

UMD ARC/Writing & Reading Center

Writing Your Résumé

A résumé is a structured, written summary of your educational and employment background that shows your qualifications for a job.

A Good Résumé ...

builds the reader's interest, calls attention to your best features and downplays your weaknesses without distorting or misrepresenting the facts.

A good résumé shows that a candidate

- Thinks in terms of results
- Knows how to get things done
- Is well-rounded
- Shows signs of progress
- Has personal standards of excellence
- Is flexible and willing to try new things
- Possesses strong communication skills

Fallacies and Facts about Résumés

Fallacy: The purpose of a résumé is to list all your skills and abilities.

Fact: The purpose of your résumé is to kindle the employer's interest and generate an interview.

Fallacy: A good résumé will get you the job you want.

Fact: Hundreds of thousands of good résumé cross employers' desks every working day. All a résumé can do is to get you in the door.

Fallacy: Your résumé will be read carefully and thoroughly by an interested employer.

Fact: Your résumé probably has 45 seconds to make an impression

Fallacy: The more good information you present about yourself in your résumé, the better.

Fact: By including too much information, a résumé may actually kill the appetite to know more.

Fallacy: If you want a really good résumé, have it prepared by a résumé service.

Fact: Many résumé services use undistinguished standard formats, so you should prepare your own – unless the position you're after is especially high-level or specialized. Even then, you should check carefully before using a résumé service.

I- Controlling the Format and Style

You've got less than 45 seconds to make a good impression, which is the time that a typical recruiter spend on each résumé before tossing it into the "maybe" or the "reject" file. In fact, most recruiters scan rather than read a résumé. So if your résumé doesn't look sharp, and if you don't grab the reader's interest in the first few lines, chances are the recruiter won't read it long enough to judge your qualifications.

To give your résumé a sharp look:

- Use a clean typeface on high-grade, letter-size bond paper (in white or some earth tone)
- Make sure that your stationary and envelope match
- Leave ample margins all around
- Avoid italic typefaces, which can be difficult to read
- Use a quality laser printer
- Try to write a one-page résumé. However, if you have a great deal of experience and are applying for a higher position, you may wish to prepare a longer résumé. Most importantly, give yourself enough space to present a persuasive but accurate portrait of your skills and accomplishments
- Break up the text by using headings that call attention to the various aspects of your background, such as your work experience and education. Underline, capitalize or use the bold face option to highlight those headings, or set them off in the left margin
- Use indented lists to itemize your most important qualifications
- Leave plenty of white space, even if this forces you to use two pages
- Write in a simple and direct style
- Use short, crisp phrases
- Focus on what your reader needs to know
- Absolutely avoid using the word I. Instead, start your phrases with active, impressive verbs such as these:

accomplished	detected	interpreted	purchased
achieved	determined	interviewed	realized
administered	developed	invented	received
advised	devised	lectured	recommended
approved	diagnosed	led	recorded
arranged	directed	logged	recruited
assisted	discovered	maintained	reduced
audited	distributed	managed	referred
assumed	documented	mediated	rendered
budgeted	drew up	monitored	represented
changed	debated	negotiated	researched
calculated	edited	obtained	restored
chaired	evaluated	operated	reviewed

collected	examined	ordered	scheduled
completed	expanded	organized	selected
compounded	formulated	oversaw	served
compiled	facilitated	performed	solved
construed	founded	planned	studied
conducted	generated	presented	supervised
conserved	guided	processed	taught
coordinated	implemented	produced	tested
counseled	improved	promoted	trained
created	increased	provided	worked
delivered	installed	publicized	wrote
designed	instituted	published	

II- Ask yourself and Answer these questions:

1. What key qualifications will employers be looking for?
2. Which of these qualifications are my greatest strengths?
3. What would set me apart from other candidates?
4. What are three or four of my greatest accomplishments?
5. What was produced as a result of these accomplishments?

III- Tailoring the Content

Name and Address

The opening section should show at a glance

- Who you are
- How to reach you

Include your name, address, phone number, as well as your email address or URL if you have one. If you have an address or phone number at school and another at home, include both. Also if you have a work phone and a home phone, list both and indicate which is which.

Career Objective or Summary of Qualifications

If you want to state your objective, make sure it is effective and be as specific as possible about what you want to do. However, many experts argue that your objective will be obvious from your qualifications and that stating your objective will only limit you as a candidate (especially if you would like to be considered for a variety of openings), because it labels you as interested in only one thing.

Keep in mind that the career objective or summary may be the only section read fully by the employer, so if you do include it, make it strong, concise, and convincing.

Education

If you're still in school, education is probably your strongest selling point; so present your educational background in depth, choosing facts that support your "theme."

