

Resume Information

Resume Builder

A resume is your personal advertisement! Its purpose is to tell employers that you are precisely the employee they are looking for! Emphasizing your successes and unique strengths, your resume should communicate what you can do in light of what you've done. Your resume should be clean, professional, clear, and precise. Rather than outlining your accomplishments comprehensively, the resume should only serve as an introduction, causing an employer to want more.

So how should you begin?

Start with a brainstorming session. Ask yourself good questions, such as:

- What is my history?
- What jobs have I held?
- What did I do in those jobs?
- What skills do I possess?
- What are my strengths?
- What is my education?
- What degrees have I earned?
- What accomplishments am I proud of?
- What unique experiences have I had?
- What do I want to communicate about myself to a potential employer?
- How has my past qualified me for the position I am applying for?

If you're having difficulty determining your strengths and accomplishments, have a friend or family member brainstorm with you. Once you know what you want to say, your task is to present it attractively. Remember that a resume must be crafted with the audience in mind. The right credentials are only an asset if they are presented well! The most common type of resume is a Chronological Resume. This is the format that lists your education and experience in reverse chronological order. This is most commonly preferred among employers.

Resume Content

Remember that a resume must be crafted with the audience in mind. The right qualifications are only an asset if they are presented well! The most common type of resume is a Chronological Resume. This is the format that lists your education and experience in reverse chronological order. **This is most commonly preferred among employers.** The information below is divided by the various sections of the resume and is listed in the order that it appears on the page, starting at the top.

- Heading
- Objective
- Education

- Work Experience
- Keys to Writing Success
- Volunteer Experience
- Awards and Special Honors
- Related Skills and Interests
- References

Heading

The heading is a simple way to introduce your basic information. It should include your name, address, phone, e-mail, web address, and any other contact information you choose to provide. This should be at the top of the page, so that employers can easily and quickly identify who they are dealing with. Your name should be highlighted somehow, possibly in bold letters and larger than the other information. It should stand out, so that the potential employer is inclined to remember it. If you are in the process of moving, remember to provide both a current and future address.

Example 1:

Name
 Street Address
 City, State Zip
 Phone Number
 Email Address
 Website (if applicable)

Example 2:

Name
 Address
 Phone Number Email Address

Objective

This is an optional feature, but if included, it can communicate that you are a goal-oriented person with strong intention. The objective should briefly (one sentence) explain the goal of your job search, and it should be tailored to the job you are applying for. The wording should focus on what you hope to give to the position, not what you hope to receive from it. A vague, general objective communicates a lack of direction. If you cannot clearly and specifically communicate your purpose, it is best to leave it out.

Example 1:

Objective: To serve as a pastor, providing Christ-like leadership, preaching, counseling, and shepherding.

Example 2:

Objective: To encourage believers toward maturity in Christ by providing a cohesive Christian Education program in a church setting.

Education

Next on the resume is your educational information. This section should include the name of each institution you have attended (college and onward), location of the institutions (optional), the dates of attendance, the degree earned there, and the degree's emphasis (if pertinent). A related thesis or special project could be included as well. Awards or special recognition you received should also be highlighted, making sure that the honor is explained. If you are proud of your GPA, include this too. The general rule is 3.0 or higher, but this is ultimately up to you!

Example 1:

Pearson College, 1982-1986
BA, English Literature; GPA: 3.8/4.0
Reynolds Scholarship Recipient
(Academic Excellence and
Leadership)

Example 2:

Gordon-Conwell Theological
Seminary, 1996-2000 -Masters of
Divinity (emphasis in World
Missions)
-GPA: 3.9/4.0

Work Experience

This is the most important section of your resume. It tells the employer what you've done in a professional setting, thus indicating what you will do for the employer. Carefully wording and accurately describing your work history will be a great asset to your resume. This section may require hours of work and many revisions, but it's worth it! You'll never regret maximizing the potential of your resume!

