

**STEP 1:** Identify the qualities of an excellent reference.

**warm-up:** who should speak for you?

Who in your life knows you well enough to talk about your personal strengths? Consider each of the following people in your life, and decide: Who would be the best person to choose to speak or write about your strengths on a job or college application? Why?

A school advisor	Your pastor at church	The mayor of your town
Your counselor	Your best friend	Your coach
Your father's cousin's roommate's ex-wife	A teacher or professor who is the world's leading expert on your subject or field	An inmate in the local minimum security prison
Your principal	A friend on Facebook who you've never met in person	Someone who owes you money
A teacher who you've had for more than one class and who you've performed well for	Your mother	Your flaky English teacher who can't remember to wear matching socks but writes beautifully
Your great aunt who doesn't speak any English	A teacher who failed you for cheating on a quiz	The man who runs the community center where you've been going for the past six years



The best reference would be \_\_\_\_\_, because:



**SELF-ADVOCACY**

When applying to a 2- or 4-year college, a first job, or even for a scholarship or loan, you will often be asked for one or more professional references. A **reference** is a person who has agreed to speak and/or write highly of your talents, skills, personality, and strengths. Teachers, counselors, community leaders, past employers, etc., are good people to serve as references.

**What are the qualities of an excellent reference?**

**college 101**

There are two types of references that colleges and jobs may require:

**Open Recommendations**

- You, the applicant, are allowed to read or listen to what your reference has to say about you.

**Confidential Recommendations**

- You, the applicant, are not allowed to see or hear what your reference says about you. Their remarks are kept secret.
- When asked to submit a confidential recommendation, you will usually have to provide a letter in a sealed envelope, with your reference's signature over the seal to prove you haven't opened it or read it before submitting. This doesn't mean, of course, that your reference can't tell you later what they said!

**STEP 2:** Identify three to five adult recommenders.

## choosing references

The last words on any resume are usually, "References Available Upon Request." This means that, if an employer or school is interested in you, they may contact you and ask for a list of two to three adults who can give a verbal or written recommendation of your personal strengths and weaknesses. But how do you know who to choose to be your reference or recommender?

In this week's **Warm-Up activity**, you discussed the pros and cons of asking a variety of people to recommend you. Hopefully, you recognized that in order to be a good reference, your recommender should:

- be able to speak well
- be able to write well
- actually like you
- know you well
- be willing to say good things about your strengths
- be dependable
- be objective about you, and not have a stake in whether or not you get accepted or hired
- have a good reputation in the community

Colleges and employers use recommendations to learn more about how you've already proven your skills, qualities, and talents. They also want to learn about the potential that other professionals see in you and your ability to continue to develop your strengths.

Recommendations are often needed for these opportunities:

- College applications
- Internship applications
- Job applications
- Special programs
- Scholarship contests

Depending on the situation, references might need to be able to talk about your academic potential (for a college application), your responsibility and reliability (for a job application), or even your punctuality and attitude (for a special program or opportunity).

For this reason, it's a good idea to choose a reference who knows you very well, and can (and wants to!) speak honestly about your personality, your strengths, and your potential.

## BIG IDEA

When deciding who to ask to recommend you, consider the situation: Who is asking for the reference, and what do they need to know?

**THINK IT THROUGH**

Look back at your Activities and Experiences charts in Lesson 5. For each of the adults you listed as bosses or supervisors, choose who you think would make good references. Write their information here:

Recommender #1: \_\_\_\_\_  
why? \_\_\_\_\_

Recommender #2: \_\_\_\_\_  
why? \_\_\_\_\_

Recommender #3: \_\_\_\_\_  
why? \_\_\_\_\_

## making it **real!**

Now that you've identified three adults who you think would make good references for you, you should speak with these people to make sure they feel comfortable being your reference. Try the script below to get a verbal commitment from them this week:

"Hello, (person's name). As you might know, I'm graduating this June, and I need to start filling out my applications for (college/trade school/job/military). I really appreciate all your support and help over the years, and I've learned a lot by working with you. I was wondering if you'd feel comfortable providing a recommendation for me? I can fill you in on all the details later, but I was hoping you'd say yes."

## your resume

A **resume** is a one-to-two-page summary of your background, experience, and strengths.

Your resume is one of the most important tools that you will use to apply for jobs, internships, and scholarships. The purpose of your resume is to show — at a quick glance — how you may be qualified for an opportunity (job, scholarship, education, whatever it may be).

