

How to Write a Résumé



A résumé is a one-to two-page written summary of your unique combination of skills, experience and abilities. It has been described as an advertisement of the job seeker. Its sole purpose is to help you get a job interview.

The résumé is used by:

the job seeker . . .

- to make a good enough impression on the employer to secure a job interview.
- to highlight unique and relevant skills and experience.
- for networking, phone contacts, cold calls and job fairs.

the employer . . .

- to screen out most job seekers.
- to identify candidates to interview who possess the skills the company desires.
- as an agenda for the job interview.

Résumé versus job application

Both the résumé and the job application are instruments to convey the same or similar information about the job seeker. The job application is in the format and content that the employer dictates, whereas the résumé's format and content is determined by the job seeker. It is important that the job seeker complete the **JobSearch Guide *Sample Blank Employment Application*** and that they use the information in their ***Sample Completed Employment Application*** as the basis for their résumé.



There are many opinions about what a résumé should look like, what it should include and how it should be presented on the page. It is likely that no two people will agree on a résumé format when asked for advice. Therefore, you have to create a résumé that you are comfortable with.

What to include in a résumé:

- name, address, telephone number.
- a clear and relevant job objective.
- all significant work experience.
- education and training.
- pertinent information about your skills.
- details of past accomplishments.
- military experience.
- organizational/professional memberships.

What not to include on a résumé:

- irrelevant personal information (hobbies, marital status, children, age, Social Security Number, race, disability, height, weight, etc.).
- references: if employers want references, they will ask for them.
- any negative information, including words, phrases or attitudes.
- any handwritten or white-out corrections.

There are basically two types of résumés:



Chronological

- Easiest and least time-consuming to compose.
- Lists previous experience in date (chronological) order, most recent experience first, followed by previous jobs.
- Most commonly used because this résumé format is the one most employers prefer, because it gives them all of the information they want to know in a job application format.
- This is the traditional résumé format, good to use if you have experience and skills similar to the ones needed in the job that you seek.

Skills/Functional

- Is harder and more time-consuming to compose, but works well if you have problems in your work history such as gaps in employment, frequent job changes, limited experience, weak skills, etc.
- Some employers dislike this type of résumé because it can disguise a job seeker's faults.
- Organizes experience by key skills rather than by past jobs.
- Frequently used by professionals who want to emphasize a particularly strong or important skill area.



You can compose a résumé that uses a combination of the chronological and skills résumés. This format lets you combine the best elements of both your skills and your work history. Review the **JobSearch Guides: *Components of a Résumé*, *Sample Chronological Résumés* and *Sample Skills/Functional Résumés*.**

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Choosing the right résumé style for you

Look at the checklist below while considering your work experience, skills, abilities, education and training. The chart will help you decide which résumé style is the right one for you.

If you...	Chronologica l	Skills
have a poor work history, employment gaps or are unemployed		X
have education that is suited to the position desired	X	
have solid training for a specific job, but little paid experience		X
have a work history that demonstrates career growth	X	
are considering a career change	X	X
have had frequent job changes		X
possess related work experience	X	
have little or no related work experience		X
have an impressive work history	X	
lack education		X

Using your résumé in your job search:



- Your résumé alone will not secure a job for you. Your job search strategy must combine an excellent résumé with targeted marketing, networking, follow-up and emotional support to be successful.

- Use your résumé for cold calls, when replying to help wanted ads or as a guideline for interviews.
- Follow up on all résumés that you have sent out preferably by telephone or personal contact.

Sample résumés

Sample résumés can be found in the following **JobSearch Guides**: *Components of a Résumé*, *Sample Chronological Résumés* and *Sample Skills/Functional Résumés*.

Résumé tips

- Don't try to prepare your résumé to suit every employer's needs. Instead customize your résumé to target specific opportunities.
- Whenever possible, research the organization/position and target your résumé accordingly.
- Limit your résumé to one page, if possible, by being brief, relevant, concise and specific. Never exceed two pages!
- Focus on what the employer wants to know and what you can offer the organization.
- Rewrite your résumé until you end up with simple, direct language that includes action words that create a positive impression. Review the **JobSearch Guide *List of Words to Use in Your Résumé***.
- The résumé should be a brief advertisement, not a rambling history of your past. Omit long explanations.
- Proofread for accuracy, relevance, spelling, grammar or other errors.
- Update your résumé frequently, even if you are not looking for a job just in case you need one quickly.
- Avoid using jargon, abbreviations, slang words and different verb tenses.
- When mailing a résumé, you should send it in a 9-x-12-inch manila-type envelope instead of folding it up in a letter envelope.
- Always include a cover letter when submitting a résumé (refer to the **JobSearch Guides: *How to Write a Cover Letter*** and *Sample Cover Letters*).
- The résumé should have a clean, uncluttered appearance with the most important information at the top of the page.
- Your résumé should be easy to read with plenty of white space to break up the reading.
- Use good quality, plain white paper and a quality printer for the best appearance.
- Experiment with your résumé. For example, if your education is more relevant to the job than your experience, list education first on your résumé followed by experience, or vice versa.



Warning

All information on your résumé is subject to verification by the employer. Any discrepancies could be grounds for dismissal.



Internet résumés

More and more employers today are requiring applicants to submit their résumé electronically. Résumés that are posted to the Internet are different in many significant ways from the traditional paper and ink résumés. Because so many employers require applicants to submit their résumé electronically, it is important that the job seeker understand how to utilize this resource.

For assistance in submitting an electronic résumé, review the **JobSearch Guide *How to Write an Internet Résumé***.

Internet resources



- <http://rezscore.com/> -- Get your résumé analyzed by experts. There may be a fee involved in this service.
- www.resume-help.org/article_tips_to_make_resume_writing_simple.htm -- Résumé writing tips.
- www.rileyguide.com -- Links to many résumé writing web sites.