



Résumé Writing Guide

A résumé is a marketing tool that highlights the aspects of your background you wish to draw to an employer's attention. It is often an employer's initial contact with you and they typically base decisions to interview on the content of this document. Résumé writing is important and deserves an investment of time. You must be willing to write and edit until you have a well-organized document that emphasizes your most relevant qualifications for the position you seek.

On average an employer initially spends less than 30 seconds reviewing your résumé. In this short time you need to convince the reader you are impressive enough to be invited for an interview. How do you do this? Where do you start? First of all, you need to know what a résumé is and what it is designed to do. Make those 30 seconds count!

The Basics:

- 1. Be concise:** Use phrases not sentences; use words that are carefully chosen.
 - 2. Think in terms of the reader:** Gear your résumé to the skills, experiences, and qualities employers seek in a candidate. Focus on the needs of your target employers. It will be beneficial to write your résumé based on the qualifications listed in the job vacancy listing.
 - 3. Use a formal writing style:** Because this is an important document, stick with a formal writing style using abbreviations only for states (ND), GPA, and degrees (BS, BA, MA, PhD).
 - 4. Make your résumé easy to read:** Choose a visually appealing layout that presents the most relevant information in the top portion of your résumé. Don't make the employer hunt to locate information! Using .5 inch to 1.5 inch margins is recommended.
 - 5. Use a font that is easy on the eyes and between 10 and 12 point:** Employers may scan your résumé into a computer database so use bold, italics and underlining conservatively. Fonts such as Calibri or Arial are a good choice.
 - 6. Length:** Many employers prefer one page, but use two pages if your experience and qualifications warrant. If you do use two pages, put the most relevant information on the first page and be sure to put your name and "page 2" at the top of the second page. If you have difficulty narrowing down your résumé, consider removing elements that are not closely related to the opportunities for which you are applying.
 - 7. Final Draft:** Proofread carefully! Don't rely on spell check alone. Spell check cannot distinguish if you should use two, to, or too! If you are sending an electronic copy of your résumé, save it as a PDF to ensure your format is maintained when opened on a new computer. If you are not saving the file as a PDF, send the email to yourself first to ensure it looks professional when it is opened.
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Select a Résumé Format:

There are three basic types to consider.

- 1. Chronological:** This is the most common type of résumé and presents your experience by listing and

describing positions you have held (whether paid or unpaid), employers, and dates. Present information in reverse-chronological order (most recent first).

2. Functional: This style emphasizes skills, qualifications, and accomplishments rather than position titles, employers, and dates. It can be effective for career changers or those with limited or erratic work histories. It may also work well for someone who wants to emphasize skills they have acquired relevant to current job objectives.

3. Combination: This combines the functional and chronological styles. Experience is organized chronologically with duties and responsibilities presented through skill clusters.

When Should You Use Curriculum Vitae?

A curriculum vitae (CV) is typically for academic or research positions. It is usually longer than a résumé and will include publications, areas of research, presentations, and courses one is prepared to teach. Please visit the Career Development Center if you feel curriculum vitae is right for you.

Once you determine which format you think would work best for your background and purpose you can begin your first draft. Remember, your résumé highlights **RELEVANT** information related to the position(s) to which you are applying. Organize this information into categories that are easy to understand and identify by employers.

Résumé Sections: How you order and label the sections of your résumé should be based on what aspect(s) of your background are most relevant to the position(s) you seek. Do not use an online or Microsoft Word résumé template. They often omit critical information, are very difficult to edit, and often do not retain the original format when emailed. Remember, readers reviewing your résumé will give the most attention to what is at the beginning of your résumé and pay less attention as they scan to the bottom. Make sure what you want them to see jumps out at them EARLY!

Identifying Information:

- Name, address, phone number, and email address (an address such as cutiepie@yahoo.com will not promote you as a candidate).
- Ensure your voice mail is professional and appropriate for potential employers to leave a message if need be.
- Include a local and permanent address if you are a current student.

Objective:

- A brief statement providing focus to your résumé indicating the kind of position you want and what you offer. The rest of the résumé should provide evidence of your qualifications for the position you seek.
- Should be specific to a position, skills you want to utilize, or field you want to enter.
- This is an optional section. Remember space on your résumé is prime real estate. If you do not write a **GOOD** objective, it would be better to omit the objective altogether to save space for

other qualifications. You may substitute an objective with “Career Highlights” or “Summary of Qualifications” section.

- Example of a **BAD** Objective: *A career with a progressive organization where I can use my education, skills, abilities, and experience to effectively contribute to the overall organization.* --- What kind of job does this person want? The reader would have no idea what this person’s career goals are. The reader wants to know what you can contribute to the company. Match the organization’s needs to your skills and abilities.
- Example of a **GOOD** Objective: *A mechanical engineering position in manufacturing operations and development where mechanical aptitude and commitment to safety can contribute to profits and efficiency.* **OR** *A position as an auditor with a large public accounting firm.*---An objective can limit your options if it is too specific. That’s why it is a good idea to write a new one for each position you apply for. Always tailor it for the job you seek.