## COLLEGE CAREER CONNECTION

A resume can be used to apply for these opportunities and more:

- Scholarship contests
- Jobs
- Internships
- Colleges, schools, or programs
- Apprenticeship Opportunities
- Volunteer Opportunities and Gap Year Programs

## what's in a resume?

Everyone's resume will express different strengths, but all resumes have certain conventions which you should follow. Be sure to include the following in your resume:

- Your first and last **name**
- Your mailing **address** (Building Number, Street, Apartment Number, City, State, and Zip Code)
- Your **telephone number(s)**
- Your **email address**
- Sections for summarizing **your education, your work and volunteer experience, your after-school activities**, and any **special skills or awards and honors** you've received
- A list of **professional references**, or a note that says "References provided upon request"

## what makes an effective resume?

Your resume is often your first personal introduction to an employer or college admissions panel. In addition to your transcript, test scores, and demographic information (your age, address, etc.), your resume will be used to make judgments about who you are, what your strengths are, and even, sometimes, what your weaknesses might be.

### Evaluating Resumes

Imagine you are an employer, and your company is looking to hire a recent high school graduate for an entry-level position as an after-school technology tutor. This is the advertisement you placed in the local paper:

“... small nonprofit organization seeks a part-time after-school technology tutor to teach children how to create their own blogs and websites using simple software. Applicants must have an interest in technology, be responsible and dependable, and have a proven ability to work with children and adults. 20 hours/week, \$10/hour ...”

Your job is to assess each candidate’s personal strengths and weaknesses by drawing inferences from their resume.

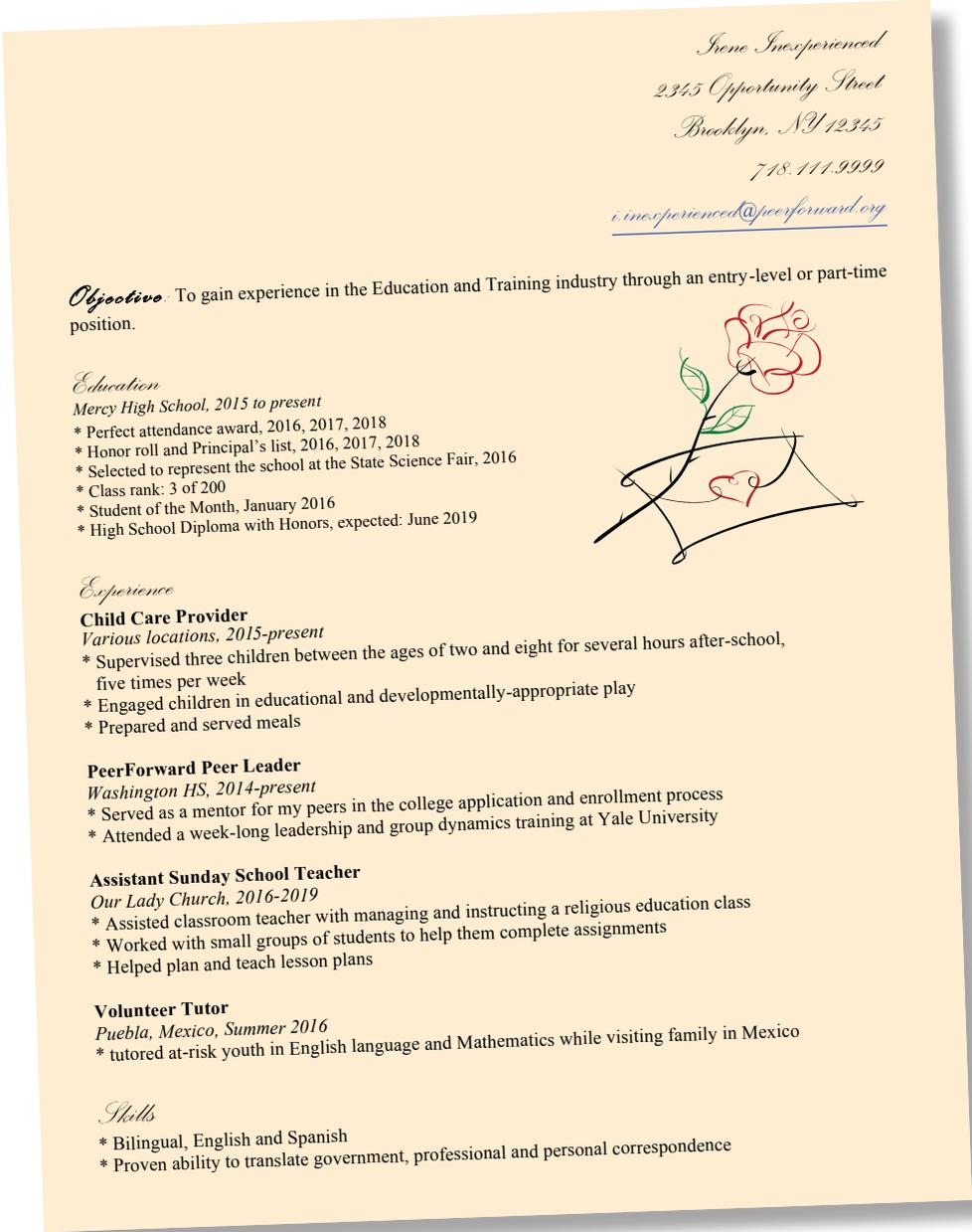
Look closely at the following resumes and discuss with a partner:

- What can you infer about the applicant from the **content** of their resume? From the information they provide?
- What can you infer about the applicant from the way their resume is written? From their **style**? Their spelling and punctuation?
- What can you infer about the applicant from the way their resume is **formatted**? How it looks, visually, on the page?
- Which of the three applicants would you invite in for an interview? Which would you hire?

### COLLEGE CAREER CONNECTION

Your resume makes a strong first impression, either good or bad! In the world of work, resumes are used by employers as a first impression. Together with a cover letter and an application form, employers will evaluate resumes and eliminate candidates before deciding who will move on to the next round; this usually involves face-to-face interviews and reference checks. College admissions panels use a similar method for weeding out applicants.

**STEP 4:** Evaluate a series of model resumes for effectiveness.



What can you infer about this applicant from her resume?	Positive Inferences (personal strengths)	Negative Inferences (personal weaknesses)
Content		
Writing Style		
Formatting		

**DECISION**

Call in for an interview?  YES  NO      Hire?  MAYBE  NO WAY!!

Billy Broke  
 1234 Oak Street  
 Anytown, AR 12345  
 (411) 555.2233  
[Mage\\_master@xboxlive.com](mailto:Mage_master@xboxlive.com)  
 Instagram: mage\_master69

**Objective:** To secure a position in the technology industry

**Education**

High School Diploma, Anticipated: June 2019  
 Jefferson High School

**Employment**

- Smoothie King, 2015-Present
- My parents made me get this job because they said I had to start making my own money
  - I work 15-25 hours per week
  - I greet customers and make smoothies

**Activities**

- JHS Computer Club, 2016-Present*  
 President of the Computer Club
- We meet every Thursday after-school and help the computer teacher, Mr. Jones, with fixing the computer labs computers
  - I organize online gaming sessions for my friends in the Computer Club
  - As president, I have to begin every meeting assign jobs to the other members. I also have to talk to the teachers and students about what's wrong with the computers so I know what needs to be fixed. Sometimes I have to teach the teachers how to use the computers correctly. They are so slow sometimes!

- Future Engineers of America's Summer Technology Training*  
 University of Arkansas, Summer 2015-Summer 2016
- I was picked out of all the other kids at my school to go and participate in this training. Basically, we spent three weeks over the summer living in a dorm on the campus and learning about computers, engineering, and technology. I went two summers in a row. It was fun and I learned a lot.

**Skills**

- Basic computer skills including working knowledge of software, networking, and peripheral hardware (that means using a mouse)
- I am the world record holder for highest score ever on Gears of Pain VII: The Revenge

**Interests**

- WoW, D&D, Xbox, Engineering, Science



**SELF-ADVOCACY**

When communicating with potential employers or colleges you want to apply to, it's important to keep your resume professional. This includes choosing an email address that is simple and appropriate. Use your first and last name only, or your initials and a number. Save your *qtpie69@aol.com* address for communicating with your friends.

What can you infer about this applicant from his resume?	Positive Inferences (personal strengths)	Negative Inferences (personal weaknesses)
Content		
Writing Style		
Formatting		

**DECISION**

Call in for an interview?  YES  NO      Hire?  MAYBE  NO WAY!!