Give this section a heading, such as "Education," "Professional College Training," or "Academic Preparation." Then start with the school you most recently attended, list the name and location of each school, the terms of your enrollment (in months – optional – and years required). State your major and minor fields of study, significant skills and abilities you have developed from your coursework, and the degrees or certificates you have earned.

If you are working on an uncompleted degree, include in parentheses the expected date of completion. Showcase your qualifications by listing courses that have directly equipped you for the job you are seeking. Also indicate any scholarships or academic honors you have received (See Functional Résumé).

You can also include a heading for "Awards and Scholarships" if you so choose. Also, if you have a GPA of 3.00 or higher, be sure to mention the scale, especially if a 5-point scale is used instead of a 4-point scale. (ex. GPA: 3.5/4.0)

If you have worked in your chosen field for a year or more, however, education is usually given less emphasis in a résumé. If work experience is your strongest qualification, save the "education" section for later in the résumé and provide less detail.

Work Experience

When describing your work experience, list your jobs in chronological order for all résumé styles, with the current or last one first. Include any part-time, summer, or internship positions, even if the jobs have no relation to your current career objective. It is important that you establish that you have the ability to get and hold a job, which is a qualification employers are looking for.

If you have worked your way through school, say so. Employers interpret this as a sign of character.

Each job listing should include the name and location of the employer. Then, if the reader is unlikely to recognize the organization, briefly describe what it does. If an organization's name or location has changed, state the present name or location, then the former: "formerly known/located ..."

Before or after each job listing, state your functional title, such as "clerk typist," "salesperson" or "teaching assistant." You should also state how long you worked on each job. Use the phrase "to present" to denote current employment. Also if a job was part-time, say so.

Devote the most space to the jobs that are related to your target position. If you were personally responsible for something significant, be sure to mention it.

Facts about your skills and accomplishments are the most important information you can give a prospective employer, so quantify them whenever possible, for example:

- Designed a new ad that increased sales by 9%
- Raised \$2500 in 15 days for cancer research
- Taught three Business Communications classes
- Tutored at the Writing & Reading Center sophomore through senior year

If samples of your work might increase your chances of getting a job, insert a line at the end of you résumé offering to supply them on request.

Skills

Include information about:

- Command of other languages
- Computer expertise

Place the Skills section near your Education or Work Experience section.

Activities and Achievements

Your résumé should describe any volunteer activities that demonstrate your abilities. List projects that require leadership, organization, teamwork, and cooperation. List skills you learned in these activities, and explain how these skills are related to the job you're applying for.

If your activities have been extensive, you may want to group them into divisions such as "College activities," "Community Service," "Professional associations," "Seminars and Workshops," or "Speaking Activities." Or you can divide them into two categories: "Service Activities" and "Achievements, Awards, and Honors." Include speaking, writing, or tutoring experience; participation in athletics or creative projects; fund-raising or community service activities; and offices held in academic or professional organizations.

Mentioning a political or religious organization, however, may be a red flag to someone with different views, so use your judgment.

References

You may include a section for references and simply put at the end of your résumé "References available upon request". Then you can list your references on a separate sheet and bring them to your interview.

Personal Data

Leave your personal interests or information off your résumé, unless they would enhance the employer's understanding of why you would be the best candidate for the job.

Civil rights laws prohibit employers from discriminating on the basis of gender, marital or family status, age (although only persons aged 40 to 70 are protected), race, color, religion, national origin, and physical or mental disability. Thus, be sure to exclude any items that could encourage discrimination.

Also exclude information about the salary you had in a previous job or the one you expect to get, reasons for leaving jobs, names of previous supervisors, your Social Security number, and other identification codes. Save these items for the interview, and offer them only if the employer or interviewer specifically requests them.

If military service is relevant to the position you are seeking, you may list it in this section, or under "Education" or "Work Experience." List the date of induction, the branch of service, where you served, the highest rank you achieved, any accomplishments related to your career goals, and the date you were discharged.

IV- Choosing the Best Organizational Approach

The Chronological Résumé (See Fig. 1)

When you organize your résumé chronologically, the "Work Experience" section dominates the résumé and is placed in the most prominent slot, immediately after the name and address, and the objective.

You develop this section by listing your jobs sequentially in reverse order, beginning with the most recent position and working backward toward earlier jobs. Under each listing, you describe your responsibilities and accomplishments, giving the most space to the most recent positions.

If you are just graduating from college, you can vary the chronological approach by putting your educational qualifications before your experience, thereby focusing on your academic credentials.

The chronological approach is the most common way to organize a résumé and is preferred by many employers.

