

How to Write a Resume *

Step 1: Choose a Format

Step 2: Order your Information

Step 3: Style your Resume



Think of your resume this way: It's an advertisement, and YOU are the product. Your goal is to get hiring managers to buy into what you're selling – which means giving you an interview. Much like the flashing neon signs along the Vegas Strip, hiring managers are attracted to well-formatted resumes with attention-grabbing details. Studies show that, "8 out of 10 resumes are discarded with only a 10 second glance." When you finish with your resume, don't forget to write a matching cover letter (see our cover letter handout for help).

Step 1: Choose a Format

Your formatting decision comes down to 3 choices: Reverse-Chronological, Functional, and Combination. Each format has its own advantages and disadvantages. Below, you will find which one is best for you.

I. Reverse-Chronological Format

This is the more traditional format and is what you are most likely to come across.

Chronological formats list your work experience in reverse order, beginning with the job you currently have or just left. Since work experience is listed first it's best for:

I should use if:

- I want to show a vertical career progression.
- I want to apply to a job in a similar field.
- I want to promote my upward career mobility

I shouldn't use if:

- I have major gaps in my employment history.
 - I am changing my career path.
 - I change jobs every few months.

*This information was taken and edited from the Resume Genius website (<https://resumegenius.com/how-to-write-a-resume>)

II. Functional Format

While chronological places emphasis on career progression, a functional format focuses on your abilities and skills. Since it heavily emphasizes the applicant's qualifications, functional format is more suitable for those with an expert level of experience.

I should use if:

- I have gaps in my employment history.
- I am changing my career industry.
- I want to highlight a specific skill set.

I shouldn't use if:

- I want to highlight my upward career mobility.
- I am an entry level candidate that lacks experience.
 - I lack transferable skills

III. Combination Format

As you can probably guess the combination format merges bits and pieces from both chronological and functional formats. Like the functional format, it focuses on specific qualifications, yet the body of the document contains professional experience similar to chronological format. This format is generally reserved for those with a great deal of experience in a particular industry. We have templates of all three types and you can move things around or take different aspects of different forms to create your own original format. As long as it shows you in the best light in terms of the specific job you are applying for, you are on the right track!

I should use if:

- I want to highlight a developed skill set within a specific career.
- I want to change my career path.
- I am a master of the subject I am applying to.

I shouldn't use if:

- I want to highlight my education.
 - I lack experience.
- I am an entry level candidate.

Step 2: Order Your Information

I. Contact Information

The contact information section is pretty self-explanatory. This section does NOT require a label (Contact Information or Contact Details). Do NOT use a header and follow this order:

1. **Name** (largest font on page, middle initial is optional)
2. **Mailing Address**
3. **Telephone Number** (Check that you have an appropriate voicemail message)
4. **Email Address** (make sure it's appropriate, don't use your sexypanda45@gmail.com account.)
5. **Link to online portfolio** (optional, ensure it is relevant to the position)
6. **LinkedIn Profile** (optional)

II. Choose a Resume Introduction

Like formats, job seekers have 3 choices for their resume introduction: a qualifications summary, career objective, and professional profile. The goal of all three are to gain the attention of an employer by highlighting your skills and experience that will help their company. However, the method through which each introduction achieves this goal differs. See below:

Qualifications Summary

With regards to format, the qualifications summary is a bullet point list (ranging from 4 to 6 points) of your most outstanding career achievements. Avoid using generic statements and try to list your skills in a way reflects your unique voice.

I should use if:

- I am applying to a job that requires a rigid set of abilities.
- I have a wealth of experience in the industry.
- I possess multiple skill sets.

I shouldn't use if:

- I lack experience.
- I am an entry level candidate that lacks specific skill sets.
- I lack measurable achievements.

Career Objective

A career objective is a 2-3 sentence statement that provides an overview of your skills and experience. This resume introduction is best for entry-level candidates.

I should use if:

- I am an entry-level applicant.
- I do not have in-depth experience in the industry.
- I am a recent college graduate.

I shouldn't use if:

- I have a wealth of industry-specific skill sets.
- I am changing career paths.
- I am writing a cover letter.

Professional Profile

The professional profile is a combination of both the career objective and qualifications summary. It is also the most flexible of the three styles as it can be formatted as short paragraph or bullet-point list.

