



Preparing your resume

The purpose of a resume

- **A marketing tool:** designed to capture attention and get you to the next stage in the recruitment process. It presents the skills, accomplishments and qualifications that you bring to a potential employer.
- **Key component:** it is the first essential tool in the job search process. The resume is the first introduction a hiring manager will have of you. You want them to feel drawn in and motivated to invite you in for an interview.
- **Written inventory:** the resume is an inventory of your skills, accomplishments, experiences and education to date. It should be customized and targeted for each individual position.
- **Getting an interview:** this is your ultimate goal with a resume – it tells the hiring manager that you have the necessary experience, skills and education.

The function of a resume

The function of a resume is to give prospective employers enough information about you so that they will invite you for an interview. In order to write it effectively, you need to focus on how your skills and experiences directly relate to the position you are applying for. Request the detailed staff position description from the contact listed on the job advertisement, it will help you to tailor your resume. Your resume is the first impression that recruiters and hiring managers will have of you – time and effort on your part can be a very worthwhile investment so your resume should address the following:

Clear: Whoever reads your resume should have a clear understanding of who you are, what skills you possess, your accomplishments and the career path you have chosen up to this point.

Concise: There should be a reason why every word is on your resume. Are there redundant phrases? Review your resume and determine if all the content is indeed making you a stronger candidate.

Consistent: If your resume is in a consistent format, your readers will be focusing on what you have written, not how you have written it. Is your resume visually easy on the eyes? Make sure that you have ample white space on your resume; the resume should be inviting to read.

Make it easy to find out what you are good at: For most people, this is the most challenging part of your resume. If you don't market yourself on your resume, the reader won't be able to read between the lines. Focus on your achievements, strengths and skills. The more you work on your resume, the more that you will learn and understand about your own strengths and skills. You will be more comfortable articulating those skills and experiences in an interview situation.

Questions to ask before writing your resume

- What is your purpose in writing a resume? Are you changing jobs in the same career area or are you changing careers? It will make a difference in how you organize your resume.
- What type of job are you seeking? It can help to have a specific objective or use the position to craft a targeted resume.
- What type of person and experience are required for the job? You can find this information through research, informational interviewing and networking.
- What skills and abilities do you have to offer an employer and what ones will you stress? Focus on those that support the experience and qualities they are seeking that is specific to the position.

Choosing your resume format

There is no specific resume format that is best for everyone. Choose a style that is best for you. Although there are many variations, most resumes can be categorized into three main types:

The chronological resume

What is it?	It is the most traditional format and is appropriate when looking for a position that is a logical step in your career.
What does it do?	It arranges your work experience chronologically starting with the most recent and working backwards.
What do you do?	Relate your work experience to the targeted position. Demonstrate a logical progression towards your career goals or current objective.
When is it most effective?	When you are seeking a position in the same field, can demonstrate measureable results and have no obvious gaps in your work history.

The functional resume

What it is?	This type of resume emphasizes skills and accomplishments. Dates of employment and specific jobs are downplayed. Skill areas are the focus of the resume, particular areas such as writing, managing, research, communication and others are highlighted.
What does it do?	It covers up gaps on your resume or pulls together unrelated experiences effectively.
What do you do?	The focus is on how well you perform and how you can transfer skills to other areas.
When is it most effective?	If you are considering a career change, have been employed by the same company for a very long time, have held several disconnected positions, or are returning to work after an extended period of time. This type of resume is not as familiar to employers so be confident that this is the best method to showcase your skills.

The chronological and functional resume combination

What is it?	It combines the features of the skills based and reverse chronological resume, giving an orderly account of your employment history.
What does it do?	It gives an orderly account of your employment history, but does not categorize them.
What do you do?	Organize your accomplishments by function and draw on your experiences.

When is it most effective?	This format helps you to clearly show how well you perform while giving an account of the progression of your career.
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Organization of your resume

Present your accomplishments: it should show how well you perform rather than just presenting descriptions of previous jobs that you have held. What skills have I developed and how did I use them?

