

Resume Writing Basics

A resume is an outline of your accomplishments, which contains the strengths and skills which make you a unique individual. It is snapshot of your education, experience, skills and interests. The purpose of a good resume is to get an interview, so the picture you paint should highlight areas relevant to the kinds of positions that interest you! The employer's point of view should be your guide. Most employers look for common strengths in the candidates. They look for people who take initiative, demonstrate leadership, get the job done or motivate others to do it. Therefore, descriptions of any jobs or activities should reflect both the results you have achieved and your potential.

GETTING STARTED

Create a Master List

The first step is to recall and list every experience you can think of including volunteer/community service, internships, paid jobs, and major research projects. You should also list campus activities, student organizations, and all of your educational experiences. Don't worry about the format yet. This master list will provide you with all the information you need to create your resume and cover letter and prepare for interviewing.

Elaborate On Your List

Next, write descriptions of the items on your list. Include information about your specific responsibilities, skills used, and outcomes you obtained. Use action verbs in your descriptions (see the Action Verb List). Remember to tailor the descriptions to the types of jobs and employers you're targeting. Think about the skills you used in each of your positions that will be of interest to potential employers. You're trying to convince an employer that your skills transfer to the type of position for which you're applying.

Organize Your Resume

After you have written descriptions for your positions, you'll need to decide how to organize your experiences, and what to include in the resume. You do not need to include every experience in your list. Be strategic. Focus on those experiences that will be of most interest to your prospective employer.

NOTE: We do not recommend using a Microsoft Word template or resume 'wizard' – create your own format.

COMMON CATEGORIES/HEADINGS

CONTACT INFORMATION

It's a good idea to include both your current school address and a permanent address. Be sure that your phone numbers are correct, and always include an email address. You only need to list one email address, but be sure you check it frequently. If you use an email address other than your Oberlin one, be sure to use a professional sounding address. Do not include your social security number or date of birth.

OBJECTIVE

An objective is optional, but if you choose to include one make it a concise declaration of the position you seek in a specified area, department, or industry (i.e. a summer internship in a public relations firm.) You will change this statement to fit each position you are seeking, so use the job description for clues. The remainder of your resume must support your career objective in some way. You will elaborate on this more fully in your cover letter, so if you can better use the space on your resume to list relevant experiences and skills, skip the objective.

OBERLIN

COLLEGE  CONSERVATORY

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[E] career@oberlin.edu
[W] www.oberlin.edu/career

EDUCATION

This section gives details about your college, degree, graduation date, and majors. An overall GPA and a Major GPA are optional. Typically, include your GPA if it is 3.0 or higher and add your Major GPA if it is higher than your overall GPA. Include study abroad, additional educational institutions, or select coursework if appropriate. Generally, you will not include your high school (or high school experiences), unless your high school is well known or is relevant to the employer (it is assumed you graduated from high school to get into college).

EXPERIENCE

This is the main content of your resume and is often the largest section. It includes the places you've worked, titles, dates of employment, job duties and your accomplishments since high school. The following are suggestions you want to follow when creating the EXPERIENCE section of your resume:

- Your title, the organization you worked/volunteered with, and the dates of employment are stated first.
- Your position descriptions should not be written in full sentences or in eloquent prose.
- Omit all personal pronouns and utilize action verbs in your description. *See examples below.*
- Write the description of your experiences either using bullets or in a paragraph style making sure it is easy to read. Bulleted statements can contain more than one sentence and be more than one line if needed. *Don't use bullets if you choose a paragraph style.*
- *Do not simply list job responsibilities; instead focus on accomplishments and results.* Illustrate position descriptions with specifics about numbers, outcomes, and goals you met. Use quantitative information when appropriate and strive to be concise. Use the descriptions you wrote while compiling your list, being sure to begin them with action verbs, which give your resume power and direction. Example action verbs are included on the last page.
- Try not to be redundant with your job title. For example, if you were a staff writer for The Review, don't just say you "wrote articles for The Review". That is implied by your title. Instead try to indicate how many articles, about what, whether you conducted interviews, etc.
- You may want to separate your experiences into different sections; for example, you may have "Internship Experience" listed separately to draw special attention to your relevant work history and list other positions under the heading "Work Experience".

