



Cover Letter & Resume Workbook for RPNs

We RPN

Registered Practical Nurses
Association of Ontario

Getting that first job can take work. An effective cover letter and resume is a critical first step to demonstrate to employers why they should hire you. Your cover letter and resume make an important first impression. This workbook will provide you with tips and a template to put your best foot forward and clearly communicate to employers why they should ask you for an interview.

Cover Letter

Think of your cover letter as a letter written personally to the hiring manager. It is not a list of things you can do, but an introduction of who you are as a nurse and why they should want to meet you. A cover letter is your story, so invest the time in writing a good one.

Your cover letter should be personalized and specific to the role you're applying for. In one-page, you should answer the following questions:

Why are you sending this résumé? / Why are you interested in this role?

Why are you interested in the organization?

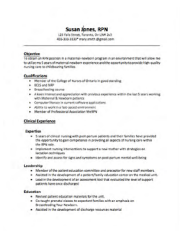
Why should the organization hire you?

Why would the hiring manager enjoy working with you?

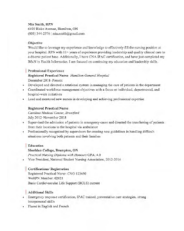
Samples for inspiration



**New Grad
Cover Letter**



**Mid-Career
Cover Letter**



**Nurse Specialist
Cover Letter**

Be specific about why you're a good fit: Give the hiring manager proof, in the form of an example, of an experience or activity that allowed you to use or develop the specific skills they are looking for.

Link your skills to related experiences: For example, "In my capacity as a student nurse, I worked on a project that developed a tool for the unit to support incontinence care for the residences".

Write using the active voice: In a sentence written in the active voice, the subject of the sentence performs the action. For example:

I learned to use the Meditech documentation system while at Pine Tree Lodge.

In a sentence written in the passive voice, the subject receives the action.

My knowledge of the Meditech documentation system was acquired while at Pine Tree Lodge.

Sentences in the active voice have a strong, direct, and clear tone.

Check for spelling and grammar errors: Give your cover letter to a colleague or friend to read over and check for mistakes. Or you can use an online spelling and grammar program such as Microsoft Word or Grammarly.

Personalize your introduction: Include the hiring manager's name whenever possible; this may be found by looking at the organization's website or finding the hiring manager on LinkedIn or phoning the company and asking for this information.

Do not start your cover letter with: "To whom it may concern." If you can't find out the name of the hiring manager, simply write "Re" and add the position title as indicated in the job listing.

Cover Letter samples for inspiration



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Formatting your Cover Letter

Here's how to set-up your cover letter so it is easy to read.

Address 1: _____ [Your Name]
Your address [Street Address]
[City, Province]
[Postal Code]
[Phone]
[Email]

Date: _____ [Day/Month/Year]

Address 2: _____ [Recipient Name]
The address of the [Title]
location you are [Company]
applying to [Street Address]
[City, Province]
[Postal Code]

Greeting:
Name of the hiring manager or "Re" and the position title _____ Dear [Recipient]:

Why you're the right fit: _____ In the first paragraph (4 to 5 sentences), indicate what attracted you to the position, why you are applying, when you graduated and the status of your registration.

In the next few paragraphs, provide a few examples of your experiences.

Link your skills to related experiences: _____ Indicate that you have attached your resume and thank the reader for taking the time to consider your resume.

Closing Paragraph: _____ Sincerely,
Full name

Signature: _____ *(If you have your registration with the College of Nurses put your designation (RPN) after your name. You can also include your email address and phone number under your name.)*

The Résumé

Types of Résumés

Chronological Résumé

Used when: You're applying for a role in a similar field that builds on your current experience.

Chronological resumes are the most common. In it, you present your work history and education by date, with the **most recent experiences appearing first**.

A chronological resume demonstrates your career progression by highlighting positions of increased responsibility or academic preparation vis à vis the position you are targeting.

[> VIEW EXAMPLE](#)

Functional Résumé

Used when: You're applying for role that is non-traditional, outside the healthcare sector, or in a different discipline.

