



I – Introduction

A resume, no matter how good, will not get you a job by itself. However, a good resume will attract the attention of the hiring manager and secure a job interview. The purpose of a resume is to disclose your accomplishments and qualifications to a potential employer. If the employer likes what she sees, she will contact you for a face-to-face meeting.

Think of your resume as a promotional brochure about you. You need to show a potential employer what you have accomplished and where

your experience lies. Your strategy should be to emphasize the experience and skills that a particular employer is looking for.

Your resume is also an example of your communication and organizational skills. A well done resume is itself another reminder of what kind of valuable employee you would be. Likewise, a sloppily produced resume is a terrific way to get yourself taken out of the running before it even starts.

There is a lot of information available on resumes and resume writing – some of it contradictory, but most of it useful. Our advice is to find a good book on resumes and learn the fundamentals of resume writing. Try and stay with the most current material you can; resume advice follows trends. The Internet is home to plenty of free advice and information, but in most cases that information will be less detailed than a good resume guide.

I – Activity

1. First, consider your audience. Will you be sending your resume to potential employers or to college admissions boards?
2. Think about the experiences you have had in high school. Write down the headings: *Academic Achievements*, *Extra-Curricular Activities*, *Volunteer Experiences*, *Work History* and *Awards & Honors*. List all of your accomplishments under the appropriate heading. At this point, include everything you can think of. No experience, honor, etc. is too insignificant.
3. Give your lists to one or two of your classmates. Ask them to mark the items in each category that they think are most impressive. Then, review your own notes. Decide which information you want to keep and which you want to discard.
4. Finally, organize the remaining items under each category from most to least impressive. (If you have an extensive work history, you might want to organize this category chronologically.)
5. Now you are ready to begin formatting and writing your resume. Please continue on to the next activity.



II – Formats

With so many different employment experiences possible, there is no single resume template that works for everyone. There are, however, generally accepted ways to arrange the information on your resume to present it in the best light.

The two styles that are discussed most often are the chronological format and the functional format. Both have their own advantages and disadvantages when it comes to presenting your information. A third style, the combination, is a compromise between the two and has become more popular in recent years. CareerBuilder gives you an overview of each format to help you decide which is best for you.

Chronological

This is the most common resume style, and the one that employers prefer. In the chronological format, the emphasis is placed on employment experience. The applicant's job history is presented in reverse chronological order, with the most recent jobs placed at the top of the list.

The chronological resume is good if your recent job experience is relevant to the job you are applying for, and you want to stay on a similar career path. Potential employers can easily see what you have done, and

how you have progressed and garnered experience.

Despite its popularity, there are some reasons why the chronological format may not be right for you. If you are just entering the workforce from school, a resume like this may actually highlight your lack of experience. You may have held jobs recently that have no relevance to the position you're applying for. If you are re-entering the workforce after a substantial absence, this resume will highlight your recent inactivity. Any large gaps in your recent employment history will be evident, and you may be asked about them.

Likewise, a job history full of briefly held jobs might lead a potential employer to question your ability to remain employed. A long employment history at a single company will reveal your age to some extent, something you may not feel comfortable doing.

Functional

In this non-linear format, your skills and achievements are emphasized. Your employment history is summarized or avoided all together. Your skills and previous relevant experience (including educational experience) are presented at the beginning

of your resume. They are organized so the employer can see how your skills relate to the job position you are applying for. (In a chronological resume, employers may simply be looking at the jobs you have held previously to see if you have the experience they are looking for.) It may take more effort to write a functional resume, but you are free to highlight your talents instead of your recent job experience. The functional resume can be particularly effective if you've held a number of similar positions; it will allow you to highlight your skills rather than itemize what might be a redundant looking job history.

But the functional resume may also raise concerns in some employers' minds as to whether you are withholding information. This doesn't mean that functional resumes are ignored or that they can't be effective. But an employer looking for a clear job history may be put off by the functional format, especially if you've used a functional resume to hide your inexperience or a long gap in your employment history.

If you don't have any problems with the reverse chronological format, use it instead. If you still like the idea of the Functional format, you may want to make it more acceptable by combining it with the chronological format



Resume Handbook

Handbook courtesy of the CareerBuilder Network

II – Formats, continued

and creating a combination resume.

Combination

The combination resume is simply a functional resume with a brief employment history added. Skills

and accomplishments are still listed first; the employment history follows. You need to reveal where you worked, when you worked, and what your job position was. This will allay an employer's worries about your experience, and it still allows

you to emphasize your talents and how you would use them for the job you are applying for. While most employers might still prefer a chronological resume, this is a good alternative to the functional resume.

II – Activity

1. If you are preparing a resume to send to potential employers, decide which format (chronological, functional or combination) you want to use. If you would like to include a resume of your accomplishments when applying to college, decide what is most impressive about your background – work or volunteer experiences, academic achievements, awards/honors or extra-curricular activities. Then, arrange your categories from strongest to weakest.

2. Now, it's time to get an idea of what a resume should look like.

Your counselor or teacher might have examples of strong resumes. Or, you can search under "sample resumes" on the Internet. Note: Some sample resumes may begin with "objective" statements; many experts agree, however, that these are unnecessary. Any objective you have should be stated in a cover letter, not on your resume.