The chronological résumé has three key advantages:

- Employers are familiar with it
- It highlights growth and career progression
- It highlights employment continuity and stability

The Functional Résumé (See Fig. 2)

The functional résumé is organized around a list of skills and accomplishments, and employment and academic experience are identified in subordinate sections.

This pattern stresses individual areas of competence, and it is useful for people who are just entering the job market, people who want to redirect their careers, and people who have little continuous career-related experience.

The functional résumé has three key advantages:

- It helps readers clearly see what you can do for them, rather than having them read through job descriptions to find out
- It allows job seekers to emphasize an earlier job experience
- It also helps them de-emphasize lack of career progress or lengthy unemployment

The Electronic Résumé (See Fig. 3)

Electronic résumés should convey the same information as traditional résumés. However, their format and style must be changed to one that is computer-friendly. To make your traditional résumé a scannable one, format it as a “plain-text document,” improve its looks and modify its content.

How to Prepare Your Scannable Résumé:

- Remove all formatting (boldfacing, underlining, italics, centering, bullets, graphics, lines, etc.) and all formatting codes such as a tab settings or tables from your document
- Remove shadows and reverse print (white letters on black background)
- Remove graphics and boxes
- Use scannable typefaces (such as Helvetica, Futura, Optima, Univers, Times New Roman, Palatino, New Century Schoolbook, and Courier).
- Use a font size of 10 or 14 points
- Remove multicolumn formats that resemble newspapers or newsletters
- Save your document under a different name by using your word processor’s “save as” option and selecting “text only with line breaks”

Tips to Improve the Look of Your Electronic Résumé:

- Align text by adding blank spaces rather than tabs
- Create headings and separate paragraphs by adding a few blank lines
- Indicate bullets with an asterisk or the lower case letter o
- Use ample white space in margins
- Condense the spacing between letters
- Use all capital letters for section headings
- Put your name at the top of each page on a separate line
- Use the standard address format below your name
- List each phone number on a separate line
- Use keywords

Because keywords help potential employers sort through an entire database of résumés, the keywords’ section should be the first section in your electronic résumé. To maximize the number of hits, include a keyword summary of 20 to 30 words and phrases that define your skills, experience, education, professional

affiliations, and so on. (See résumé p. 11.)

Choosing and Using the Right Keyword

- Marketing Keywords: research, statistics, brand management, product management, marketing plans, catalogs, promotions, packaging, competitive strategies, focus groups, trade shows
- Financial Management Keywords: analyst, investment, forecasts, liquidity, cash flow, expense management, budgeting, securities, treasury, risk management, debt, credit
- Human Resources Keywords: interviewing, staffing, benefits, recruiter, EEO, training, retention, employee relations, compensation, exempt/nonexempt, stock options, succession planning
- Sales Keywords: prospect development, inside sales, customer tracking, business-to-business, cross-selling, contract negotiations, account management, presentations
- Internet Keywords: e-commerce, Java, site traffic analysis, HTML, Webmaster, broadband, intranet, Photoshop, C++

Here is an example of a keyword summary for an accountant:

“Accountant, Corporate Controller, Fortune 100, Receivables, Payables, Inventory, Cash Flow, Financial Analysis, Payroll Experience, Corporate Taxes, Activity-Based Accounting, Problem Solving, Computer Skills, Excel, Access, Networks, HTML, Peachtree, Quick Books, BA Indiana University — Accounting, CPA, Dean’s List, Articulate, Team Player, Flexible, Willing to Travel, Fluent Spanish.”

One way to find out which keywords to include in your electronic résumé is to underline all the skills listed in ads for the types of jobs you are interested in and applying for and include them in your summary.

Figure 1. Chronological Résumé

ROBERTO CORTEZ

5687 Crosswoods Drive Falls Church, Virginia 22046
Home: (703) 987-0086 Office: (708) 549-6624

OBJECTIVE

Accounting management position requiring a knowledge of international finance

EXPERIENCE

March 1999
to present

Staff Accountant/Financial Analyst, Inter-American Imports (Alexandria, Virginia)

- Prepare accounting reports for wholesale giftware importer
- Audit financial transactions with suppliers in twelve Latin American countries
- Created a computerized model to adjust accounts for fluctuations created in currency exchange rates
- Implemented electronic funds transfer for vender disbursements, improving cash flow and eliminating unnecessary clerk positions

October 1995
March 1999

Staff Accountant, Monsanto Agricultural Chemicals(Mexico City, Mexico)

- Handled budgeting, billing, and credit processing functions for the Mexico City branch
- Audited travel/entertainment expenses for Monsanto's 30-member Latin America sales force
- Assisted in launching an online computer system to automate all accounting functions

EDUCATION

1993 to 1995
Mason

Master of Business Administration with emphasis on international business George University (Fairfax, Virginia)

