



## Nontraditional Students – How to Address an Employment Gap

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 73 percent of undergraduate college students are nontraditional. This percentage is based on a student falling into one or more of the following categories: being a part time student, are 25 years or older, working full time, being financially independent, one who didn't immediately continue education after graduating from high school, one who has children or dependents other than their spouse, being a single parent and/or having a GED rather than a high school diploma. Nontraditional students commonly experience life events that lead to gaps in employment (e.g., personal illness or injury, delaying or withdrawing from college because of financial hardship), adding to the challenge of writing a resume. This tip sheet addresses how to explain such gaps and clarifies what is appropriate to share.



### Explaining the Gap

The key is to be honest and upfront on your resume in a professional manner without getting too personal. For example, if the gap stems from a personal injury or is due to being a caretaker for a family member, avoid divulging specific details about the illness or injury on your resume. Instead, the statement should briefly acknowledge the gap and emphasize your interest in returning to work.

When formatting your resume use reverse chronological order versus a functional style. You may be inclined to use a functional or skills resume to hide gaps in your employment; however, most employers are not fond of that format. To help fill the gaps take into consideration any part-time employment, volunteer experience or courses you took during those time periods. Each are valuable experiences to include on your resume and offer a great opportunity to market the career readiness competencies (CRCs) you've developed. Refer to the Are You Career Ready? tip sheet for an overview of the CRCs. Described below are three strategies to address your employment gap(s). Regardless of which strategy you choose, make sure you make the connection between your skills and the employer's needs. It's helpful to compare your resume to a description of the position you desire to evaluate how well you are making that connection.

1. By adding a brief statement to your Professional Summary, you quickly alert the employer to why there is a gap in your employment. Professional summaries are most helpful for experienced professionals who want to demonstrate how their experience and skills from a variety of past roles apply to a specific type of position. It is not appropriate to list a Professional Summary on a traditional college student's resume.

**Scarlet N. Gray**

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**Professional Summary**

- Motivated and enthusiastic team player/leader with exceptional communication skills and the ability to build relationships.
- Skilled presenter able to understand and convey information to audiences of all sizes in a manner that is appealing and well understood.
- Developed and designed product-marketing plans and program strategies for prospective business owners, property management and customers.
- Eager to return to the workforce after 6 years of being fully engaged as a stay-at-home parent

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2. The second example displays how experience as a stay-at-home parent or caregiver can be listed as an “occupation” on your resume. Briefly mention the reason for the gap and include a couple of notable contributions that you accomplished during that time period. This option can also be used if you’re applying for a job where your skills and experience as a stay-at-home parent or caretaker are highly applicable, such as working with children or in human services.

<b>Stay at Home Parent</b>	July 2017 – present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eager to return to the workforce after taking a two-year leave of absence from my career to nurture the development of two, pre-K children</li> <li>Maintained membership with the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) in order to remain engaged and aware of the latest industry trends</li> <li>Active member of the PTA, selected as membership chair based on demonstrated use of effective leadership and communication skills</li> </ul>	

3. The final example is an appropriate alternative if you’re not comfortable listing your experience as a stay-at-home parent or caretaker on your resume. Use your cover letter to acknowledge the gap and address your desire to re-enter the workforce while also describing your experience and the skills that you have to offer the employer.

<p><b>Scarlet N. Gray</b> 1885 Neil Avenue, Apt. H • Columbus, Ohio 43201 • buckeye.1@osu.edu • 614.777.0001</p> <hr/> <p>Dear Mr. Brown, As a polished customer service professional offering 5+ years of comprehensive client care, I am ready to seek new challenges and opportunities. After taking a two-year leave of absence to serve as a caregiver for an elderly family member, I am eager to transition back into a customer service role with a high performing organization.</p>
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Regardless of which strategy you use to address the gap, the key is to not simply explain why but to also focus on the skills you developed during that time. If you took online courses, obtained a certification or professional license, were a freelance writer, volunteered or had a part-time job, include those experiences on your resume. The content and sections you choose to organize the content is up to you. Beyond the Education and Experience sections there are a variety of others to consider. Examples include “Course Projects,” “Specialized Training & Skills,” and “Professional License & Certification” sections. Include the section(s) that allow you to effectively display the strongest qualifications you have related to the employer’s needs. Check out the resume sample on the following pages for additional ideas for what to include in your resume.

You are also encouraged to meet with a Career Coach who can offer resume feedback and provide guidance related to your career goals. Schedule your appointment by logging into .

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**PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY**

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- Committed to improving the lives of children, families and communities.
- Offer over 9 years of human service and education experience.
- Experience working with people from a variety of age groups, cultures, education levels and professional backgrounds.
- History of assessing customers' needs and creating the most effective action plan.
- Eager to return to the workforce after a 5-year leave of absence to raise a family.

**EXPERIENCE**

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**Stay at Home Parent – Notable Contributions**

July 2014 – present

- Maintain membership with the Human Service Chamber of Franklin County in order to remain engaged and aware of the issues that impact human service agencies
- Active member of the PTA, selected as membership chair based on demonstrated use of effective leadership and communication skills
- Sought continuing education opportunities and secured relevant training and certifications

**Directions for Youth & Families – Outreach Counseling Program**

**Columbus, OH**

*School Counselor*

May 2012 – July 2014

- Motivated students to have a positive approach towards studies
- Delivered lectures on personality development and arranged group discussion programs
- Developed positive relationships with students, staff, and parents
- Collaborated with school staff to recommend full assessments from a school psychologist
- Supervision was based on multi-generational, family systems, object relations, and psychodynamic concepts
- Made appropriate referrals and filed CPS reports as needed

**North Central Mental Health Services, Inc.**

**Columbus, OH**

*Care Coordinator*

Jan 2010 – May 2012

- Contributed to management team activities on a regular basis
- Assisted in establishment of consistent service policies and procedures
- Oversaw coordination of a variety of community outreach programs
- Maintained and updated client activity records as required
- Assisted with evaluations and assessments conducted by the therapists

**Capital University – Admissions & Retention Office**

**Columbus, OH**

*Program Manager*

April 2006 – June 2008

- Supervised student case load management (assessed the progression, retention, completion and re-entry of students)
- Remained in contact with former students through emails and phone calls at regular intervals to stay informed of their career growth
- Monitored data integrity management systems for registration, demographic and communication history of students
- Updated database of current and former students

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**St. Vincent Family Center**

**Columbus, OH**

*Therapist Trainee*

Jan 2004 – Nov 2005

- Led youth leader group covering concepts such as self-esteem to reinforce and support patients' treatment progress
- Monitored patients' activities and behaviors while also mentoring and providing emotional support
- Completed necessary paperwork and effectively communicated with staff to ensure the safety and proper treatment of the youth

**EDUCATION**

**The Ohio State University**

**Columbus, OH**

Master of Arts in Educational Studies, Counselor Education

June 2005

GPA: 3.4

Bachelor of Arts, Major in Sociology

June 2003

GPA: 3.7

**SPECIALIZED TRAINING & SKILLS**

*Nonprofit Management Certificate, Columbus State Community College*

June 2011

*Social and Community Services Certificate, Capella University*

June 2013

City of Columbus, Training and Development Courses: *Business Writing,*

June 2012-14

*Assertive Communication, PowerPoint Presentations: Scripting & Narrating Your Presentation*

**PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

Membership in American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

April 2004 – present

- Earned Anxiety and Stress Management Specialist designation

Sept 2007

Membership in Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling (ACAC)

Feb 2004 – present

**CERTIFICATIONS & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

CPR Certification – American Red Cross

March 2009

Habitat for Humanity Volunteer

April 2017 - present

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