How to Create A Winning Resume

What is a Resume?

A resume is a document used to introduce yourself to employer and market your skills, accomplishments, and educational background relevant to the position. On average, employers spend only **7-20 seconds** reviewing a resume, so it is important to create a document that aligns your best qualifications with the position you are seeking.

Resume Formats

Chronological: Showcases your education, activities, and work history. Highlights your most recent experiences first, followed by additional information in reverse chronological order.

Functional: Draws attention to key skills, lessening the emphasis on dates of graduation or employment. Typically used by those with diverse work experiences or noticeable gaps in employment history.

Chrono-Functional or Combination: Maintains the emphasis on skills and notable accomplishments, including a brief section outlining work history and employment.

Note: See our "Anita A. Jobb" resume example handout which is appropriate for graduating seniors. Check with Career Center staff for additional examples related to your field of study.

What to Include

Your resume should clearly and concisely highlight your most valuable experience to your employer. The following sections can be used to categorize your qualifications, work history, and activities (necessary information in bold):

- **Demographic information** (name, address, phone, email, web address, etc.)
- Objective, Summary of Skills, or Professional Qualifications (optional)
- **Education**
- GPA (only 3.0 or higher recommended)
- Study Abroad Experience
- Relevant Coursework
- **Work History** (can divide into Relevant and Other)
- Internship Experience
- Special Skills
- Technical Skills
- Languages
- Certifications
- Interests (if relevant to the position)
- Professional Organizations
- Honors and Awards
- Availability
- Geographic Preference
- Leadership Experience
- Community Service

Hint: Use the job description to determine the most important qualifications for the position!

The Career Center's **Correspondence Review Service** allows you to leave your resume to be edited by staff within 24-72 business hours.

Resume Layout

- Use a standard font, such as Times New Roman or Arial
- Use 10-12 pt. font for the body
- Enlarge your name so that it stands out (14-16 pt.)
- Use bold or italics to highlight key information
- Organize your information consistently throughout the document; you can use either bullets or paragraph style
- Create an uncluttered layout, with white space remaining
- Set your margins to a maximum of 1", but no less than .5"

Is a CV Appropriate?

In the US, a Curriculum Vita is used in academic and medical careers instead of a resume. The main difference is that the CV is much more comprehensive, whereas resumes focus on the most relevant qualifications only. See our CV handouts for guidance. Start off by brainstorming for what should be included and then make an appointment to have an advisor critique it. Alternatively, you can drop it off at the front desk for our drop off critique service. Visit the Chronicle of Higher Education CV Doctor (chronicle.com) for sample CV's for different fields.

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The Do's

1. Place your strongest material in the two-inch visual space that begins about 2 5/8 inches from the top of your resume. Make sure you include your most impressive, impactful achievements and qualifications in this "primetime" space. It's where the reader's eyes will focus first.

2. Using the company's job description, address keywords from their description in your "summary of qualifications" section. Many companies scan their resumes and computer software does the initial screening. If certain words aren't included in an applicant's resume, they are quickly removed from the screening process.

3. Give the most weight to your most recent professional positions. The section of the resume for your most recent position should contain more bulleted accomplishments than your previous positions. For each position, rank the accomplishments in order of decreasing relevance to the employer you are targeting. Each entry should contain a minimum of two bullet points.

4. Use stats to increase your impact on the organizations you have worked for. If you reduced expenses or increased sales, discuss by what percentage. If you supervised a project, say how many were on your team. Always ask yourself how you helped the organization, and insert the numbers that demonstrate that impact.

5. Pay as much attention to your resume's design as you do to its content. The key is to remain consistent. For instance, if you choose to bold company names, make sure you do this for each. If you italicize dates, verify that each date is italicized.

6. Include publications, patents, presentations, honors, relevant volunteer experiences, and professional licenses or certifications in your resume, particularly if they are relevant to the position you seek. These "extras" can sometimes be the factor that wins you the interview.

7. Be sure to edit your resume. Many of our employers tell us they will allow only one mistake on a resume. If a resume contains two mistakes, they are quickly removed from consideration. Some employers say they do not allow any mistakes. For this reason, it's never too careful to have your work reviewed by your peers, faculty, and the Career Center Staff.

8. Place your education after your experience if you've been in the workforce for more than five years. If the degree you earned is the most relevant or impressive detail of your education section, highlight it. If the school you attended is the selling point, emphasize it.

9. Most employers will ask for a one-page resume. However, it is okay to have two if you can demonstrate related work experience, transferable skills, and campus involvement. Once you've been in the workforce for a period of time, your resume will be expected to grow in length.

10. When submitting resumes via e-mail, always submit in pdf. form to "lock in" your formatting. If you are asked to submit it to resume screening software, remove all of your formatting by saving the document in a .txt file (plain text) or .rtf (rich text format) before copying and pasting it on the application website.

The Don'ts

1. Never lie or falsify previous position titles or length of employment. This is good cause for termination of employment.

2. Never use the same resume for every job you apply to. Remember, employers are looking for specifics items unique to their company and job. Be sure you address those items in your resume. Tailor each resume to meet that company's expectations.

3. Don't use pronouns ("I") or articles ("a," "the").

4. Don't provide personal data. Marital status, date of birth, height/weight, and similar non-work-related information can be used to illegally discriminate against applicants, and they rarely add anything of value to your qualifications.

5. Don't repeat the same action words throughout the resume. (See our "Active and Descriptive Words" Handout for a cheat sheet.)

6. Make sure your dates are accurate. Employers routinely call Human Resources offices to verify an applicant's length of employment. If you have doubts, contact HR and check your dates before including them on your resume.

7. Don't use more detail than you need to convey your accomplishments. If an employer sees paragraph-sized bullet points, they generally will not read them. A good rule of thumb is to limit each bullet to one to two lines of text with three to five accomplishments for each position.

8. Don't make your resume a list of your job duties — make it a list of your accomplishments! Weave your job responsibilities into your descriptions of your accomplishments.

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