I should use if:

- I have had major achievement in my past experience
- I am applying to a position in the same industry
- I have a special area of expertise in my field

I shouldn't use if:

- I am an entry-level applicant
- I am recent college graduate
- I lack measurable accomplishments

Finally, when deciding what skills to add, try to target skills specific to the job you are applying for. Don't just simply copy and paste skills right out of the job description, but instead try to use words common in the industry.

III. Professional Experience

The section is the core of your resume, where you are tasked with proving the skills you have listed in the qualifications summary or career objective. When it comes to labeling this section some use "Relevant Experience" or "Work Experience."

Remember to list your work experiences in reverse chronological order and only list experience that is relevant to the job you are applying for. For each company create a heading including the company's name, city & state, your title, and the dates of employment (month and year). If you are still currently working at a company, you can simply write "month, year-Present" for the employment dates.

3 Parts of a strong bullet point

- 1st: Action Verb (should always be first)
- 2nd: Quantifiable Point
- 3rd: Specific and relevant job duty

Example #1:

- Trained 5+ cashiers, managing their cash limits and guaranteeing quality customer service at all times.

Example #2:

- Spearheaded the development of the first media kit amalgamation for all company projects, increasing national sales by 8%.

The above bullet points are great examples because they use action verbs to help to snatch the attention of hiring managers.

IV. Education

Having a solid education section helps to display the foundation of your knowledge and expertise. Depending on your professional experience, you may want to consider switching the order of the professional experience and education sections. Here are the main points to include in your education section:

- **The names of your university, community college, or technical school**(Don't include high school unless you did not attend college)
- **Location of the schools** (city, state)
- **Date of graduation** (month, year)
- **Degree(s) or Certificate(s) earned/ working toward**
- **GPA** (only include if your GPA is above 3.0, round up to the first decimal place , and use this format: GPA: 3.5/4.0)

V. Additional Sections

By now you've already added the nuts and bolts to your resume. Below are a few sections you may want to consider adding to help strengthen it:

Certifications/Licenses

Publications

Awards/Honors/Activities

- Grants
- Academic Honors
- Scholarships
- Volunteer positions
- Professional Affiliations

Technical Skills

- **Software:** Proficient in Microsoft Office Suite, Visio, and Oracle
- **Programming Languages:** Excel at HTML, C++, and Python

Additional Skills

Including an additional skills section may be worth considering. An additional skills section is a short and concise list of skills relevant to your industry. This section is similar a technical skills, but is often used for industries that do not specifically require advanced skills.

What to include:

- Fluency in a second language
- Knowledge of computer applications (ie Photoshop, Illustrator)
- Ability to operate heavy machinery

What not to include:

- Generic statements (Customer Service Skills)
 - Run of the mill skills
 - Unrelated skills

Step 3: Style your Resume

I. Number of Pages

This is the most argued point of resume writing. Some professionals vigorously discourage applicants from going over one page, while others argue that in some instances it is acceptable. The bottom line is this: **if you have information that is highly relevant to the position you are applying for then go ahead and add an extra page.** However, if you are just adding fluff for the sake of adding pages, then your resume will suffer.

II. Font and Sizing Dos and Don'ts

Font style and size is largely dependent on your preference. You can never be sure what the hiring manager prefers so you have to go with gut. However there are some Dos and Don'ts when it comes to choosing your font and sizes.

Dos

- Choose easy-to-read fonts
- Use the same font throughout
- Change sizes in descending order for your name, headers, and bullet points
- Choose a font that fits with the text sizes you've chosen

Don'ts

- Don't choose small sizes to fit everything on one page
 - Don't pick wacky fonts
- Don't have one uniform text size throughout
 - Don't go below 9pt

For sizing, many resumes follow a 24, 12, 10 format. This means that the name is 24pt, the body headers are 12pt, and the bullet points are 10pt.

It's worth noting whether your resume is a paper version or an electronic version. For a paper version it's better to use Serif fonts, while electronic versions look better in Sans Serif fonts. Below are some popular font choices.

Serif Fonts:

Times New Roman
Georgia
Bookman Old Style
Century Gothic

San Serif Fonts:

Arial
Helvetica
Tahoma
Calibri

III. Lines

Lines are great to use to help break up the resume and allow potential employers to better process the information. Line breaks commonly begin after the career objective or qualifications summary. From there, they are used to break each subsequent section. How you divide it is up to you, but just don't go page break crazy for every bit of information. Too many page breaks will ruin its readability.