1990 to 1993

Bachelor of Business Administration, Accounting, University of Texas, Austin

INTERCULTURAL AND TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Fluent in Spanish and German
- Traveled extensively in Latin America
- Excel; Access; HTML; Visual Basic

Figure 2. Functional Résumé

Glenda S. Johns

Home: 457 Mountain View Road
Clear Lake, Iowa 50428
(515) 633-5971

College: 1254 Main Street
Council Bluffs, Iowa 5150
(712) 438 5321

OBJECTIVE

Retailing position that utilizes my experience

RELEVANT SKILLS

Personal Sales/Retailing

- Led housewares department in employee sales for spring 2000
- Created end-cap and shelf displays for special houseware promotions
- Sold the most benefit tickets during college fund-raising drive for local community center

People Skills

- Commended by housewares manager for resolving customer complaints amicably
- Performed in summer theater productions in Clear Lake, Iowa

Managing

- Trained part-time housewares employees in cash register operation and customer service
- Reworked housewares employee schedules as assistant manager
- Organized summer activities for children 6-12 years old for city of Clear Lake, Iowa— including reading programs, sports activities, and field trips

EDUCATION

- Associate Degree in Arts, Retailing, Mid-Management (3.81 GPA/4.0 scale), Iowa Western Community College, June 2000
- In addition to required retailing, buying, marketing, and merchandising courses, completed electives in visual merchandizing, business information systems, principles in management, and business math

WORK EXPERIENCE

- Assistant manager, housewares, at Jefferson's Department Store during off-campus work experience program, Council Bluffs, Iowa (fall 1999-spring 2000)
- Sales clerk, housewares, at Jefferson's Department Store during off-campus work experience program, Council Bluffs, Iowa (fall 1998-spring 1999)
- Assistant director, Summer Recreation Program, Clear Lake, Iowa (summer 1998)

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- Student Co-chair for Clear Lake Women's Auxiliary Board Fashion Show (raised \$4000), 2000
- President of Phi Kappa Phi Society at Iowa Community College, 1999
- Student representative (high school) to Clear Lake Chamber of Commerce, 1995-1996

Figure 3. Electronic Résumé

Roberto Cortez
457 Mountain View Road
Clear Lake, Iowa 50428
Home: (515) 633-5971 Office: (703) 549-6624

KEY WORDS

Financial executive, accounting management, international finance, financial analyst, accounting reports, financial audit, computerized accounting model, exchange rates, joint-venture agreements, budgets, billing, credit processing, online systems, MBA, fluent Spanish, fluent German, Excel, Access, Visual Basic, team player, willing to travel

OBJECTIVE

Accounting management position requiring a knowledge of international finance

EXPERIENCE

Staff Accountant/Financial Analyst, Inter-American Imports (Alexandria, Virginia),
March 1999-present

- Prepare accounting reports for wholesale giftware importer, annual sales of \$15 million
- Audit financial transactions with suppliers in twelve Latin American countries

- o Created a computerized model to adjust for fluctuations in currency exchange rates
- o Negotiated joint venture agreements with suppliers in Mexico and Columbia

Staff Accountant, Monsanto Agricultural Chemicals (Mexico City, Mexico),
October 1995 to March 1999

- o Handled budgeting, billing and credit-processing functions for the Mexico City branch
- o Audited travel/entertainment expenses for Monsanto's thirty-member Latin American sales force
- o Assisted in launching an online computer system to automate accounting

EDUCATION

Master of Business Administration with emphasis on international business, George Mason University
(Fairfax, Virginia), 1993 to 1995

Bachelor of Business Administration, Accounting, University of Texas (Austin, Texas), 1990 to 1993

INTERCULTURAL AND TECHNICAL SKILLS

Fluent in Spanish and German
Traveled extensively in latin America
Excel, Access, HTML, Visal Basic
An attractive and fully formatted hard copy of this document is available upon request

Final Tips to Writing the Perfect Résumé

To write an effective résumé, avoid making it

- Too long, too concise, irrelevant, off point
- Too short or sketchy. In this case, the résumé does not give enough information for a proper evaluation of the applicant
- Hard to read for lack of white space
- Wordy

- Too slick, when the resume appears to have been written by someone other than the applicant, raising the question whether the qualifications have been exaggerated
- Poorly reproduced
- Misspelled and ungrammatical throughout
- Boastful. The overconfident tone makes the reader wonder whether the applicant's self-evaluation is realistic
- Dishonest

References

Bovèe, Courtland, and John V. Thill. *Business Communication Today*. 6th ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999.

Lannon, John M. *Technical Communication*. 7th ed. New York: Longman, 1997.

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