

Writing Résumés

No matter the format, your résumé is an important job search tool. Employers rely on them for vital information about applicants as they search for people to interview. Your résumé is often the first (and sometimes only) thing an employer sees, and it must interest the reader and stand out from hundreds of other documents. The best way to catch his or her attention is to provide information he or she needs and present it in a manner that is logical, easy-to-read and customized to the employer.

How do you know what an employer needs? Look at jobs the company has posted. Highlight the experience, education and skills that you have and the employer requires and prefers. Include matching items on your résumé in the appropriate place. Read about a company's values and culture on its website to determine what education, skills and experience are likely to be desirable.

Standard résumé sections and content

- Your name, mailing address, phone and a professional-sounding email address
- A targeted objective or profile that tells the employer what you seek and what you can contribute
- Coverage of relevant education and training (school name, city and state, degree and major/program title and expected/actual graduation date)
- An experience section that helps you illustrate your accomplishments in relevant work, internship and volunteer settings (company/organization name, city and state, job title, start and end dates and bulleted, action-oriented job duty descriptions). To better illustrate accomplishments, use statistics when possible and appropriate
- Skills section that contains your relevant competencies and uses keywords from the job posting

Potential résumé sections and content

- Related coursework for in-progress degrees or unique education programs
- Relevant awards, honors and accomplishments
- Extracurricular and professional leadership activities in clubs and associations
- Licenses and certifications
- A separate military section
- Languages

Check the usefulness of each piece of content. Ask:

- Will this information help me achieve my objective?
- If it will, does the content stand out on my résumé?

Do not include personal information about you, your family, health, religious beliefs, political ideas or salary.

Waste neither your, nor a potential employer's time with dishonesty. Résumés should contain truthful information. Recruiters check.

Content is important, but style is too. Formatting should be appropriate and applied consistently.

Bold

- Your name
- All section headings
- Job titles
- Degree/program names
- Positions held within clubs or organizations

Organize

- Show that you understand logical order of information. (We recommend that you start with the most closely related and noteworthy information.)
- List education and experience in reverse-chronological order—start with the most recent and work backward.
- Organize content so you can guide the reader through the résumé and reveal the reasons why you should be interviewed.
- Résumés should be no longer than two pages. The second page is acceptable, as long as the most relevant information is on the first page. The second page contains useful—but supplemental—information.

Flair?

Not much is required. Format just enough to catch recruiters' attention and make it easy to read. Make your name the largest text on the résumé (size 16-18 is usually appropriate). Black ink is best, and no graphics or images are necessary.

Résumés feature a “just the facts, ma'am” approach and an assertive writing style. There is no need for complete sentences, passive statements (Responsible for), articles (a, an, the) and personal pronouns (I, me, my, we, etc.).

Final word

Spelling, grammar and punctuation must be flawless. Also, look out for typing mistakes. Employers have no tolerance for sloppy résumés. Use spell-check and get others to proofread.