Resumes

A resume is a document that summarizes your education, skills, talents, employment history, and experiences in a clear and concise format for potential employers. The resume serves three distinct purposes that define its format, design, and presentation:

1. To represent your relevant professional information in writing
2. To demonstrate the relationship between your professional information and the problem or challenge the potential employer hopes to solve or address, often represented in the form of a job description or duties
3. To get you an interview by clearly demonstrating you meet the minimum qualifications and have the professional background help the organization meet its goals

Regardless of the format, employers have expectations for your resume. They expect it to be clear, accurate, and up to date (Bennett, 2005). This document represents you in your absence, and you want it to do the best job possible. You don't want to be represented by spelling or grammatical errors, as they may raise questions about your education and attention to detail. Someone reading your resume with errors will only wonder what kind of work you might produce that will poorly reflect on their company. There is going to be enough competition that you don't want to provide an easy excuse to toss your resume at the start of the process. Do your best work the first time. Table 4.9.1 highlights some common types of resumes.

Table 4.9.1 Common types of resumes

Type	Function	Advantage	Disadvantage
Chronological	Chronological resumes (which list items in reverse time order) focus on work history.	Demonstrates a consistent work history	It may be difficult to highlight skills and experience.
Functional	Functional resumes (also called competency-based resumes) focus on skills.	Demonstrates skills that can clearly link to job functions or duties	It is often associated with people who have gaps in their employment history.

Type	Function	Advantage	Disadvantage
Combination	A combination resume lists your skills and experience first, then employment history and education.	Highlights the skills you have that are relevant to the job and provides a reverse chronological work history	Some employers prefer a reverse chronological order.
Scannable	A scannable resume is specifically formatted to be read by a scanner and converted to digital information.	Increasingly used to facilitate search and retrieval, and to reduce physical storage costs	Scanners may not read the resume correctly.

Main parts of a resume

Resumes have several basic elements that employers look for, including your contact information, objective or goal, education and work experience, and so on. Each resume format may organize the information in distinct ways based on the overall design strategy, but all information should be clear, concise, and accurate (Simons & Curtis, 2004). The content in your resume should be carefully selected to present the best, most applicable qualifications for a particular employer (the company and position for which you are applying) or purpose (attending a career fair).

Contact information

This section is often located at the top of the document. The first element of the contact information is your name. You should use your full, legal name even if you go by your middle name or use a nickname. There will plenty of time later to clarify what you prefer to be called, but all your application documents, including those that relate to payroll, your social insurance number, background checks, transcripts, certificates, or degrees, should feature your legal name. Other necessary information includes your phone number and email address. For business purposes, do not use an unprofessional email address like ilovedogssooooomuch@….com or teddybears@….com. Create a new e-mail account if needed with an address suitable for professional use. If you have more than one phone number at which you can be reached, list the one you're most likely or most easily able to answer. (Don't make it confusing for an employer to guess which number at which to call you.)

Objective

This is one part of your resume that is relatively simple to customize for an individual application. Your objective should reflect the audience's need to quickly understand how you will help the organization achieve its goals. An example of an objective is shown in Figure 4.9.1.

Objective: To contribute to an increase in sales at ABC Corporation as

Figure 4.9.1 Sample objective statement on a resume

Education

You should list your education in reverse chronological order, with your most recent education first. List the school, credential type (e.g., diploma, certificate, degree), and the full credential name. Don't use abbreviations for your university/college or program. For example, if you're completing a BBA-Accounting, spell it out in full (Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting). If you went to a college or university that may not be known in the area where the organization is that you're applying for a job, include the city and country alongside the name of the school. If you have some post-secondary education, you can include by this indicating you are in progress. In most circumstances, it is preferable to omit your high school education.

Work experience

List in reverse chronological order your employment history, including the positions, companies, locations, dates, duties, and skills demonstrated or acquired. You may choose to use active, descriptive sentences or bullet lists, but be consistent. Emphasize responsibilities that are relevant to the specific job for which you're applying, but don't let emphasis become exaggeration. This document represents you in your absence, and if information is false, at a minimum you could lose your job. Be specific, be precise, and quantify details whenever possible. For example, instead of saying "managed employees during the night shift," you could quantify that statement by saying "supervised 8 employees during 9-hour overnight shifts." Use the present tense to describe positions you currently hold and the past tense to describe positions you no longer hold.

Other relevant qualifications

If you have received awards or honours; given presentations; published papers or other materials; or have other qualifications of note and relevance to the position for which you're applying, you can list these in an appropriately named section on your resume. Don't include a list of your personal interests or hobbies. If you are wondering whether or not to include a piece of information, focus on the audience's needs. Will they find this information valuable in making a decision about you as a candidate? Does it reveal something important about your skills, interests, and qualifications? Does it reveal something new about you that is not already revealed in your resume?

