

College Knowledge: 5 steps for creating an outstanding activity résumé

By Barbara Connolly For MediaNews Group [The Oakland Press](#) Mar 15, 2021

When deciding whether to admit you, colleges consider your extracurricular activities. The best way to showcase your activities is with an activity résumé that highlights your talents and strengths.

An activity résumé organizes information you will need to complete your college applications. Some colleges invite you to attach an activity résumé to your application. It can also be given to your recommenders and college interviewers, and most scholarship applications require an activity résumé.

While due to the pandemic, many high school activities have changed and some have been canceled, you are still engaged in activities, at least in virtual form, and colleges want to know how you spend your time.

Here are five steps for creating an outstanding high school activity résumé.

List everything

To begin, make a list of everything you have done since the summer before ninth grade. To spark your memory, look around your home and check your computer for records of activities, such as a brochure for a summer camp, or a schedule for virtual club meetings. List activities of all types, including independent work and work you are doing to help your family at home.

Categorize

After you have a list, group similar and related activities together. The most common categories are:

- Extracurriculars, such as school clubs, performing and visual arts, writing, academic research, math and science competitions, speech and debate
- Athletics
- Community service
- Summer experiences
- Paid work

Your categories will be unique to you. For example, a student who focuses on music may not have an athletics category, and other students might not have a paid work category. It's not necessary to have every possible type of activity.

Prioritize

Prioritize your activities by putting those most important to you higher on the list within each category. For example, if you are a member of your school's robotics team, write about robotics for your school newspaper, and research robotics, cluster those activities together near the top of your list under "extracurriculars." That way, the reader can easily see what is important to you.

Describe

Clearly and briefly describe each activity. Here is the type of information to include in your descriptions:

- The years in school you participated in the activity (grade 11, 10, 9).
- The hours per week and the number of weeks per year you participated, for example, 6 hours per week/30 weeks per year.
- The organization's name, such as, National Honor Society or school newspaper.
- Your role, such as, president, member, volunteer.

Your role is the most important part of the description. Start with your position: captain, editor, or volunteer. Describe your growth in the activity by noting, for example, that you evolved from newspaper writer in grade 9, to section editor in grade 10, and editor in grade 11. Describe exactly what you do, such as organize meetings, practice daily with the orchestra, or fundraise. If you received any recognition, such as MVP or Rising Star, add that information to your description.

Format and proofread

Your activity résumé is a visual expression of who you are. It should be aesthetically pleasing. Make life easy for your reader!

You can choose any format you like, either an Excel spreadsheet, a table in Word, or a classic résumé format with headings and bullet points. Whichever format you choose, be sure to use a consistent font and bold headings. Have a header that includes your name, your school, the city and state where your school is located, and your email address.

Carefully read every line of your résumé. It's easy to make mistakes when you're compressing so much information into a single document. Details will count when college admissions readers review your activity résumé, so proofread it. Finally, when you're absolutely sure everything is perfect, convert your document to a PDF.

It's an extraordinary time for high school students. Traditionally, what you do in school, your activities, define you — a scientist, an athlete, a musician. Your activities still have that effect, but today students need to go the extra mile and innovate to engage. It's worth the effort for many reasons, not the least of which is the positive impact an activity résumé can have in your college admission process.

Barbara Connolly, JD, is the founder and director of Birmingham-based College Choice Counseling, and a Certified Educational Planner. She can be reached at barbara@collegecc.com.