Example List of Duties and Skills using Action Verbs:

- "Created a safe and supportive atmosphere"
- "Maintained highly accurate database for Marketing Department"
- "Supervised clerical staff of 12 regarding all administrative activities"
- "Planned and organized special events: concerts, dinners, receptions"
- "Consolidated client database and performed market analyses on 100+ organizations"

Example Bullet Points:

Version #1: *Waited tables. Opened and closed restaurant.*

Version #2: *Provided customer service to patrons of high-traffic café. Opened and closed restaurant.*

Version #3: *Provided quality customer service to patrons of high-traffic café, serving up to 100 meals during busy lunch and dinner shifts. Developed loyal return clientele. Selected by manager over more experienced wait staff to open and close restaurant.*

SKILLS

List your computer, language, and other relevant skills.

ACTIVITIES/LEADERSHIP

If not already included in the Experience section, use this section to describe activities you've participated in, especially if you played a leadership role. This section is especially useful for students and recent grads that do not yet have a great deal of work experience.

REFERENCES

For this section, simply use a phrase such as "Available upon request." Then, on a SEPARATE sheet of paper, list at least three people who know you well and who are willing to be positive references for you. Ask their permission, and give each of them a copy of your resume as a courtesy. Tell them what kinds of positions you are seeking. If possible, include at least one professional reference (someone who knows about your work habits), at least one education reference (someone who knows about your educational abilities), and at least one personal reference (someone who knows you as a member of the community and can vouch for your character). Be certain that you use the same heading (your name and contact information) on your reference sheet as was used on your resume.

FORMAT YOUR RESUME

After you have determined what information you would like to include in your resume, you must choose a format in which to present it.

Most students and recent grads use some variation of a chronological format where experiences are listed in reverse chronological order (most recent first). You can list either your employer or your job title first – typically you will start with whichever is stronger and be consistent. Most employers prefer a chronological form of resume, since it makes it easy for them to spot work continuity and determine what knowledge and skills were used in what positions. Since most employers now accept and even prefer online applications, keep the format of your resume simple and straightforward.

You should emphasize experiences that are relevant to your objective or experiences that demonstrate specific transferable skills that would be needed. If these relevant experiences are not necessarily your most recent or are volunteer or extracurricular, you can still feature them first by using a Relevant Experience section. Give a good amount of detail and be specific in your descriptions. Other experiences can be listed under an Additional Experience section with much less description.

Other formatting options include functional and combination resumes. In these types of resumes you describe experiences under specific skill headings (see Sample for Mary X Student).

LENGTH:

Your resume should be one page long. Two-page resumes are acceptable only under certain circumstances.

Remember that employers spend very little time scanning your resume. Good information on the second page might never be seen. It's best to keep the resume succinct and leave out unrelated experience.

If you must use a two-page resume, make sure your name is at the top of the second page.

APPEARANCE:

There are many ways to design a resume. You want it to be easy to read, so have a good balance of text and white space. Don't try to be too creative. Stick to something that can be scanned quickly.

MARGINS:

½ inch to one inch is standard. Make sure your resume is centered on the page.

FONT SIZE/STYLE:

A 10-12pt font is standard. Times and Times New Roman are two professional looking styles. Use only one font style in your resume.

FINALIZE A DRAFT:

Proofread, proofread, proofread! Even if you use spell-check and grammar-check, proofread carefully and have your resume critiqued by at least one other person. The best way to proof your resume is to read it out loud to another person who has a copy of it or bring it to Career Services. Before you submit anything it is critical to review the position description (if you are submitting the resume for a specific job/internship) to be sure your document reflects the needs of the organization. Create different resume versions for different audiences. Many fields have different expectations of resumes, so be sure yours is appropriate. If your resume is for a specialized or technical field (science, theater or computer science for example), be sure to have a faculty member in your department look it over.

You will most likely submit your resume to an employer through email or a website. You will want to make sure the resume is saved in .doc format or as a PDF (best option). If you are required to mail your resume print it on the same paper you will use for your cover letters. Choose a conservative color: white, ivory, off-white, light gray or eggshell.

A WORD ABOUT CVs

A CV (curriculum vitae) is simply an academic version of a resume. You may be asked to provide a CV when applying to graduate school or for research positions. If you finish a Ph.D. program, you will need a CV for your job search. A CV emphasizes earned degrees, teaching and research experience, publications, and presentations. As an undergraduate, you probably do not have a great deal of this type of experience, but you can still tailor your resume to fit an academic environment. You should include relevant academic information, presentations or poster sessions at professional conferences, and publications, if applicable. The rest of the CV can focus on other experience, including activities you've participated in on campus, leadership positions you've held, and employment experience.