References

You may choose to include references at the end of your resume, though simply writing "references available upon request" is more common (and often more appropriate).

Additional resume strategies

Length

You may also be tempted to extend your resume to more than one page, but don't exceed that limit unless the additional page(s) will feature specific, relevant information that represents several years of work that directly relates to the position. The person reading your resume may be sifting through many applicants and will not spend time reading several extra pages if the content is not directly relevant.

Use key words

Just as there are common search terms and common words in relation to each position, job description, or description of duties, your resume should mirror these common terms when and where appropriate.

Follow directions

If a job description uses specific terms, refers to computer programs, skills, or previous experience, make sure you incorporate that language in your resume (assuming you have those skills or experience!). You know that when given a class assignment, you are expected to follow directions; similarly, the employer is looking for specific skills and experience. By mirroring the employer's language and submitting your application documents in accord with their instructions, you convey a spirit of cooperation and an understanding of how to follow instructions.

Make it easy to read

You need to make sure your resume is easy to read. Use white space between sections. Use emphasis (such as bolding, italicizing, underlining, or all caps) consistently to draw attention to headings or things of note, but avoid using multiple types of emphasis at one. For example, don't bold, underline, and italicize the heading for your work experience section. Choose an easy-to-read font that is typically used in business documents, such as Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri. Avoid using less common font types, which may be difficult to read. A font size of 11 or 12 is easier to read for most people. Be consistent and purposeful in the visual design of your resume. Align bullet points consistently. Use the same types of bullet points in your resume. Align your resume content consistently. Remember that whomever will be reviewing resumes will likely be looking at many documents in a row and may be working quicklymple of a chronological resume is shown in Figure 4.9.2.

Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Cell Phone
Home Phone/Office Phone
E-mail Address

Objective or Statement of Interest
Clear and concise statement of professional goal that may include job or position and may also indicate a field (financial services, human resources).

Employment Experience
- List in reverse chronological order (i.e., put the most recent position first).
- Note the job title, the company, and dates of employment.
- Include clear statements of work performed as part of your job responsibilities, using language similar to the job announcement.
- If the job announcement emphasizes supervisory experience, for example, this should be an area of emphasis in your descriptions of tasks performed.
- Indicate the most important or relevant job responsibilities or skills involved with those tasks first in priority order.
- Include awards, citations, or commendations that relate to your objective or statement of interest.

Education
List earned degrees and incomplete education if applicable:
- Undergraduate Studies, 86 credits, University of State
- Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Computer Information Systems, Community College of State, 2005
- High School Diploma, City High School, GPA or class rank
- Include technical certificates and completed trainings if they directly relate to your objective or statement of interest.

Community Service
List activities, your role, and, if applicable and space is available, your accomplishments:
- Eagle Scout, Troop #12345, 1998–2001
- Youth Choir Leader, Community Interfaith Church, 1995–2001
- Students in Free Enterprise Team, City High School, 1998–2001

References
List names of references, their positions, and their contact information or include "references upon request."

Figure 4.9.2 A sample of a chronological resume

Whereas the chronological resume focuses on employment history, a functional resume, as shown in Figure 4.9.3, highlights skills.

Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Cell Phone
Home Phone/Office Phone
E-mail Address

Objective
Clear and concise statement of professional goal (job or position)

Qualification Highlights
Experience that directly relates to job description
- You may choose to highlight a specific skill that relates to the position (e.g., bilingual, computer and technology proficient, certified diesel technician).
- Only highlight specific skills, certifications, or license(s) that indicate you meet (or exceed) the minimum qualifications.
- Only highlight personal traits if they clearly meet the position description (e.g., if a sales position requires an outgoing personality, highlight theater experience and previous sales experience).

Professional Skills
- You may want to list skills with clear "because" statements, demonstrating your mastery of a skill because of your volunteer work, internship, previous employment, or similar accomplishment.

Sales
You may also want to use a key skill as the focal point (e.g., sales) and include a series of brief statements that demonstrate range or depth of experience in that skill:
- Fundraising for your youth group (name of organization, date)
- Customer service call experience
- Voter recruitment initiative participation
- Census bureau work

Skill 2

Employment History
You may not need this category if you covered it in the skill summaries above.

Education
List earned degrees and incomplete education if applicable:
- Undergraduate Studies, 86 credits, University of State

References
List names of references, their positions, and their contact information or include "references upon request."

Figure 4.9.3 A sample of a functional resume

References

Bennett, S. A. (2005). *The elements of résumé style: Essential rules and eye-opening advice for writing résumés and cover letters that work*. New York, NY: Amacon.

Simons, W., & Curtis, R. (2004). *The Résumé.com guide to writing unbeatable résumés*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

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