This section should include your work experience in reverse chronological order, beginning with your most recent experience. Specifically, you should include job title, company, dates of service, the location of the job (optional), and a description of the work you did. In terms of the layout, it is very important that each job listed is visually separate from the others. With only a glance, employers should be able to identify the various work experiences you have had. The title of the job, company, and dates of service should be set apart from the description by underlines, italics, bolding, etc. However you choose to highlight the information, make sure that your methods are consistent across all the work experience listed.

3 KEYS TO WRITING SUCCESS

Action Verbs

Your description of each position should be carefully worded using action verbs. Your resume should tell a potential employer that you are a person of action who takes initiative and makes things happen! The right verbs can provide unquestionable professionalism and confidence to your resume. Avoid using the same verb twice in your resume. Download our exhaustive list of action verbs now!

Details

It is also important to include detailed information regarding your past performance-number served, percent accomplished, etc. - anything to give the employer direct descriptions of your previous successes. Past performance is an excellent prediction of future performance. If you can specifically display to employers that you have a history of successes, you will become that much more attractive to them.

Transferable Skills

As you describe your tasks, focus on your transferable skills – the skills you possess that directly relate to the open position. Show them that you are the perfect fit! Ask yourself, "What does the employer want to see when he/she reads my resume?" If you emphasize pertinent skills, the employer will naturally regard you as a match when reading your resume. This does not mean that you list skills that the employer desires that are not currently in your skill set. Rather, you should focus on the desired qualities that are within the skills you already possess.

Example 1:

Youth Pastor, Grace Evangelical Church, Seaton, AL, 1986-1990

Planned and directed all youth programming for 75 students, grades 7-12. Taught weekly Sunday School and Wednesday Bible study, with studies in Romans, Proverbs, and the Gospels. Established and developed a Youth Leadership team, mentoring 20 students one-on-one. Launched a Youth Missions Initiative, providing monthly opportunities for youth to serve in cross-cultural contexts.

Example 2:

Associate Pastor, First Presbyterian Church Woodland, ME, 1990-1996

Developed and coordinated a cohesive Christian Education program for all ages. Preached twice monthly and taught an Adult Sunday School class weekly. Introduced and supervised a counseling program for those experiencing divorce. Assisted senior pastor in visitation, budget coordination, and missions efforts.

Volunteer Experience

This information is optional, but it's good to include if you have done pertinent or interesting volunteer work. Make sure to maximize this section by showing the employer how the work has developed you and how it relates to the work you're applying for.

Example 1:

After School Tutor, Inner City Ministries, Chicago, IL, 1992-1993
Mentored five 7th graders weekly, developing their academic and leadership skills.

Example 2:

Chaplain, Oak Hill Nursing Home, Cleveland, OH, 1998-1999
Created and led weekly worship service. Cared for and counseled elderly patients. Fostered community among the residents.

Awards and Special Honors

Include here any awards or special recognition you've received. Make sure to explain the award, if the honor is not readily evident. School-related awards could be listed here or in the education section above.

Example 1:

Smithson Award, Cancer Foundation (Awarding Leadership and Service)

Example 2:

Volunteer of the Year, 1992, Bayview Chamber of Commerce

Related Skills and Interests

Include here additional experiences or qualities that you feel contribute to who you are and who you could be as an employee. For example, if you're outgoing socially, note that you have "excellent interpersonal skills." If you've traveled widely, are fluent in a foreign language, or have lived in other cultures, these deserve mentioning! Computer skills are especially important to note. Having hobbies also communicates that you are a well-rounded person with a variety of interests and experiences to bring to the position. **Keep in mind that an employer does not want to know too much personal information about you. Include only the type of hobbies that are somewhat related to the position.**

Example 1:

Dedication to task, organization, and time management

Example 2:

Active interest in reading, travel, and the outdoors

References

It is often preferred, though not mandatory, to mention the availability of references. Simply note, "**References available upon request.**" Perhaps set this apart by centering or italicizing it.

