



Purpose of a Resume

The primary objective of a resume is to win an interview. A great resume—one that is concise, powerful, persuasive and well-written—does not only tell the employer what you have done, but also convinces the employer that you have what it takes to be successful in the position. Your resume should stimulate enough interest so that it inspires the employer to pick up the phone and set up an interview with you.

While your resume is a vital step in the job search process, it is important to keep in mind that it is only one part of a package. Self-knowledge, interview preparation, networking and follow-up are also essential to your job search success. Before you start building your resume, be sure that you have done a lot of self-exploration. Know who you are, what you want, and what you have to offer.

General Guidelines

- 1) The first impression of your resume is the most important. Have someone else read over your resume to check for grammatical and spelling errors. Although format and style do count, it is the actual content and your ability to create interest that encourages the employer to interview you. It doesn't matter how fancy your resume is if the quality of the content is missing.
- 2) Each resume should be tailored to the employers' needs as much as possible. Look at the requirements of the job, and highlight only the relevant qualifications on the resume. If you have a lot of work experience, a rule of thumb is to list three or four of your previous jobs.
- 3) Focus on your skills, personal qualities, achievements and quantifiable **accomplishments** using past tense verbs (eg. created, lead, initiated). See the insert for powerful action verbs to describe your activities.
- 4) A resume is a summary of your experience and should be kept to two pages.
- 5) Make points that are concise and have impact (do not use paragraphs). Use bullets to focus on points. Remember, constantly ask yourself "How will adding this piece of information get me an interview?" If the answer is "it doesn't," then leave it out.
- 6) Always list the most important points first when organizing your headings and content.
- 7) Always include a cover letter when you present a resume to an employer.
- 8) When faxing your resume to an employer, always follow-up by sending an original.
- 9) Print your resume on good bond paper (typically with crème or white), and only one side of the page. Your cover letter should be printed on the same type of paper.
- 10) Be honest. You should make the most of your experience and achievements, but do not mislead the employer or give information you are not able to justify in an interview.

Layout & Style

When creating your resume, keep in mind the following techniques (from Robin Williams' *The Non-Designer's Design Book*):

- Contrast:** Make your headings, degree and job titles stand out from the regular text. Use bold letters or underlining. An employer should not have to decipher headings or sections compared to text.
- Repetition:** Repeat visual elements of the design throughout the resume. If you choose to make a heading bold with capital letters and underlined, then be consistent.
- Alignment:** Nothing should be placed on the page arbitrarily. For example, one alignment for headings (flush left) and one alignment for other text. Elements should have a visual connection to each other.
- Proximity:** Items that are related to one another should be grouped close together. One visual unit helps to organize information and reduces clutter.



Basic Resume Content & Styles

There are many types and styles of resumes. The one you choose will depend on the industry and the position you are applying for. Basic types include the chronological, the functional and the combination. The combination type is popular with most employers, as it reveals your unique skills and shows your history to back it up. Although it takes more time to design, format, and write, the combination style combines the advantages of all formats.

Components of a Combination Resume:

Contact Information

- include name, address(es), telephone and e-mail on the first page
- name and page number on the second page
- do not include personal data such as age, gender, marital status, social insurance number, health status or photograph



Objective

- the objective should be brief, unique and matched to the job/company/organization for which you are applying
- do not add fuzzy phrases or cliches which are obvious or do not mean anything

Summary of Strengths / Highlights / Skills Summary

- several points highlighting your strengths and skills that are pertinent to the position
- information in this section basically targets essential information that is contained in the next sections

Education

- if you have no relevant work experience, education should be emphasized first (if you have some relevant experience, the education section should follow the work experience section)
- education should be in reverse chronological order starting with your most recent degree (or working towards completion)
- high school is optional
- include special course work, clinical placements, thesis or extra certification that is particularly suited to the employer's needs
- mention grades if noteworthy (honours student, top of class, etc.)

Awards (optional)

- include honours, citations, entrance scholarships, passport to education and any other recognition
- if only one or two, list with education details if related

Related Experience / Other Experience / Volunteer Work

- after listing your position title, company and dates of employment, include your accomplishment and key responsibilities for each position
- work experience can be divided in several ways, or included under one heading depending on the amount of each
- experiences are listed in reverse chronological order

Extra-Curricular Activities & Interests (optional)

- employers are interested in your accomplishments in addition to your academic achievements
- things to include might be: on-campus clubs you belong to (be sure to include any positions you may have held), activities that demonstrate communication ability such as Toastmasters, any team sports you participate in and to what level you achieved success in a sport, participation in a band or musical group
- be sure you know why you are including this information and how the activity benefits the employer

References

- do not include references on your resume (unless the employer asks for them explicitly) and do not write "References available upon request."
- prepare a separate reference sheet and make sure you leave a copy with the interviewer
- include your references' name, address, phone numbers, position and place of employment
- the ideal number of references is three. The best references are previous supervisors from past work and volunteer experiences. Second best are professors, TA's or anyone who has had an opportunity to review your work. Third best are personal references such as friends of family.