Meet the needs of employers: it should be targeted to the position. It should focus what you have to offer the employer and how you will meet their needs – not just on what you want.

Major strengths: it should describe your major strengths and potential. What do I do best and what do I want to do in my next job?

Unique talent: it shows your unique talent and should be both interesting and enticing enough for the employer to want to meet you in person.

Interesting: the resume should be an interesting read rather than a challenging one.

Consider the following questions as you detail your job experiences

Why and how is this job different than all other jobs?

What did you accomplish or achieve?

Qualify or quantify whatever you have accomplished. Did you work autonomously or did you just take direction? What distinguishes you from your colleagues? Have your ideas been put into practice? Have you been designated to train new employees? Do co-workers ask your advice? Have you spearheaded major projects?

What were your major responsibilities?

Think about how you might articulate this in an interview or in conversation with someone, it might flow onto paper easier if you talk about it first.

What new skills or knowledge did you acquire?

Many work experiences that may not have been in the traditional sense of formal work experience but have honed your transferable skills can supplement your professional positions. You can include full time, part time, seasonal volunteer work, internships, consulting and freelance work. The point is not whether you were paid, but what you accomplished.

Which information should you include?

Name of your employer, location, your job title, dates of employment and a description of what you achieved. You may want to include a brief description of the organization if relevant.

Sections of a resume

Contact information: Be sure that this is current and should include your address, phone numbers and email address.

Profile summary/summary of qualifications vs. objective: The profile summary is an opportunity for the applicant to showcase their content based skills at the top of their resume. It is a snapshot of what you consider to be your most marketable skills. It captures the essence of your transferable skills from previous positions not mentioned on the resume. It is particularly useful for experienced job seekers and those who need a coherent opening statement to tie together diverse work experiences.

Work experience: You can choose a format to detail these descriptions. Use bullets or paragraph format and try to consolidate skill sets into bullets. Use action verbs and quantify experience to convey size and/or scale of projects. This will make a stronger impression and convey your “value added” contribution to the department.

Education: Your education should be on the end of your resume. If you are currently pursuing a degree then this a good place to put candidate for and year that you will receive the degree. If you completed non degree or professional development courses then you can also put them under this heading or a sub heading titled Professional Development.

Technical skills: This section may not be essential for all positions and your reference to technical expertise may be detailed in your project descriptions. If you do choose to detail your technical skills, it should list the software applications that you are familiar with.

Professional associations and memberships: In this section, you can mention professional development courses, volunteer experiences, committees that you serve on, your professional affiliations, community and professional involvement, awards and publications and presentations.

Tips for an effective resume

Formatting: Use plenty of white space on your resume, this will make it easier for the reader and will showcase your skill set more effectively. Locate the most important information on the left hand side of the page e.g. dates should be on the right as position and organization are more important. Be consistent with your formatting.

Action verbs: These are important in detailing your work experience. There is a list of action verbs in the Resume Builder module of [OptimalResume](#).

Content: Describe specific responsibilities and support all activities and responsibilities with results and accomplishments. Use present tense in describing current job. All previous positions are described in the past tense. Organize your descriptions according to function and do not keep repeating yourself throughout the resume.

Keywords: Keywords are an integral part of your resume. Consider use of them. Check job descriptions and try to use this language on your resume.

Critique your resume: Have an objective reader look over your resume to proofread it for content, grammatical and typing errors.

Resume "do nots"

- Do not use abbreviations. Use professional and technical information when it is relevant.
- Do not list references; reserve them for the interview or follow-up activities.
- Do not include personal data, marital status, number of children, health information or hobbies.
- Do not devote more space to earlier jobs than to more recent employment. Employers are interested in most recent, relevant experience.
- Do not leave gaps between employment dates. List jobs by month and year, rather than by year to year. Briefly state a good reason for the gap, e.g. returned to school full time, worked on temporary jobs or left career for personal responsibilities.