Resume Presentation

Layout

The layout of your resume is key. The right credentials are only an asset if they are presented well! It is essential that your resume appear clean, concise, and professional. Experiment with bolding, italics, underlining, tabs, margin settings, bullet points and other symbols, etc. to find the most neat and consistent arrangement of your information. Make sure that you skip lines between each section of your resume. This will provide open space on the page that contributes to an overall neat and appealing presentation. A messy, crammed, disorganized page immediately communicates a message (whether true or not!) about the kind of worker you are. Remember - keep your audience in mind. Tailor your resume to each position that you are applying for. Ask yourself: How has my past qualified me for this particular position? How can I emphasize these qualifications?

Writing Style

Your resume should be concise and to the point. Employers don't have time to read lengthy and overdone descriptions. Give them a fresh, honest look at who you are. Your resume will be strengthened by carefully chosen words that accurately and specifically capture you and your experience. Say a lot with a few words. Be sure to include as much specific information regarding your past performance as possible – number served, percent accomplished, etc. Employers appreciate seeing these tangible proofs of previous successes.

Font

Your font should be clear and easy to read. An intricate font will only discourage an employer from reading about you. When an employer picks up your resume, it should appear clean and professional.

Paper and Printer Choice

Your resume should be printed on paper that stands out. Choose a heavier stock than normal printer paper, as well as a color that will subtly catch the eye. Do not use bright colors - this will only make your resume hard to read. **A classy, but subtle gray or beige is appropriate.** Use a laser or Inkjet printer, never a dot matrix.

Number of Pages

A resume is usually around one page. As you progress in your career, a 1-2 page resume is fine. Only exceed one page if you legitimately have information that is essential for the employer to read. Don't move to two pages just to include the baby-sitting jobs or lawn work that you did as a teenager.

Proofreading

Proofreading your resume is absolutely essential! Errors will badly damage your credibility before an employer. Have several people review your resume for any mistakes. In addition, have a friend read it to determine if it accurately reflects you, your skills, and experiences. It is also a good idea to **have your resume reviewed by someone in a field related to the one you're applying for.**

Prepare the Way

Before you send your resume, establish phone contact with the employer, if at all possible. Tell them that you are interested in working for them, and that you are sending your resume. When an employer can attach a previous conversation to the resume he/she has just received, your chances of being considered increase. You are somewhat "known," not a random stranger sending in a resume. Sending one resume to an employer you have spoken with is more effective than sending your resume to twenty employers you have never talked to. Be willing to do the hard work and take initiative!

Action Verbs

The verbs you choose to describe your achievements and experience communicate a lot about you! Your resume should tell a potential employer that you are a person of action who takes initiative and makes things happen! Some verbs are inherently more passive than others, subtly implying that your achievements have been half-hearted or feebly accomplished. Look at the following example:

- Passive Verb - "...led a Bible Study for Junior High youth group."
- Action Verb - "... created, planned, and implemented a Bible Study for Junior High youth group."

The right verbs can provide unquestionable professionalism and confidence to your resume. They also give employers better information, because they're more specific in nature. Use them to your advantage! However, don't sacrifice the flow of your resume just for verbs! If they don't sound natural and flow easily, leave them out. Action verbs are a subtle asset that should complement your achievements, not detract from them.

What Are Employers Looking For?

Below is a list of traits and abilities that employers are looking for. Which ones describe you? Emphasize your best qualities throughout your resume!

