

How to describe your study abroad experience

Your time living abroad is probably one of the most transformative experiences of your life - document it on applications and plan how you'll describe it in a job interview.

Resumes

For your resume, you have three basic choices of where you can list study abroad experience:

1. Education section

This is appropriate to highlight the program or specific courses that you completed. Include the city, country, date and whether it was with a university or some other program.

University of Vermont BS Computer Engineering	Burlington, Vermont May 2024
Reykjavik University One semester in the School of Computer Sciences program Relevant coursework: <i>Deep Learning, Computer Networks</i>	Reykjavik, Iceland Aug. – Dec. 2022

2. Experience section

Include your study abroad experience in this section if you did research, volunteered, or completed any other projects. Describe your duties/experience as you would a job.

Sozo Educentre <i>Tutor</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taught math lessons for a class of 15 high school students• Participated in extracurricular activities to exchange culture with high schoolers• Led workshops to increase computer literacy of first-year high school students	Cape Town, South Africa Jan. – May 2022
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3. Skills section

Include your experience here if your study abroad experience is evidence of a skill.

Computer: Python programming (1-month intensive course in Madrid, Spain)
Language: Japanese (Advanced – one year study in Fukuoka, Japan)

If you have more questions about your experience, drop by the Career Center – Davis Center, room 204 or make an appointment through uvm.joinhandshake.com



Cover Letters

Featuring your time abroad in a cover letter is a good idea if you developed skills relevant to the position to which you are applying, or you do not have a lot of other experience.

- Identify the skills that are required for the position (see box on right for examples)
- Consider how you developed these skills while abroad.
- Use specific examples – show, don't tell.
- Don't forget to connect your experience/skill to the position.

Skills to consider:

- Adaptability
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Cultural Awareness
- Independence
- Initiative
- Leadership
- Organization
- Patience
- Self-confidence
- Teamwork

Vague

My time studying in Rome improved my communication skills.



This starts with a good idea but does not give any level of depth and there is no connection to the workplace.

Better

During my semester in Rome, I became a more capable and empathetic communicator. Because my Italian was still developing, I had to focus more on what the other person was feeling and thinking to convey my meaning. Being able to see things from another person's perspective is an incredible asset as a supervisor, and it will help me establish an open and understanding relationship with my colleagues and clients.

Job Interview

In a job interview, you'll be asked different questions that could be answered with your experience abroad.

They ask...

"Tell us about yourself."

You say...

- I'm a mechanical engineering student with a passion for traveling and experiencing new cultures....
- I have been a cautious person my whole life, but recently I was forced out of my comfort zone, and I realized something about myself.

(These are just two examples, but the point is to try to connect your experience to your personality, interests, goals or points of growth.)

"Tell us about a time you had to manage a difficult situation."

-or-

"When have you had to work with a group of people?"

Use the STAR method (this can be used to describe any relevant past event)

S – Describe the **situation**

T – **Task**; what was your role?

A – What **action** did you take?

R – What was the **result**?

A direct question about your time abroad. Tell a story about how you developed a skill / gained an insight relevant to the job.