Education:

- Include institution(s) attended, degree(s) obtained or expected, major(s), graduation date, minors, and concentrations.
- Can include relevant courses, study abroad, honors, or scholarships (or put these in separate sections).
- GPA is optional, depending on the position you are applying for. **DO NOT** list your GPA if it is under a 3.0. You may include your overall and major GPA, making sure to designate each one clearly.
- High School information is not included unless you are a freshman or sophomore, or you had a specialized high school experience relevant to your career objective.

Relevant Coursework:

This is an important section to include, especially when applying for internships, as employers like to know your familiarity with their particular field. List the highest level of coursework taken in your major, as well as any coursework related to your career goal. Be sure to list the courses in two or three columns, so they may be read more easily.

Projects:

If you have completed any relevant projects in your classes you can include them here. A project section highlights relevant technical and teamwork skills which are of interest to an employer. List the name of each project and the semester in which it was completed. Use phrases to describe the project, and start each phrase on its own line with an action verb. Be sure to discuss your role in the project, the purpose of the project, and how you met the challenges presented.

Skills:

- A skills section is important to include, especially when applying for positions which require some level of technical knowledge. This section can include computer skills, language abilities, laboratory, and research skills.
- May be broken down in specific sections: For example, computer science majors may have hardware, software, and programming listed under computer skills.
- Indicate your level of expertise if indicating a foreign language. A great resource is the Language Skills Self-Assessment Tests through the Interagency Language Roundtable www.govtilr.org.

Experience:

- Always keep your objective in mind when deciding what experiences you will include and highlight!
- In the experience section any relevant work, volunteer, or leadership experience should be listed. Traditional résumé formats begin with present/last position and record information in reverse chronological order. However, your most important and relevant experiences should ideally appear first. In order to highlight relevant experiences, try creating more specific categories such as “Writing Experience, Computer experience, Work Experience”, and list experiences accordingly. Usually, listing experiences in these types of categories will naturally result in a reverse chronological order within each category.
- Each experience should be listed separately with the job title, name of department, name of organization, city and state, and dates of employment being included. Under each experience, list accomplishments that would be of interest to an employer and translate your experiences into results, quantifying when possible. Use an action verb to start each phrase, and remember it is okay to include fragments and incomplete sentences.
- A tip you can use to be sure you have worded your statements properly is to put an ***imaginary*** “I” in front of the statement. If it makes sense with the “I”, you have probably written the statement correctly.

SAMPLE ACTION VERBS

Abstracted	Consolidated	Explained	Measured	Repaired
Accomplished	Constructed	Explored	Mediated	Replaced
Accumulated	Consulted	Expressed	Memorized	Reported
Achieved	Contacted	Extracted	Mentored	Represented
Acquainted	Contracted	Extrapolated	Merged	Researched
Acquired	Contributed	Fabricated	Met deadlines	Reserved
Acted	Controlled	Facilitated	Ministered	Reshaped
Adapted	Converted	Factored	Modeled	Resolved
Addressed	Conveyed	Familiarized	Moderated	Responded
Adjusted	Convinced	Fashioned	Modernized	Restored
Administered	Cooperated	Filed	Modified	Restructured
Adopted	Coordinated	Financed	Molded	Retailed
Advanced	Corrected	Focused	Monitored	Retained
Advertised	Corresponded	Followed through	Motivated	Retrieved
Advised	Counseled	Fomented	Navigated	Revamped

