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If someone Googles “how to write a High School resume,” they will find a vast array of tips, tricks and resources from around the world. Most articles focus on the development of the resume itself, offering suggestions like “keep it concise,” or “format it professionally,” helping students with the actual technical act of putting together a resume rather than delving into what a resume truly reflects and represents.

The following tips go beyond the technical act of writing a resume and provide ideas for how a student might showcase who they are as both a learner and global citizen. Through an intentionally reflective process that spans the years of secondary school, a student can demonstrate why they are the right fit for a university and inspire an admissions team to determine, “Yes, this is someone we want to join us!”

Be true to oneself

High school students often wonder, “What do college admissions officers want to see on my resume?” What they want to see is a unique and interesting individual. Secondary School is an important time to discover one’s interests, skills and talents and uncover what one values and how they want to contribute to the world. Rather than trying to engage in experiences that look good on paper, students should focus on the experiences that immerse them in a feeling of energised focus.

Focus on quality over quantity

It’s okay for a secondary school student to not fully know what their passions are or what they want to do in the future, and instead to show a range of different interests and experiences in the university application process. It’s important, though, to be intentional about what one includes and why. Rather than compiling the longest possible list of every different activity, committee and club a student has been involved in, highlight experiences that have been personally fulfilling.

Express a journey

College admissions officers know that high school is a time of exploration. Through the creation of a resume, a student can express the journey that they’ve been on, choosing examples of what they have done that collectively tell the story of who they are as learners and community members. If a student has stopped doing something, they should be prepared to explain why. Likewise, if they have started something new, they should share how it has contributed to their growth.

Demonstrate one’s contributions

How will a university applicant be a positive influence on a new community? Will they be someone who works well with others and contributes to a future college or university? To convince university admissions teams that an applicant will be a good fit for their community, it helps to see how that individual has connected to others within their current school community and beyond. Students should share ways that they have interacted with others as a collaborator and contributor, how they have led and how they have integrated, what they have learned about teamwork and how they will apply that learning to their next setting.



Hone critical and creative thinking skills

It has become increasingly apparent that to succeed as learners and to thrive in the world of work, skills are just as, if not more, important than knowledge. Students with strong information literacy and research skills are flexible, adaptive and agile.

Individuals who can identify problems, propose innovative solutions and evaluate a range of outcomes have the capacity to contribute in dynamic and meaningful ways. Applicants who can demonstrate the ways they bring critical and creative thinking skills together will really shine.

Earn intentional credentials

There are seemingly infinite badges, workshops and assessments available for today's students to complete, earning some sort of credential in the process. Rather than taking every possible test or course, students should focus on the ones that will best highlight their academic strengths and aptitudes based on where they want to go after secondary school. By working with the adults in one's school, a student can be sure to match where they want to go with how they spend their time during and beyond the school day. At HKA, our Post-Secondary Counsellor and IBDP Coordinator work closely with students and parents to determine the academic courses and co-curricular activities that are the best fit for their future ambitions and map out a pathway to develop and emphasise the areas that will prepare a student to pursue those next steps.

Curate one's digital footprint

In today's world, a resume is only a tiny slice of what an admissions committee looks at to find out about an applicant. One quick Google search or social media check can be much more revealing than an application itself, underscoring the importance of actively managing one's social media presence and digital footprint. This also means that students can effectively leverage social media to tell their story in a positive way. If a school provides opportunities for students to create online portfolios, like the Global Citizen Diploma we have here at HKA, these digital spaces can complement and strengthen the formal resume submitted through the university application process.



Hong Kong Academy is a non-profit, through-train school offering a rigorous, student-centered education for children aged 3 to 18 years. The school was founded on the belief that all children bring a unique set of talents and strengths to their learning, with HKA providing a personalised approach that recognises this and encourages all students to reach their full potential.

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Hong Kong Academy is a through train IB World school offering a rigorous, student-centred education for children aged 3-18 years.

Our highly qualified faculty and award-winning sustainable campus provide a safe and inspiring environment in which students are encouraged to reach their full potential and contribute to their communities. Join our open houses or connect with us on campus to experience the HKA difference and discover how your child could benefit from our exceptional educational programmes.