3. Write a sentence or two about each of the activities/honors/etc. that you have listed under your headings. Remember that the purpose of each sentence is to advertise your strengths and selling points,

and to tell readers how your experiences have helped you develop character and hone valuable skills. Don't use the first person ("I"). Do begin each sentence with an action verb or adverb, e.g. "spearheaded" or "effectively solved."

4. The first draft of your resume is done. Now, it's time to fine-tune it. Please continue on to the next activity.



III – Writing Tips

The CareerBuilder Network offers this collection of wisdom for fine-tuning a resume into a winner:

Keep it concise. Employers have lots to do, so don't make the mistake of asking them to read through an unnecessarily long resume. A long, wordy resume will put off someone who is already short on time. Resumes should be one page, if possible, and two if absolutely necessary to describe relevant work experience. A two-page resume is no advantage if it's full of information that isn't reasonably applicable to the position you're applying for. Use the space only if you need it to fully disclose your accomplishments.

Make your words count. Your use of language is extremely important; you need to sell yourself to an employer quickly and efficiently. Address your potential employer's needs with a clearly written, compelling resume.

Avoid large paragraphs (over six or seven lines). Resumes are often scanned by hiring managers. If you provide small, digestible pieces of information you stand a better chance of having your resume actually read. Use action verbs such as "developed," "managed," and "designed" to emphasize your

accomplishments. Don't use declarative sentences like "I developed the..." or "I assisted in..."; leave out the "I." Avoid passive constructions, such as "was responsible for managing." It's not only more efficient to say "Managed," it's stronger and more active.

Make the most of your experience. Potential employers need to know what you have accomplished to have an idea of what you can do for them. Don't be vague. Describe things that can be measured objectively. Telling someone that you "improved warehouse efficiency" doesn't say much. Telling them that you "cut requisition costs by 20%, saving the company \$3800 for the fiscal year" does. Employers will feel more comfortable hiring you if they can verify your accomplishments.

Be honest. There is a difference between making the most of your experience and exaggerating or falsifying it. A falsified resume can be easily spotted by an employer (if not immediately then during the interview process), and if it doesn't prevent you from getting the job, it can cost you the job later on.

Don't neglect appearance. Your resume is the first impression you'll make on a potential employer, and a

successful resume depends on more than what you say; how you say it counts as well.

Check your resume for proper grammar and correct spelling — evidence of good communication skills and attention to detail. Nothing can ruin your chances of getting a job faster than submitting a resume filled with easily preventable mistakes.

Make your resume easy on the eyes. Use normal margins (1" on the top and bottom, 1.25" on the sides) and don't cram your text onto the page. Allow for some breathing room between the different sections. Avoid unusual or exotic font styles; use simple fonts with a professional look. Use standard, non-textured, fine-grained paper in white or ivory. Keep in mind that textured and dark-colored paper may not copy well when the employer makes copies to pass around to other participants in the hiring process. If you need to copy your resume, make sure your copies are clean and clear. Even the best-looking resume can be ruined by a poor copier. Use only copiers maintained for professional copying.

Target, target, target. Emphasize what you can do for an employer. Be specific. If you are going after more than one job opening, customize your resume

Resume Handbook

Handbook courtesy of the CareerBuilder Network

III – Writing Tips, continued

accordingly. It helps to tailor your resume for a specific position. Remember to only include the experience that is relevant to the job.

Eliminate superfluous details. Unnecessary details can take up a lot of valuable space on your resume. Don't mention personal characteristics such as age, height, and marital status. This is information that employers may not legally solicit

from you, and they would probably be more comfortable if you don't volunteer it yourself. List your hobbies and interests only if you can relate them to the position you're applying for. If you need room to describe your work experience, avoid this altogether. The phrase "References available upon request" should be left off if you need room to describe your work experience. Most employers assume you have references they may con-

tact, and will request them if there's a need to do so.

Avoid the "Objective" statement. Your objective should be clearly articulated in your cover letter. If you do include an objective, be specific. Vague statements, such as "Looking to utilize my marketing skills" or "seeking a rewarding position" add nothing to a resume and may in fact make you appear insincere.

III – Activity

1. Keep each of the above writing tips in mind as you embellish and revise the draft of your resume. Resume-writing is a painstaking process. Take your time! Remember, for your resume to set you apart from other job or college applicants, it needs to come as close to perfection as possible. If you haven't done so already, type and format your resume on a computer.
2. On a separate sheet of paper, create an evaluation checklist that lists the writing tips described in this section down the left hand side (e.g. "Keep it concise," "Make your words count," etc.) and lists the categories included on your resume (e.g. *Honors & Awards*, *Work History*, etc.) across the top. Make two checksheets – one for yourself and one for a classmate.
3. Using a scale of 1-5, you and a classmate should both evaluate your resume according to how well each section meets the criteria listed on the left. If, for example, your *Volunteer Experiences* section is too wordy it might receive a low score on "Keep it concise."
4. Based on your own and your classmate's evaluation, do one last revision of your resume.
5. Bravo! Hopefully, your new resume is a reflection of your unique assets and marketable skills. May it open doors to your future!