Advocated	Created	Forecast	Negotiated	Reviewed
Aided	Critiqued	Forecasted	Netted	Revised
Allocated	Cultivated	Formed	Nourished	Revitalized
Amplified	Customized	Formulated	Nurtured	Revolutionized
Analyzed	Cut	Fortified	Obliged	Riveted
Answered	Debated	Fostered	Observed	Routed
Applied	Debugged	Found	Obtained	Saved
Appointed	Decided	Founded	Operated	Scheduled
Appraised	Decreased	Funded	Orchestrated	Screened
Apprised	Defined	Furnished	Ordered	Searched
Approached	Delegated	Furthered	Organized	Secured
Approved	Delivered	Gained	Originated	Secured
Arbitrated	Demonstrated	Gathered	Outlined	Selected
Archived	Designated	Generated	Overhauled	Served as
Arranged	Designed	Governed	Oversaw	Served on
Arranged	Detailed	Grouped	Packaged	Served
Articulated	Detected	Guided	Participated	Serviced
Assembled	Determined	Handled	Perceived	Set goals
Assessed	Developed	Harmonized	Performed	Settled
Assigned	Developed	Helped	Persuaded	Set-up
Assisted	sensitivity	Hired	Photographed	Shaped
Assumed	Devised	Hosted	Pinpointed	Simplified
responsibility	Diagnosed	Identified	Pioneered	Sold
Attained	Directed	Illustrated	Planned	Solicited
Attended	Disbursed	Imagined	Prepared	Solidify
Audited	Discovered	Implemented	Presented	Solved
Augmented	Discriminated	Improved	Presided	Sorted
Authored	Discussed	Incorporated	Prevented	Sourced
Authorized	Dispatched	Increased	Printed	Specialized
Automated	Dispensed	Influenced	Prioritized	Specified
Awarded	Displayed	Informed	Processed	Spoke
Backed	Disproved	Initiated	Produced	Sponsored
Balanced	Disseminated	Innovated	Programmed	Stabilized
Billed	Dissuaded	Inspected	Projected	Standardized
Boosted	Distinguish	Inspired	Promoted	Stimulated
Bought	Distributed	Installed	Proofread	Streamlined
Briefed	Documented	Instigated	Proposed	Strengthened
Broadened	Doubled	Instilled	Provided	Studied
Budgeted	Downsized	Instituted	Publicized	Submitted
Built	Drafted	Instructed	Published	Suggested
Calculated	Drew	Insured	Purchased	Summarized
Catalogued	Earned	Integrated	Quadrupled	Supervised
Categorized	Economized	Interacted	Qualified	Supplemented
Centralized	Edited	Interfaced	Read	Supplied
Certified	Educated	Interpreted	Realized	Supported
Chaired	Effectuated	Intervened	Reasoned	Surveyed
Charted	Elicited	Interviewed	Reassured	Synthesized

Checked	Eliminated	Introduced	Reclaimed	Systematized
Classified	Emphasized	Invented	Recognized as	Tabulated
Closed (a deal)	Empowered	Inventoried	Recommended	Taught
Coached	Enabled	Invested	Reconciled	Terminated
Coded	Enacted	Investigated	Reconstructed	Tested
Collaborated with	Encouraged	Invited	Recorded	Trained
Collated	Enforced	Involved	Recruited	Transcribed
Collected	Engineered	Isolated	Rectified	Transformed
Combined	Enhanced	Joined	Redeemed	Translated
Communicated	Enlarged	Judged	Redesigned	Treated
Compared	Enlightened	Launched	Redirected	Tripled
Compiled	Enlisted	Lectured	Reduce	Tutored
Completed	Ensured	Led	Reduced	Underwrote
Composed	Entertained	Liaised	Reeducated	Unified
Computed	Established	Listened	Referred	Updated
Conceived	Estimated	Lobbied	Reformed	Upgraded
Concentrated	Evaluated	Located	Registered	Upsized
Conceptualized	Examined	Logged	Regulated	Utilized
Conciliated	Exceeded	Made	Rehabilitated	Validated
Condensed	Excelled	Maintained	Reinforced	Valued
Conducted	Executed	Managed	Related	Verified
Conferred	Exhibited	Manufactured	Remodeled	Visualized
Configured	Expanded	Marketed	Rendered	Won
Conserved	Expedited	Mastered	Reorganized	Wrote
Considered	Experimented			

Activities:

- Evidence of involvement is important to employers as it shows another dimension of you as a candidate.
- Include campus activities, volunteer positions, committees, and athletics. You may have listed and described activities that are relevant to your objective in the Experience section. In that case, don't repeat them again. This section will include other activities in which you've been involved.
- Include position, organization name, location, and dates of involvement (month/year-month/year).
- You may want to include descriptive statements if you had significant accomplishments or skills you developed through participating in the activity.
- Put activities relevant to your objective in your Experience section for greater emphasis.

Interests:

- List of personal interests is optional; good for rapport building during interview.
- Be specific and truthful.
- Do not go overboard with your list, keep it to one line.

Honors and Achievements:

The purpose of listing honors is to indicate strong academic abilities and to relate them to the mission of the employer. These should be listed in chronological order, with the most recent first. They can include the month and year the honor was received, and high school honors and award can be included if there is room. Examples of honors include special awards, Dean's List, and scholarships. Achievements may be listed in a separate section which outlines shows, exhibits, and publications.

References:

- Not mandatory to include a statement about references such as "References Available Upon Request."
- Create a separate "references" sheet with your header information at the top that lists the names and contact information of individuals (faculty, supervisors) who have agreed to serve as your recommenders. This sheet should only be provided upon request.
- Ensure that your references are positive! Make sure to keep your references informed about which positions you are applying for so they may tailor their reference to highlight your skills and abilities that will be applicable to the position.

Contact the Career Development Center for assistance with writing cover letters, résumés, and thank you letters. Stop by the CDC to view résumé samples. The CDC is also available to assist with mock interviews.