## Rachel Ramos

2300 South Hampton Street  
 South Ridge, SC 29115  
 ramos@gmail.com

(555) 555-1222

### Education

- 2015–Present South Ridge High School South Ridge, SC
- High school diploma expected June 2019
  - Honor Roll Student, 9th and 10th grade
  - Attendance Office Student Assistant, 11th grade

### Work Experience

- 2015–Present McDonald’s South Ridge, SC  
 Cashier
- Manage cash register and balance funds at closing
  - Selected Employee of the Month for May 2016
  - Named Head Cashier for evening shift

### Experience and Activities

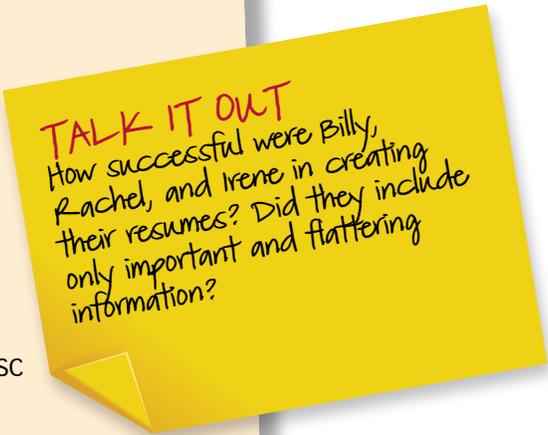
- 2015–Present South Ridge Marching Band South Ridge, SC  
 Trumpet Player
- Band named 2016 state champions
  - Marched in the state Thanksgiving Day Parade
  - Tutored middle school band members

- 2015–Present Shiloh Baptist Church South Ridge, SC  
 Usher
- Make copies of programs
  - Assist with seating members and guests

- 2015–2017 South Ridge Softball Team South Ridge, SC  
 Catcher/Third Baseman
- Most Improved Player

**Skills** Proficient in MS Office, fluent in Spanish

**Interests** Playing trumpet, reading science fiction, volunteering with church



What can you infer about this applicant from her resume?	Positive Inferences (personal strengths)	Negative Inferences (personal weaknesses)
Content		
Writing Style		
Formatting		

**DECISION**

Call in for an interview?  YES  NO

Hire?  MAYBE  NO WAY!!

## Resume Do's and Don'ts

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- Do use formatting techniques to direct your reviewer's eye to important information — capitalization, bold, italics, font changes, tabs, and spacing.
- Proofread, proofread, proofread! You want your resume to convey that you are professional, careful, and responsible — typos and grammatical errors will say the opposite.
- Do use the checklist for proofreading your resume.
- Don't use fancy fonts. Some people want to make their resume more exciting, but using fancy fonts can be distracting and can make your resume look unprofessional.
- Don't overuse bold and italics. Using them sparingly can help to highlight some important information, but overusing them will only make your resume hard to read.
- Don't use slang or too many abbreviations. If you do use an abbreviation, make sure you type out the whole name the first time you refer to it. For instance, you might refer to your high school as JHS, but make sure you type out "Jackson High School" the first time you refer to it.
- Don't use photographs, illustrations, or graphics (unless they are required for the specific job).
- Don't include reasons that you left previous jobs.
- Don't include a title. Don't put "RESUME" at the top. Don't put "Jason's Resume" at the top.
- Your name — and only your name — will be the title.

## Checklist for Proofreading Your Resume

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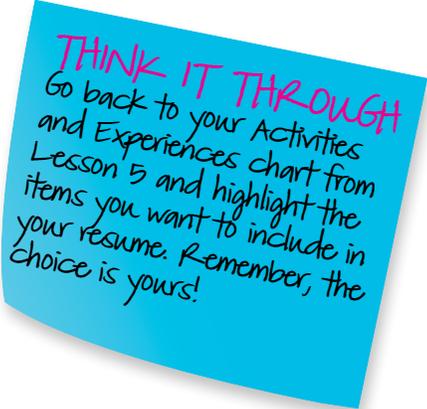
- Read through your resume.
- Does everything make sense?
- Is everything in order?
- Does it flow? Is it easy to read?
- Have you left anything out?
- Make sure you remembered to include your:
  - Name
  - Education
  - Activities
  - Awards or honors
  - Contact information
  - Experience
  - Skills
- Check for spelling errors.
- Check for any grammatical errors.
- Enlist the help of other people. Have at least one other person (a parent, teacher, or your advisor) read through your resume, check it for any errors, and give feedback on content.

