability to take the first steps on a career path.

Skill-building is part of what college extracurriculars are all about. They're also a solid way to let employers know you have interests and passions outside of your college field of study. Since you don't yet have much professional experience, extracurriculars can help fill that part of your resume. Offer examples of traits displayed in your extracurricular and how they apply to the position.

Hiring managers for entry-level jobs want to see volunteer experience—plain and simple. According to a study of over 2,500 U.S. hiring managers, [82% of managers said they prefer candidates](#) with a history of volunteering. Most weren't even concerned whether it was related to candidate experience, though as a new professional related experience can't hurt.

## Include Paid Work That's Not Directly Related to the Position

As you progress in your career, you will likely remove less relevant paid work from your resume. Why? Because jobs that don't pertain to your career path may have far less clout with hiring managers.

However, as a newbie to the job market with little to no experience, jobs that you worked to pay for college or save some extra cash make useful additions to your resume. Although those positions may seem irrelevant, they've provided an opportunity for you to learn transferable skills and work ethic. For example, if you worked as a summer camp counselor, you likely gained a background in leadership, conflict management, and flexibility. If you served as a college tour guide, you probably improved public speaking and time-management skills.

As someone new to the job market, and even later on, it's these transferable skills that will set you apart from other applicants. But be careful. When you list your so-called unrelated work on your resume, avoid listing duties associated with the job. In place of that, record any major accomplishments. Then, give specific examples of how you applied your selected transferable skills in that role.

## Reframe Personal Experiences

Although many of us don't view our personal lives as applicable to the workforce, skills and characteristics are what make us desirable in certain positions. Think about events in your life that were out of the ordinary. Did you host a foreign exchange student, help raise siblings, or move around as part of a military family? Living through each of these scenarios can help you produce new business skills. Some of these skills—such as cross-cultural understanding, multitasking, patience, and navigation can translate well to other jobs. Before you put the finishing touches on your resume, think through the skills your personal experiences have given you. Jot them down and see if they work as a complement to your existing resume. If you still need to fill space, you could even include this section as a more detailed one.

## Use Your Resume as an Example of Your Professionalism

### Proofread

Proofread your resume for grammar, spelling, and punctuation three times once it's "finished." Then ask a friend to do the same. Every time you update your resume, go through the proofing process again. Sound excessive? Maybe it does. But it's worth it. A resume that is error-free shows employers that you possess attention to detail with important documents. Moreover, an estimated 77% of hiring managers immediately trash resumes when they see typos or grammatical mistakes.

And it's all too easy to miss those little errors that look right at first glance and don't get flagged by spell check. See a few [real-life examples](#) of these.

- An accurate and rabid typist
- Degree in pubic relations
- Fluent Spanish and French (but only fluent in Spanish)

While these typos may elicit a chuckle, a hiring manager won't view them with the same humor.

### Stick With a Clean, Not Overly Stylized Layout and Font

Emojis may be all the rage in social media, but graphics and cartoons on your resume are detrimental—especially when applying to [recruiters and hirers that use applicant tracking software](#). A poll by Ladders found from an in-depth poll that 42% of senior managers would refuse to interview an applicant solely for using any type of cartoon imagery on their resume. Another 1 in 4 said they'd skip over a candidate who used excessive color or elaborate fonts. As a general resume tip for college graduates, avoid the unnecessary and unprofessional—especially the smiley faces and flowery extras.

### Avoid personal pronouns, text speak or emojis

Write your resume in the first person implied and avoid I-personal pronouns such as I, my, we, or our. Also, remember that just because it works in a text doesn't make it appropriate or effective in a resume. Even the most tech-savvy of your potential colleagues will not find shortened text phrasing professional. And if you're a traditional student, you'll already be fighting the young adult stereotypes in order to be taken seriously. Don't lose your shot at that perfect career-starting job because you forgot about context while you were writing or proofing.

### Tailor your Resume for Remote Roles

Grasping new technologies quickly and communicating well through a variety of media draws in the attention of hiring managers. Coming straight out of school, you may have been exposed to new programs and systems that haven't quite saturated your industry yet. The same goes for methods of communication. Make sure to add those systems to your resume under hard or technical skills.

While writing your resume, also do a quick search for a handful of jobs you'd be interested in. Look for words describing technology that companies prefer their job candidates to have experience with. If you do, include those. If not, spend some time on YouTube learning about the system or download a free trial and practice using them. On your resume, list the skills as "basic (insert skill)." This way, you're not claiming to be an expert. But you do have that desired skill on your resume. If asked to back it up, you will show the initiative to research and learn on your own.

If you're searching for a [remote position](#), managers want to feel comfortable working with you at a distance. As a result, possessing a self-starter mentality, strong time management skills, and communication should be your resume focus. Consider ways you've showcased these skills through internships, projects, and extracurricular activities. Then, make sure to sprinkle them throughout your resume with examples. Additionally, list them in your skills section.

### Create an Online Portfolio

Another way to present your technological prowess is to create an online portfolio and resume. Having a well-written and active LinkedIn profile is a good start. But almost every industry has outcomes and results you can include in an online portfolio. This will give potential employers a taste of some of your best work, prove your tech skills, and let them know you understand the importance of an online presence. If you're not sure where to start, do a quick Google search on the title of your desired career and the words "online portfolio." You'll find a world of knowledge and templates to get you started. Once you're finished, add links to the portfolio and your LinkedIn profile to your resume.

### Always Add a Cover Letter

Cover letters are a chance to let your personality come out and connect a position to your specific background and skills. They are your chance to make an argument for yourself. As a person with little experience, here are our recommendations for your cover letter:

- Keep it short and sweet, preferably less than 250 words.
- [Address it to a specific person](#), or at the very least, to a "hiring manager."
- Avoid complicated language. Be professional and straightforward.
- Do thorough research about the company and open with a clearly personalized comment.
- Use keywords from the job description in your letter.
- Highlight directly related transferable skills.
- Finish with a call to action.

Admittedly, the competition will be fierce upon entering the job market with little to no experience. But your perseverance will prevail. Get the leg up you need to stand out and secure an interview by strategically writing a standout resume and cover letter.

*Do you have experience with [getting a job out of college or resume tips for college graduates](#)? Connect with [Virtual Vacations](#) on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#) to tell us what you think. We'd love to hear from you!*

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