

HOW TO WRITE A RESUME THAT GETS RESULTS

- The task of the **resume** is to get you an **interview**. It's the task of the **interview** to get the **job offer**.
- A **resume is an advertising tool** with you as the product. **It is not an autobiography.**
- Your resume should be **targeted** towards the type of position you are applying for.
- Your resume should answer the following questions the employer will have:
 1. Who are you and where can I reach you? = Identifying information
 2. What type of job are you looking for? = Objective
 3. What can you do for us? = Summary of Qualifications/Summary of Skills
 4. Where have you gained work experience? = Work History
 5. What you have learned? = Education

Before you can sit down to write the resume itself, you will need to do some **preliminary work**:

Step 1: You will need to jog your memory, so you will remember what you did and where you did it. Create a **time line** of your life, starting with the first job you ever held, until the present time. Include non-paid activities such as volunteer jobs, internships and positions held in school and other organizations.

Step 2: Write a **job sketch** for all these activities. List all major duties and responsibilities. List a brief description of special projects. Make an analysis of results you achieved. An easy way to accomplish this task is to use 3X5 index cards. On the front, list the employer, your supervisor's name, the company address and phone number, your job title and the dates you worked there. On the back of the card you will write your job sketch. You can also create a "master copy" on your computer. (Print a copy in case of computer crashes). By doing this, you will have a permanent record of your work life. After you have completed steps 1 and 2 once, you can keep adding to your bio as you develop new skills and experience.

Step 3: Strategize on what to include and what not to include on your resume. See page 3 of this handout.

Formatting your resume

There are two basis formats for resume writing: a **chronological** resume emphasizes your work history; a **functional** resume highlights your skills and abilities. Which type you use depends on your circumstances.

The **chronological** format is the most widely known and used format. It is organized by dates of employment in reverse chronological order, starting with your current or most recent employer. This format focuses on your job titles and your duties and responsibilities. It works best if you have a stable employment record and are looking for a promotion or employment in a similar position. Employers prefer this type.

The **functional** format allows you to focus on what you are *capable* of doing (your functions) and downplays job titles and dates. It is organized around two or three or four of your strongest skills (for example, marketing skills, organizational skills and public relations skills). Examples of how you have used these skills are listed underneath each skill area. Employment history is still listed, but the emphasis is on your skills rather than your duties and responsibilities. This format works well for career changers, people with little paid experience and for people with large gaps in their employment. It also works well for people who have had a single employer where they performed many different functions. Note the attached examples for "Jane Smith." Using the same person and similar information, the resume on the right is an example of a chronological resume; the resume on the left is a functional one. **Employers prefer chronological resumes—if your situation allows, use the chronological format.**

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF RESUME PREPARATION

- Your resume needs to be appealing to the eye. If you were an employer, would *you* want to read it?
- Many employers prefer a one-page resume, but if you have a lot of relevant experience, they prefer readability over length. Don't cram so much information on a single page that it becomes difficult to read. Don't go over two pages, though. Use a word-processing program such as Word to compose your resume. It is best to design your own, using common resume categories, rather than using the resume templates. Make sure the text is well-distributed over the entire page. Start with margins of 1 inch around, and don't make them smaller than 0.7. Leave plenty of white space between text items. Print your resume and cover letter on high quality paper (white or cream) on a laser printer and use standard size paper.
- Use the same fonts throughout. Good fonts to use are Times New Roman, Tahoma, Garamond and Arial. Don't use "cute" or "fancy" fonts. In general, you don't want to use a point type smaller than 10 or bigger than 14. Use **bolding**, underlining and CAPS for emphasis (sparingly, however). The use of italics is discouraged because it is hard to read. Be consistent in how you use bolding and capitals. For example, if you bold a previous employer in one entry, other employers should also be bolded. Be aware of visual effects, for example, how well the different entries on your resume line up.
- Don't use personal pronouns (I, me, my). Do use ACTION VERBS and POWER WORDS instead of complete sentences. Be consistent in your verb tenses. Use the present tense only if you still hold a position; for all previous positions, use the past tense.
- Draw attention to your skills and accomplishments through the use of "bullets."
- PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD! Your resume should be completely error-free.
- Don't write the word "resume" at the top.
- Don't put personal information such as age, height, weight, marital status, etc.
- An employer expects the standard resume categories of identifying information, work history and education, and will also look for a quick summary of your qualifications and the type of work you are looking for. Be CLEAR, CONCISE AND ORGANIZED.
- You can list your education either ahead of your work experience or underneath it. The general rule is that you list your strongest assets first. For recent graduates or people still in school, this is frequently their education. You don't need to list your high school education once you have taken college-level classes.
- Don't list salary information.
- Don't list reasons for leaving jobs, and don't include names of supervisors and full addresses of previous employers.
- Have a separate "reference sheet" with names, addresses and phone numbers of your references. (Don't mail them with your resume, unless you are requested to do so, and make sure you ask your references for their permission to include them on your list).
- **NEVER** send a resume without a cover letter, even when faxing or e-mailing your resume, unless the employer tells you otherwise.

