Writing Strong Resume Bullet Points: Science, Lab, Research, & Development Industries

Turn experiences into impact using the SAR method

What do employers look for in these industries?

Effective resumes in these industries highlight measurable results such as improved data quality, informed research initiatives, or successful product development. Overall, this handout will help you write strong accomplishment statements for roles in science, laboratory, and R&D.

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 the laboratory experiments and data collection

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

- Processed 60 biological samples using PCR and microscopy, obtaining usable results from 90% of samples for inflammatory disease research

How the SAR Method was implemented:

ACTION: Processed

SITUATION: 60 biological samples using PCR and microscopy,

RESULT: obtaining usable results from 90% of samples for inflammatory disease research

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., Innovation & Collaboration, Research & Analysis, or Communication) • **Scientific objectives** (e.g., sample collection, materials testing, prototyping) • **Methods, tools, or software used** (e.g., PCR, chromatography, MATLAB, R, Python)	• **What measurable outputs were produced?** (e.g., # of samples processed, reports completed) • **What findings emerged?** (e.g., trends identified, baseline data generated) • **What skills did you build?** (e.g., scientific writing, microscopy, research design)

Neuroscience Lab Assignment: Examined EEG data from 25 participants, identifying 3 neural activity trends associated with visual attention for a 20-page research report

Research Assistant for Campus Photonics Lab: Analyzed optical performance data in MATLAB, identifying signal-loss patterns that improved accuracy by 15%

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

Considerations for the Situation	Questions to Help Frame the Result
• **Scientific challenges** (e.g., product development, quality concerns, contamination risks) • **Constraints or resources** (e.g., timelines, instrumentation, grant funding, budgets) • **Stakeholders involved** (e.g., engineers, regulatory specialists, manufacturing)	• **What milestones were reached?** (e.g., # of articles published, products launched, methods validated, funding renewed) • **What performance gains occurred?** (e.g., reliability, consistency, fewer adverse effects) • **What broader impacts resulted?** (e.g., regulatory readiness, commercialization)

Principal Investigator: Directed biotechnology research developing novel therapeutics, securing $2.5M, publishing 8 articles, and advancing 3 candidates to preclinical testing

Senior Physicist: Led technical analyses for industrial clients, developing 10 recommendations that reduced energy consumption by 18% across 5 production facilities

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

- **Scope** (e.g., approximate # of samples, experiments, reports): Conducted analytical testing on 100-125 aquatic samples, supporting evidence-based water quality testing
- **Scale** (e.g., size of team, lab, program): Managed data collection and research reporting across 4 university food science labs, reducing inconsistencies in research submissions
- **Quality Improvements** (e.g., increased reproducibility, compliance, safety): Optimized formulation parameters for an investigational medication, improving tolerability and minimizing side effects during preclinical development

Tip: Begin tracking data to incorporate stronger metrics into future SAR statements.