**STEP 5:** Choose which of your activities and experiences you want to include in your resume.

**own your resume**

Billy, Rachel, and Irene all had choices when it came to creating their resumes. They had to decide:

- Which **personal strengths** they wanted to stress
- What **content** to include on their resume, and what to leave off
- How to explain their experiences with **style**
- Which **format** to use to present their experiences



Your resume belongs to YOU. YOU decide what to include and how to explain your experiences, both good and bad.

**power statements**

In order to write an effective resume, you need to write strong, active bullet points for your experiences. Passive language makes it sound like something happened to you or you put up with a bad situation. Active language instead makes it sound like you were in charge, that you had the power, and that you can be successful.

Passive Language:	Active Language:
<i>I was making smoothies</i>	<i>I crafted delicious and healthy liquid snacks.</i>
<i>I got an award for best science experiment</i>	<i>I designed, built, and evaluated a science experiment which received a "best in class" award.</i>
<i>I got to go on a trip over the summer</i>	<i>Selected to participate in a summer learning opportunity designed around building student confidence with technology.</i>

**STEP 6:** Differentiate between active, effective language and passive, ineffective language.

When writing a resume, you should focus on using the most active language possible to improve effectiveness. Use bullet points to summarize your accomplishments. Begin each bullet point with an active verb, like the ones in the list below.

**Active Verbs for Your Resume**

administered	advised	analyzed	arranged	assembled	assisted
attained	audited	augmented	authored	built	classified
coached	collected	compiled	conceptualized	conducted	consolidated
consulted	contacted	coordinated	counseled	created	designed
developed	diagnosed	directed	distributed	drafted	established
evaluated	examined	facilitated	fashioned	formulated	generated
guided	identified	illustrated	improved	increased	initiated
inspected	instructed	interpreted	invented	maintained	marketed
motivated	negotiated	organized	originated	overhauled	performed
persuaded	planned	prepared	presented	presided	processed
projected	promoted	recognized for	recommended	recruited	remodeled
repaired	represented	researched	responsible for	revised	scheduled
simplified	summarized	supervised	trained	translated	wrote

**STEP 7:** Write a series of bullet points for each of the activities and experiences you want to include.

## show your strengths

Use the **Active Verbs List** to write a draft of your bullet points for your resume.

### Education

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### Activities

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### Work and Volunteer Experience

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### Skills

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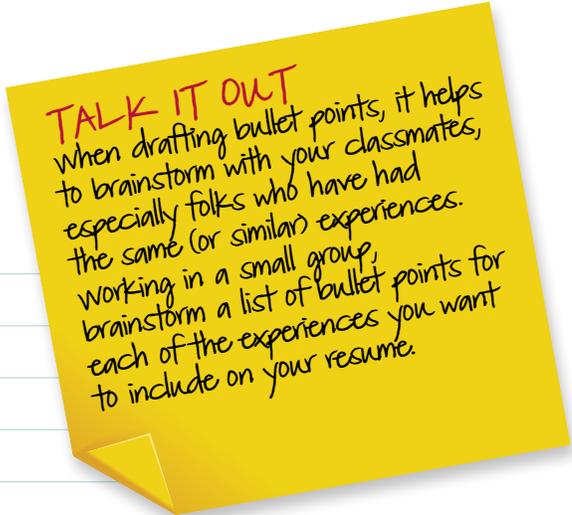
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## BIG IDEA

You will use the resume you've created again and again this year as you apply to colleges, trade and technical schools, and for scholarships and jobs. As you gain experience, you can add to your resume.

## build your resume

Now that you know what you want to include on your resume and how you want to express your ideas, you're ready to create your resume. Many software programs have "resume wizards" or templates to help you format your document.

Finally, **save and print your resume**. You will need one copy to give to your recommender and one copy for your **Senior Portfolio**. Note that you can create and store more than one resume, so if you don't like the first one, you can create as many as you like until you get it right.

## resumes and references: summarizing your strengths

A strong resume and a strong set of references can help you demonstrate your personal strengths to employers as well as to college and program admissions committees. The resume you created this week will serve as a great model for the resumes you will create throughout your lifetime as you follow your career path. It also will help you choose which of your personal experiences to focus on when you write your personal statement next week.

This week, I highlighted the following personal strengths on my resume (list them here):

I believe my resume will demonstrate to employers and colleges that I am:

Did anything change this week about how much value you saw in your activities and experiences? Were you able to create bullet points and a resume which made all of your experiences seem valuable and strong? Why or why not?