CRITIQUING YOUR RESUME - Use the following guidelines to self-critique your résumé's quality & effectiveness.

Overall Presentation

1. Does it look neat? Is the layout pleasing to the eye? Does it look easy to read?
2. Is it too busy? Are there too many different fonts or sizes?
3. Do headlines/categories stand out? Were you consistent in placement of headings?
4. Is it free of typographical errors and misspelled words?
5. Is the resume too long or short?

Contents

A. Basic Information

1. Does your name stand out?
2. Are your address, phone and e-mail easy to find?

B. Objective (optional)

1. Does it stress job titles, functions, skills?
2. Does it project knowledge of desired career field?

C. Education

1. Have you presented college(s), degree(s), course(s), honor(s)?
2. Are GPA(s) presented?

3. Did you include any study away experiences?

D. Experience

1. Have you included experiences that project skills and accomplishments?
2. Did you describe experiences in active phrasing? (see action verb list)
3. Are experiences grouped according to topics? Do the categories correspond to the experiences?
4. Do job titles, organizations or both stand out?
5. Have you presented experiences in reverse chronological order?

E. Activities

1. Have you listed appropriate activities, noting leadership?
2. Have you avoided using acronyms?

F. Special Categories

1. Have you presented your SKILLS in an easy to read format? (i.e. COMPUTER SKILLS, LANGUAGE SKILLS)

G. Interests

1. Have you included only positive information?

FATAL RESUME FLAWS:

- Lack of focus or direction
- Long, rambling sentences
- Crowded, cramped appearance
- Use of personal pronouns
- Dense blocks of narrative
- Poor print quality (light, faded)
- Strange or inappropriate graphics
- Inconsistent format
- Reused or recycled appearance
- Typographical errors or misspellings
- Smudges, stains, wrinkles
- Handwritten corrections
- Unusual or careless folding

The staff and Peer Career Advisors in the Office of Career Services would be delighted to work with you on your resume. Please visit the office in Stevenson-Longman or contact us at career.services@oberlin.edu | 440.775.8140

EXAMPLE CATEGORY HEADINGS - *Headings will depend upon your background and what will be of interest to the prospective employer. You may include some of the following:*

Academic Highlights	Course Concentration	Honors & Distinctions	Professional Leadership
Academic Honors	Credentials	In-service Training	Professional Societies
Achievements	Degree	Interests	Publications
Affiliations	Departmental Service	International Experiences	References
Areas of Expertise	Education	Internship Experience	Scholarships
Avocations	Educational Background	Job Objective	Service Skills & competencies
Awards	Educational Preparation	Languages License(s)	Special Training
Civic Contributions	Employment	Part-time Work	Student Teaching
Classroom Experience	Endorsements	Position Desired	Study Abroad
Coaching	Experience	Practicum Experience	Teaching Certificate(s)
Certification	Highlights	Presentations	Travel Abroad
College Activities	Extracurricular	Professional Activities	Volunteer Activities
College	Interests		
Distinctions	Field Experience		
Community Involvement	Honorary Societies		
Community Service			

SAMPLE ACTION VERBS - *For more examples see "The Honking Big List of Action Verbs" at http://www.oberlin.edu/career/students/resume_intro.html*

accomplished	delegated	invented	questioned
adapted	demonstrated	investigated	realized
administered	designed	launched	recommended
advised	developed	lectured	recorded
analyzed	devised	maintained	recruited
appraised	discovered	managed	redesigned
approved	directed	marketed	reduced
assembled	discovered	mastered	regulated
assisted	earned	measured	reorganized
authored	eliminated	mediated	represented
broadcast	enhanced	modeled	researched
budgeted	established	moderated	reviewed
built	evaluated	motivated	rewrote
catalogued	examined	negotiated	scheduled
clarified	facilitated	organized	screened
coached	financed	originated	served
communicated	fostered	performed	simplified
compared	founded	persuaded	solved
competed	generated	planned	sponsored
compiled	guided	prepared	strengthened
composed	heightened	presented	succeeded
conducted	identified	prioritized	supervised
constructed	illustrated	produced	systematized
consulted	implemented	programmed	taught
controlled	increased	promoted	tested
coordinated	installed	proposed	toured
copyrighted	integrated	provided	trained
correlated	interpreted	publicized	translated
corresponded	interviewed	published	updated
created	introduced	purchased	wrote