

Writing Strong Resume Bullet Points: Research Industry

Turn experiences into impact using the SAR method

What do employers look for in this industry?

Effective resumes in this industry highlight measurable results such as new knowledge generated, evidence-informed recommendations, improved research methods, or contributions to policy, practice, or innovation. Overall, this handout will help you write strong accomplishment statements for roles in academic, government, and applied research settings.

Tip: Remember to [customize your resume](#) by incorporating keywords from the job description. For additional guidance on formatting and structure, review our [Resume/CV templates](#).

SAR Method: Core Framework

- ✓ Your resume must contain concise bullet points to describe your experiences
- ✓ SAR statements effectively outline your accomplishments in a simple, informative way

What is SAR?

S = Situation: What was the context? (e.g., problems you encountered or tasks you took on)

A = Action: What did you specifically do? (e.g., use a strong past-tense [action verb](#))

R = Result: What changed because of your actions? (e.g., improvements or outcomes)

Note: When formatting a resume bullet point, the sequence should be Action + Situation + Result. Also, try to incorporate numbers, percentages, or dollar amounts to further demonstrate your impact.

A weak example for a summer internship could be:

- Assisted with data collection for a health promotion research project

A strong example for a summer internship using the SAR method could be:

- Reviewed 60 scholarly sources and survey data from 80 participants, identifying sedentary behaviour patterns that informed physical activity recommendations

How the SAR Method was implemented:

ACTION: Reviewed

SITUATION: 60 scholarly sources and survey data from 80 participants,

RESULT: identifying sedentary behaviour patterns that informed physical activity recommendations

Note: This statement includes industry-specific context and skills, clearly communicates the result or intent of the action, and incorporates numbers to strengthen its impact.

Tip: For current students, review the [Carleton Career Competencies](#) to identify the knowledge, skills, and attributes developed through your academic journey. These reflections can help articulate your employability and write stronger SAR statements.



Impact Levels: Early Experience vs Advanced Experience

This section will help you brainstorm the context of your work (Situation) and the impact of your contributions (Result), with sample examples tailored to your level of experience.

Early Experience (e.g., co-ops, placements, internships, projects, clubs, and entry-level roles)

Considerations for the Situation	Questions to Help Frame the Result
• Carleton Career Competencies (e.g., Research & Analysis, Innovation & Collaboration, or Communication) • Research activities (e.g., literature reviews, data collection, statistical analysis) • Study topics (e.g., cognition, climate change, particle physics, financial wellness)	• What outputs resulted? (e.g., # of datasets, reports, manuscripts, infographics, articles, presentations, recommendations) • What findings emerged? (e.g., trends, relationships, evidence gaps) • What technical skills were developed? (e.g., SPSS, R, laboratory methods)

Undergraduate Neuroscience Thesis: Analyzed EEG data from 25 participants, identifying 3 neural activity trends linked to visual attention and contributing to a 20-page honours thesis

Marketing Research Assistant: Collaborated with 3 professors to analyze spending patterns of 300 college students using SPSS, informing 5 recommendations about consumer behaviour

Advanced Experience (e.g., professional experience and leadership roles)

Considerations for the Situation	Questions to Help Frame the Result
• Research leadership initiatives (e.g., funding proposals, longitudinal studies, clinical trials, program evaluations) • Research priorities (e.g., knowledge gaps, innovation, commercialization) • Research partners (e.g., universities, hospitals, government funders)	• What research outputs were achieved? (e.g., # of publications, grants, patents, policy briefs, public recommendations, implications) • How were the findings applied? (e.g., better healthcare delivery, policy changes) • What scholarly recognition resulted? (e.g., citations, conference presentations)

Experimental Psychologist: Led a \$20K-funded controlled trial evaluating personalized music therapy for patients with dementia, demonstrating a 30% improvement in social interactions

Criminologist: Analyzed 12,000 residential break-ins, identifying burglary risk factors that informed prevention strategies and producing 8 publications cited over 350 times

Other ways to show impact if you do not know exact numbers

- **Scope** (e.g., approximate # of participants, datasets): Conducted interviews with 30+ families, identifying service gaps that informed a public health program evaluation
- **Scale** (e.g., size of team, institutional reach): Co-presented neutrino oscillation research with 10 physicists from 3 universities at the WNPP Conference, advancing knowledge exchange with 200+ attendees
- **Quality Improvements** (e.g., accuracy, consistency, reliability, efficiency): Enhanced data validation procedures, improving dataset accuracy prior to statistical analysis

Tip: Begin [tracking data](#) to incorporate stronger metrics into future SAR statements.

