

Early career planning

How students can start building their résumés

by JOANNE SALLAY



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Like many of her peers, university student Katherine McIntyre spends time on TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram, keeping up with friends and trends. But what might surprise some people is that the 19-year-old has been developing her résumé since grade 10.

McIntyre began building her résumé in high school when applying for her first paid positions as a figure skating coach and camp counsellor. To get started, she searched Google for examples, then further developed it through her career studies course, a mandatory part of Ontario's curriculum.

In grade 12, McIntyre began noticing LinkedIn posts from her mother, an academic physician, as well as her mother's network sharing career updates and milestones. Seeing how professionals used LinkedIn to connect and share these moments inspired McIntyre to create a profile of her own.

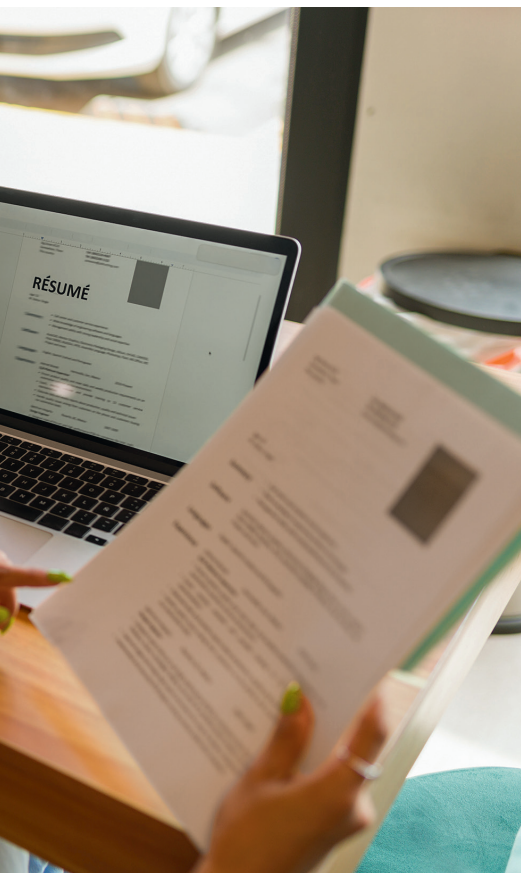
Now entering her second year at Huron College at Western University, McIntyre continues to rely on her résumé as she applies for leadership roles,

on-campus employment and summer internships. While her mother has an academic curriculum vitae that stretches to 42 pages, McIntyre's business résumé is currently two pages, just as her professors advise as the maximum.

Start with what interests you

McIntyre's experience reflects a growing trend: Many students are beginning to think about résumés earlier—not only for the official workforce, but also for part-time jobs, volunteer roles and academic programs.

Jennifer Schwartz, head of Guidance and Career Education at North Toronto Collegiate Institute with the Toronto District School Board, says the key is for students to focus on activities that genuinely interest them. "Perhaps a student wants to create an assembly to educate their peers about an important topic, or work with people in their community to build a service that helps others," adds Schwartz, a Costco member. "The opportunities are endless."



Schwartz also encourages students to focus less on titles and more on the impact they make. “Having a leadership title is not meaningful in and of itself,” she explains. “Students need to be able to demonstrate growth and creativity within their experiences.”

Applying to college and university

For students considering post-secondary opportunities, résumés can also play a role in the admissions process. Costco member Susan Pasternak, who is a college admissions essay coach in the Chicago area, works with high school students applying to college programs.

“While not all schools require a résumé, some invite students to upload one, giving them another opportunity to share more about who they are,” Pasternak says

Many applications include activity lists or supplemental sections. Because of this, Pasternak encourages students to keep track of experiences early.

“It’s never too early to start keeping a list,” she says. “Open a document and write down activities, part-time jobs, volunteer work, hobbies—anything that reflects how a student spends their time.”

Some of the most compelling stories, she notes, come from part-time jobs or everyday experiences that reveal character, confidence and personal growth.

Start early, reduce stress, build pride

For students and families, the most important step is simply getting started. By exploring interests, trying new activities and keeping track of experiences along the way, students can gradually build a résumé while developing valuable time-management skills. Starting early and staying proactive helps prevent last-minute stress.

McIntyre agrees. While building and updating her résumé may not be the most exciting project she has worked on, seeing her experiences captured in one place has become a source of pride and a reminder of the future she is building. ■



Résumé helpers

Many people in a student’s school and community network can provide guidance, encouragement and feedback when building a résumé:

- High school teachers and guidance counsellors
- Career studies teachers and co-op education advisors
- College and university career services staff
- Professors and academic advisers
- Education consultants and career coaches
- Family members, peer mentors, community or volunteer leaders—JS

FROM LEFT: ANTONIODIAZ; POLINA TOMTOSOVA / STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Skilled trades

Résumés are often associated with academic pathways, but they are also commonly requested for students exploring the skilled trades. Katherine

McIntyre, a university student in Ontario, explains that her younger brother, currently in high school, needed a résumé when applying for a co-op work placement in carpentry. Résumés help showcase

previous work experience, hands-on skills and reliability, allowing students to present their abilities and interests to potential employers and apprenticeship programs.—JS