

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE RESUME

What is a Resume? A resume is a one (or two) page summary of your skills, education, and experience. The resume acts much like an advertisement for a company trying to sell something. The resume is your advertisement. Lead with your **STRENGTHS**; with a focus on experiences, education and skills that will be of greatest interest to the employer. Make it easy for an employer to see that you are a qualified candidate who should be invited for an interview. Plan to spend a good deal of time creating, proofreading, editing, and **perfecting** your resume. A solid resume should be honest and verifiable, targeted and results oriented. Don't cheat yourself...work hard on it.

How long do employers typically look at a resume?

- A. Less than 30 seconds
- B. 3 Minutes
- C. 1 Minute

If you answered "A", you are correct. Employers often receive hundreds of resumes for a single position. They do not have time to read line by line; instead they scan for industry or occupation specific **KEYWORDS** and related experiences. This increases the importance of tailoring your resume to fit the needs of the position; leading with your strengths.

What should be included in a resume? Not all resumes are the same, but there are some common elements that they all should include. The necessary elements are:

Heading - Your heading should include the essential personal information. Your formal name (in a slightly larger font) should appear at the top and it should stand out above all else on the paper. You want them to remember who you are in less than 30 seconds. Also include your street address, city, state, zip code, phone number and email address.

Objective - It is generally one or two concise, easy-to-read statements focusing on the type of position you are seeking, the skills you want to use, and/or the tasks in which you want to become involved. Your objective should be specific. If you are applying for different types of jobs, change your objective to match each type of job. If you are uncertain about the specific positions available, note your areas of interest.

Education - List in reverse chronological order, include your degree, major, school, city, state and graduation date (or expected graduation). When applying for positions related to your major, you may want to include a section titled "Related Coursework." In this section, you can list classes that might contribute to your employability, highlight skills gained and related class projects.

- Include your overall or major GPA if it is a 3.0 or higher.
- You can also list study abroad experiences and education-related honors in this section.

Experience - Reverse chronological order is expected, but if you have a mixture of experiences, you can break this into two categories, such as "Related Experience" and "Work History" in order to group related items together. Be sure to include job title, company name, city, state and dates of employment (month/year format) for each experience.

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- Use bulleted statements that begin with **POWER VERBS** to provide details of your accomplishments and responsibilities rather than a general list of duties.
- Include information and skills that relate to the position you are seeking (use position description as a guide)
- Consolidate information when possible; avoid repetition and excessive details in describing experiences.
- Do not use personal pronouns like “I” in descriptions.
- Do not be discouraged if you have never had employment in your field. Instead, focus on your strengths, skills, and accomplishments.

Community Involvement- Employers like to see people who have been involved in school or community activities. In this section, list special activities you participated in and organizations you joined (positions held & accomplishments.). Include the years in which you participated.

- Include hobbies and interests **ONLY** if they are relevant to your objective or if they reveal characteristics important to the job.

Skills - This section is used to highlight special skills you have related to specific computer hardware or software, programming languages, fluency in a foreign language(s), or machinery required for performance on the job. You could also group “Certifications” in this category.

References-It is not necessary to include “References Available Upon Request” at the end of your resume.

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How do I set up a resume? Your resume should be divided into distinct sections. The italicized words above are typical section headings. Headings should stand out as boldfaced, larger text. Here are some suggested headings:

Typical Headings: Objective, Education, Employment History/Work Experience, Leadership Skills, Community Involvement, Professional Associations, Computer Skills, Related Coursework

Additional Headings (to be used if appropriate): Internship Experience/Related Experience, Technical Skills, Certifications, Extracurricular Activities, Highlights of Qualifications, Honors/Awards, Projects, Summary of Qualifications, Volunteer Experience

Should items be arranged in any particular order? Yes! You want your resume to be coherently organized. There are two distinct types of resumes. Traditional college students tend to utilize a **Chronological Format**. The chronological style is exactly what it sounds like: It follows your work history backward from your current job, listing employers, dates, and job responsibilities. This is the format that you would most likely use if you are new to the workforce and have limited experience. For someone who is transitioning into another career field, the **Functional/Combination Format** is more useful. A functional resume focuses on transferable

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skills. (Visit the Center for Career Development for more information on functional/combo formats)

Should I place Education above Experience or vice versa? Most college students include the Education section directly after the Objective. However, if you have experience that relates directly to the job you are applying for, you should place the Experience section above Education. (What would be more attractive to the employer?)