NECESSARY STEPS IN CREATING A RESUME THAT GETS RESULTS

1. It is essential for your resume to have a focus. It should be clear to someone reading your resume what type of position you are interested in pursuing. That also means that *you* need to be clear about your employment objective.
2. You will need to know the type of skills, knowledge and experience employers look for in the people that hold those kinds of positions and you will need to communicate how *your* skills, knowledge and experience match the employers' needs.
3. From your time line and job sketches (see page 1 of this handout), decide which three or four of your skills, past work experiences and education make you a particularly good candidate for the type of position you are interested in. You will summarize those key reasons at the top of your resume, generally underneath your personal information and the job objective, in a "summary of qualifications" or similarly named section. A summary section has become an almost mandatory necessity on resumes. Employers quickly glance at this section to determine whether or not to give your resume a closer reading.
4. For each one of these skills, think of a time from your past work history (paid or unpaid) and education when and how you used those skills. This is your proof that you can do the job. You will need to describe these accomplishments (also called action statements) using ACTION VERBS that emphasize those accomplishments and NOUNS that are specific to the type of job. Take a look at the handout entitled, "List of Skill and Function Areas" to see examples of common terms for skill areas and the ACTION VERB handout for verbs to describe these skills.
5. Choose a resume format that best fits your situation: chronological, functional or a combination of both. A chronological resume works best for people who have a stable work record with few gaps, and for whom the new job objective is a natural career progression. Functional resumes show what you *can* do and downplay the where and when of your past job experience. A combination resume works best for people who worked for a single employer for a long time, where they have performed several different functions.
6. Arrange your action statements according to the format you choose, meaning that on the chronological resume you will describe your accomplishments chronologically under each employer. On the functional resume, you will create "function areas," and you will list your actions statements under the specific skill section of which they are an example. Look at the resume examples to see how each resume is arranged.
7. Determine how you will transmit your resume to the employer. If you are sending an attachment, make sure you compose your resume in WORD, since that is the software that most employers use. If you are faxing your resume, your original needs to be a very crisp copy, because faxing reduces legibility. If you are mailing or hand-carrying your resume to an employer, print it up on resume paper. Finally, if the employer wants you to use a TEXT format to copy and paste your resume in an on-line format, you need to know how to do that. See the handout on scannable and plain text resumes.

Example of the **Chronological** resume style.
Benefits: Most widely recognized format; Shows career progression.
Drawbacks: Shows employment gaps; Doesn't always show what you *can* do.

(YOUR NAME)

(Your Address)

(Your City, State and Zip)

(Your Phone Number)

(Your Email Address)

Objective:

_____ (An objective statement tells the reader what job you seek. State the actual job title, the type of work, or describe the skills you want to use).

Summary of Qualifications:

- _____
- _____
- _____

(List your strongest skills and personal attributes - for example, Three years experience in office management. Proficient in the use of MS Word, Excel and Access. Strong organizational skills.). This section is known by different names (Highlights, Summary, Highlights of Qualifications, Summary of Skills, etc).

Education: _____ (Degree received, Name of College, City, State, Date Degree was or will be received; if you don't have a lot of work experience, you can also list completed class work)

Professional Experience:

_____ (List your current/last job title, Company, City, State, beginning and ending dates of employment ; if still employed, say "to present)

- _____
- _____
- _____

(List duties and responsibilities, using action verbs and showing accomplishments).

(Previous Job Title, Company, City, State, First and Last Dates)

- _____
- _____
- _____

(Previous Job Title, Company, City, State, First and Last Dates)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Optional Headings: Computer Skills (recommended if not already included in Summary of Qualifications) or other Specialized Skills (especially useful in Professional/Technical Resumes), Awards/Honors, Community Service (if relevant and/or as filler if you have very little work experience).

Example of the **Functional** resume style.
Benefits: Emphasizes your skills; Downplays employment history.
Drawbacks: May raise red flags with employer; Format isn't as well-known as chronological resume.

(YOUR NAME)

(Your Address)

(Your City, State Zip)

(Your Phone Number)

(Your Email Address)

Objective:

Summary of Qualifications:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Education:

(Degree received, Name of College, City, State, Date degree was or will be received)

Professional Experience:

(Skill Area #1)

- _____
- _____
- _____

(Describe several instances of how you used these skills)

(Skill Area #2)

- _____
- _____
- _____

(Skill Area #3)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Work History:

(Current/Last Job Title, Company, City, State, Dates)

(Previous Job, Company, City, State, Dates)

(Previous Job, Company, City, State, Dates)