The functional résumé categorizes your experience by skill and accomplishments, which gives you an opportunity to accentuate your transferable skills and put less emphasis on previous jobs held or on academic preparation. A functional résumé allows you to highlight your skills as they relate to the qualifications the employer is looking for.

[> VIEW EXAMPLE](#)

Hybrid Résumé

The hybrid résumé combines the strengths of chronological and functional résumés. It emphasizes career continuity — as in the chronological style — while also highlighting themes of expertise and accomplishments, as reflected in the functional style.

[> VIEW EXAMPLE](#)

10 Second Rule!

Most résumés are initially scanned for about 10 seconds. To maximize this short time, you must create a well-written, well-organized product that is easy to read and visually appealing. Here's how:

- Organize your résumé so that you list your **most relevant experience** of interest to the employer at the top of your document.
- Begin with your **Qualifications** and highlight that you match what they have requested in the job posting.
- **Use point form** in your descriptions, using accomplishment statements. Do not start your bulleted statements with “responsibilities included” or “duties” to describe your experiences.
- Use headings on your résumé that allow you to present yourself favourably. Common headings include:

Objective	Work Experience
Qualifications	Community Involvement
Education	Certifications/Memberships/
Clinical Experience	Professional Development/Other

- **Switch the order of Education, Clinical Experience, and Work Experience depending on the stage of your career you are.** New graduates should start with Education and Clinical Experience. Mid-career nurse should put their Work Employment first.
- **Keep it to two pages.** In Canada, typically, most employers expect to see a résumé that is no more than two pages long. In certain sectors, one page is the standard.
- **Use only one font** and choose a font that is clear, easy to read, and professional. Black font on a white page/background works best.
- Avoid tables and resume templates, as these can be difficult to read where organizations use Applicant Tracking Systems.

Objective

- State your goal and match it to the job posting.
- Be specific (Ex: Seeking a full-time RPN position in Urgent Care).



Qualifications

- Note that you are registered to practice and are in good standing with the College of Nurses.
- Add any other qualifications that pertain to the role. (e.g. If the posting indicates, “Certificate in Gentle Persuasive Approach preferred” and you have that certificate, list it here!)



Education Section

- List your degree, school, and date completed. Include majors and specializations, and academic courses, as relevant to the position.
- List the most recent first.
- Add any academic work if relevant to the position.



Clinical Experience

- Name the Hospital and Unit.
- Include the course objective.
- Add what you wanted to improve during the semester; what did you do really well?
- In this section, demonstrate how you understand and know the population you're working with.



Work Experience

- Begin with the most recent experience.
 - 5-8 bullets for most recent roles.
 - 3-5 bullets for earlier placements.
- Use keywords that match the position requirements.
- Don't repeat (ie. don't put "IV skills" under every clinical placement/work experience.)

Describe your achievements by following the CAR approach:

Challenge: For any each role, think about a challenge/problem/obstacle that you needed to overcome.

Action: List the action you took to resolve the problem. What skills did you use/what new skills did you develop in order to reach your objectives?

Result: Describe the quantifiable results/measurable contribution you made.

Example: Developed a fall prevention toolkit that reduced falls by 15% in the unit.



Before you hit send!

- Did you order the sections of your résumé according to their importance for the position?
- Did you double-check the grammar, punctuation, and spelling?
- Do you have consistency in headings, tenses, punctuation?
- Did you order the information within each section in reverse chronological order with the most recent information listed first?
- Did you check if your résumé should be one page or two pages?
- Is the layout clean and uncluttered?
- Is the font selection appropriate?
- Have you demonstrated why you are a great nurse?
- Did you add your designation “RPN” or any degrees you’ve earned behind your name?
- Have you had someone look it over and provide you with feedback?

Résumé samples for inspiration



**New Grad
Hybrid
Résumé**



**Mid-Career
Functional
Résumé**



**Nurse
Specialist
Résumé**

References & Further Reading

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We RPN

Registered Practical Nurses
Association of Ontario

5025 Orbitor Drive
Building 5, Suite 200
Mississauga, ON
L4W 4Y5

1.877.602.4664

WeRPN.com