How important is the format? The importance of the format lies in its consistency. It should be easy to read and demonstrate your organizational abilities. Remember this is your marketing tool, it should not be identical to anyone else's. (Visit the Center for Career Development for formatting ideas)

Can I use the templates found in Microsoft? We highly discourage the use of resume templates. Your resume will lack originality and potentially look like everyone else's. In addition, it can be very difficult to add new sections to the pre-existing templates due to the use of tables.

Should I use complete sentences when describing my experiences? Use fragments that begin with action phrases; avoid long narratives. Leave out unnecessary words. Try to match your skills and experience with the employer's needs (refer to job description).

Do looks really matter? Absolutely! When sending a resume to an employer or college, don't skimp. Use white or off-white professional weight paper and black ink. Avoid using colored paper or fancy graphics in your resume unless the job you are applying for is in a career area that might stress this type of formatting (art, graphic design, advertising, etc.) Always print resumes using a quality laser printer. *Note: When sending resumes electronically, pdf. versions are highly recommended.

RESUME TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Final hiring decisions are rarely based solely upon the resume. The resume is your marketing tool that will get you an interview. The resume should be a concise, factual, and verifiable. It should be a positive reflection of your education, employment history, and accomplishments.
2. **Sell yourself!** Create a good first impression by highlighting skills and abilities appropriate to the position. If you don't sell yourself, your resume will stay in the pile with all of the others. Separate yourself!
3. Make sure your resume is **PERFECT!** It only takes one error in spelling, punctuation, or grammar to cause an employer to stop reading. Ask people to proofread your resume. Spell check does not catch proper names, homophones, or homonyms. Go over it with a fine tooth comb.
4. Use at least ½ inch margins around the page and blank lines between sections to make all the information easier to read. Choose a professional font like Times New Roman, at least 11 point font size and avoid overuse of italics, bold, and underlining.
5. If you have limited work experience, you will want to emphasize your accomplishments in and out of the classroom. Volunteer activities, community involvement, sports, honor roll, and student organizations are things that help define who you are and should be highlighted. List only recent honors and awards unless they are specifically relevant to the position for which you are applying.
6. Use quantifiable measures, values, percentages, measurable outcomes, to enhance your qualifications (i.e., indicate age range of children, number of staff members that you train or supervise, the amount of your budget, how much your organization raised)
7. Present your job objective in a manner that relates both to the company and the job description.
8. Tell the truth and nothing but the truth! Employers will pick up on "little" white lies when they interview you.
9. Choose your words carefully. In a resume, you need to sound positive and confident, neither too aggressive nor overly modest. Do not use "I." Each description of your responsibilities should begin with a verb. (refer to list of Power Verbs)
10. Resumes should be sent to a person by name. Avoid sending the resume to a job title such as "Production Manager." It will take an extra effort, but do your research and find out the name and title of the appropriate person to whom your resume should be sent.
11. Always include a cover letter when submitting your resume.
12. Do not staple or fold your resume. (List your name, telephone number, email address & page 2 of 2 on second page)

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13. When applying for a job with an employment application you may want to attach your resume. The resume will add impact and should complement the application. If you are asked to fill out an application, never write on it "See resume." Take the time to fill out the application completely.
14. Finally, **Follow-up, Follow-up, Follow-up!** It is no use mailing resumes if you do not take the time to follow up on your efforts. If you are not getting responses or interviews from your resume, you may want to reevaluate it. The true test of an effective resume is that you are invited to interview.