

Your High-School Resume

By Dave Berry

Getting into a good college is a lot like trying to get a good job. In both cases, you need a way to sell yourself. That's where your résumé comes in.

A high school résumé works like a professional résumé. If you are a junior, planning on applying to colleges that do not accept everyone who applies (that's most colleges), you're going to be competing for a spot in the freshman class. You need a tool to market yourself, something to make you stand out from the others. A résumé is the answer.

To put together a high school résumé, you need to do some serious reflection. Get a piece of paper and a pen. Ask someone in your family, who knows what you have accomplished over the years, to sit with you for an hour or so. The purpose of this exercise is to chronicle the highlights of your academic and extracurricular career.

Start by listing the biggest academic honors you've garnered, starting with ninth grade. Most colleges are interested in only your four years of high school. Please note, though, that if you have done something exceptional in middle or elementary school, make note of it. Academic honors include honor-roll recognition, essay-writing awards, science competitions, and the like. Take time to discuss your history. Make note of everything that comes up.

Now turn to your extracurricular activities. This category includes clubs you've belonged to, class offices you've held, sports, band, yearbook, and all the other nonacademic activities you've done. Don't forget non-school-related items such as volunteering at a nursing home and jobs you've worked. Include special interests like photography, hiking, writing, and so forth. Detail your uniqueness. You're trying to paint a portrait of yourself; create an action inventory.

When you're finished listing everything, put the items into chronological order by category. The title of this document should be something like, "Robert P. Osborne: Personal Highlights," or "Robert P. Osborne: Achievement Summary," or something similar. Your two main categories should be "Academic" and "Other," or "Extra-Curricular."

When you're done, you'll have a one-sheet profile of your best work and activities. You can include a copy of the résumé with all of your applications to offset the application's limited space. Don't be afraid to market yourself. If you don't, who will?