- Communication Skills
- Leadership
- Teaching Ability
- Energy
- Intelligence
- Planning Skills
- Organization
- Analytical Ability
- Conflict Resolution Skills
- Direction
- Initiative
- Vocational Skills
- Self-Confidence
- Decision-Making Ability
- Willingness to Accept
- Responsibility
- Good Financial Management
- Supervisory Ability
- Self-Knowledge
- Mentoring Skills
- Visionary Outlook
- Imagination
- Interpersonal Skills
- Flexibility

The Cover Letter

Always customize your cover letter for the position you're applying for! The cover letter serves as your introduction to an employer and should accompany your resume at all times. It should have a fairly formal, professional style, without seeming stiff. Avoid addressing the employer by their first name unless you know them well or they've invited you to a first name basis. The body of your letter should consist of three paragraphs. In the first paragraph, state the position you are applying for and how you heard of it. Get right to the point! In the second paragraph, state briefly why you are qualified for the position. This may involve reviewing the main points of your resume, indicating why you're interested in the job and how your experience relates. In the third paragraph, state clearly that you would like to be considered as a candidate and that you are seeking to obtain an interview. Give the employer a specific time frame in which you will call them in order to inquire about obtaining an interview. Thank them for any consideration they may give you.

When and Why

When you've never spoken with the employer, a cover letter is absolutely essential. Use it to concisely and informatively introduce yourself. Never send the resume alone. When you've spoken with the employer, use the cover letter to remind the employer of your conversation. Reiterate why you want the position and why you're qualified for it. Thank the employer for any previous time they have given you to talk over the position. The cover letter can be more brief in this instance.

Ten Mistakes People Make When Writing A Resume

Watch for these common mistakes!

1. Providing too much personal information (age, weight, health, marital status)
2. Discussing salary
3. Citing reasons for leaving past jobs
4. Using the word "I"
5. Conveying a passive tone
6. Stating phrases in the negative or in the past.

Example:

"Fired staff and removed privileges, as needed," instead of "Initiated all disciplinary measures"

Example:

"Finished a First Aid training course", instead of "Hold status of Certified First Aid Technician"

7. Providing irrelevant data that doesn't communicate accomplishments or skill set
8. Overlooking errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling
9. Choosing a layout, paper, or font style that is hard to read
10. Choosing a layout that lacks consistency

Resume FAQ's

1. Should I include work experience that was unpaid?

Don't ever hesitate to include ANY work experience - paid or unpaid - that has contributed to who you are and who you could be as an employee. If your unpaid work experience is related to the position you're applying for, your resume should reflect this! You could include it under a section called "Volunteer," or include it with your paid work experience and title that section "Relevant Work Experience."

2. Should I include work experience that is unrelated to the position I'm applying for?

All of your work experience has developed you in some way. Therefore, none of it is "unrelated" to the position you're applying for. However, some work experience may be more related than others, and it is this "more related" experience that you want to focus on. As you describe your previous work, highlight your skills and experiences that are transferable. Ask yourself: How has

my previous work displayed the qualities that the employer is looking for? Show them that you're the perfect fit! If there is space, include the work experience that you feel is "less related." Again, intentionally seek out your transferable skills and experiences as you describe the position.

What are some other options for heading titles?

1. Objective:
 - a. Purpose Statement
 - b. Goal
 - c. Position Objective
2. Education:
 - a. Educational Background
3. Work Experience:
 - a. Professional Experience
 - b. Experience
 - c. Related Work Experience
 - d. Pastoral Experience
 - e. Employment History
4. Volunteer:
 - a. Related Experience
 - b. Other Experience
5. Awards and Special Honors:
 - a. Awards
 - b. Honors
 - c. Activities
6. Related Skills and Interests:
 - a. Other Skills and Hobbies
 - b. Technical Skills
 - c. Additional Abilities

Whatever headings you choose, make sure that each heading is consistent with the others on the page.

If I was promoted, and thus held two jobs within the company, should I include the original position on my resume? Absolutely! This shows the progression of your successes, as well as your growth as an individual. It sends an excellent message, telling employers that you produce the kind of work that gets rewarded.

How many references should I have? Employers may specify the number of references they would like to have. Usually, 3-5 references, each representing various relationships with you, is good (work, friend, family, church, etc.). Have written references prepared in advance, so that they are ready to send as employers request them.