

Resume Writing

DePauw University Writing Center

The DePauw writing consultants unanimously agree that the best way to write a resume is to follow a model and then revise, revise, revise. This handout, an abbreviated chapter of a business writing textbook, presents several common ways of organizing resumes and a checklist for you to use as you design your document. The writing tutors are happy to help you improve wording, make stylistic changes, and edit after you have produced a draft.

Resume Facts

- The purpose of a resume is to kindle employer interest and generate an interview.
- Hundreds of thousands of good resumes cross employers' desks every working day.
- Your resume probably has less than ten seconds to make an impression.
- By including too much information, a resume may actually kill the reader's appetite to know more.

As with any piece of writing, one main factor to consider is organization. There are three main resume types: chronological, functional and targeted. For examples, please visit the Writing Center.

No matter what type you choose, remember **the resume will first be evaluated based on its appearance, not its content**. As a rule of thumb, try to write a one-page resume but don't be so locked into this "rule" that you compromise listing your pertinent experiences.

- Leave ample white space and margins ■ Break up the text by using headings ■ Keep your writing simple and direct ■
- Use short, crisp phrases starting with action verbs ■ Pay attention to mechanics ■

Key characteristics of a good resume are:

- NEATNESS ■ SIMPLICITY ■ ACCURACY ■ HONESTY ■

The Chronological Resume lists work experience or education in reverse chronological order (most recent first), describes responsibilities and accomplishments associated with each job or educational experience. The most traditional type of resume, the “experience” section dominates this format. If you are just graduating from college, you can arrange the resume so that your educational data comes first.

Use a Chronological Resume when:

- Your last employer is well known and highly respected
- You plan to continue along your established career path
- Your job history shows progressively more responsible positions
- You are applying to a traditional organization

The Functional Resume lists “functional” experience separate from employment history. Instead of listing work experience chronologically, this format groups past experiences to showcase your individual competencies. This arrangement may be especially good for recent graduates without much on-the-job experience.

Use a Functional Resume when:

- You want to emphasize capabilities not used in recent jobs
- You are entering the job market for the first time or are changing careers
- You have held a variety of unrelated jobs
- Your work has been freelance or mostly temporary (i.e. WT or summer internships)

The Targeted Resume lists capabilities and accomplishments pertaining to a specific job and lists other work experience briefly in a separate section. This type should be used when you want to focus attention on what you can do for a particular employer in a particular position. This is a good organizational choice for people who have a very clear idea of what they want to do and can demonstrate their ability in the targeted area.

Use a Targeted Resume when:

- You are very clear about your job target
- Have several career objectives and want a separate resume for each
- Want to emphasize capabilities that you may not have performed for a regular employer

Checklist for Resumes

Content and Style

- ❑ Prepare the resume before the application letters to summarize the facts that the letter will be based on.
- ❑ Present the strongest, most relevant qualifications first.
- ❑ Use short noun phrases and action verbs, not whole sentences.
- ❑ Use facts, not opinions.
- ❑ Avoid personal pronouns.
- ❑ Omit the date of preparation.
- ❑ Omit mention of your desired salary, work schedule, or vacation schedule.

Heading and Contact Information

- ❑ List your name, address, area code, telephone number, and e-mail address – for both home and school or work, if appropriate.

Career Objective and Skills Summary

- ❑ State the type of work you want (not a job title) and your career objective
 - State a broad and flexible goal to increase the scope of your job prospects.
 - Prepare separate resumes if you can do unrelated types of work, such as bookkeeping and nursing.
- ❑ Summarize your key qualifications.
- ❑ State the month and, if you know it, the day on which you will be available to start work.

Education

- ❑ List all relevant schooling and training since high school, with the most recent first.
 - List the name and location of every postsecondary school you have attended, with the dates you entered and left and the degrees of certification you obtained.
 - Indicate your major (and minor) fields in college work.
 - State the numerical base for your grade-point average, overall or in your major, if your average is impressive enough to list.
- ❑ List relevant required or elective courses in descending order of importance.
- ❑ List any other relevant educational or training experiences, such as job-related seminars or workshops attended and certificates obtained.

Work Experience

- ❑ List all relevant work experience, including paid employment and volunteer work.
- ❑ List full-time and part-time jobs, with the most recent first.
 - State the month/year you started and left each job.
 - Provide the name and location of the firm that employed you.
 - List your job title and describe your functions briefly.
 - Note on-the-job accomplishments such as an award or a suggestion that saved the organization time or money.

Activities, Honors, and Achievements

- ❑ List all relevant unpaid activities, including offices and leadership positions you have held; significant awards or scholarships not listed elsewhere; projects you have undertaken that show an ability to work with others; and writing or speaking activities, publications, and roles in academic or professional organizations.
- ❑ In most circumstances, exclude mention of religious or political affiliations.

Other Relevant Facts

- List other relevant information such as your typing speed or your proficiency in languages other than English.
- Mention your ability to operate any machines, equipment, or computer software used in the job.

Personal Data

- Omit data that could be regarded negatively or used to discriminate against you.
- Omit or downplay references to age if it could suggest inexperience or approaching retirement.
- Describe military service (branch of service, where you served, rank attained, and the dates of induction and discharge) here or, if relevant, under “Education” or “Work Experience.”
- List job-related interests and hobbies, especially those indicating stamina, strength, sociability, other qualities that are desirable in the position you seek.

References

- List three to five references, or offer to supply the names on request.
 - Supply names of academic, employment, and professional associates – but no relative.
 - Provide a name, title, address, and telephone number to each reference.
 - List no name as a reference until you have that person’s permission to do so.
- Exclude your present employer if you do not want him or her to know you are seeking another position, or add “Resume submitted in confidence” at the top or bottom of the resume.

Finally, beware of the following common resume problems:

- ☞ **Too long:** Just get to the point
- ☞ **Too short:** You do need to convey the relevant, important facts.
- ☞ **Hard to read:** Leave lots of white space, take advantage of bolding, underlining, indenting, and bulleting.
- ☞ **Wordy:** Again, just get to the point!
- ☞ **Too slick:** Make sure that your resume reflects who you are.
- ☞ **Amateurish:** Know your audience, know how to talk to that audience.
- ☞ **Poorly reproduced:** Don’t send photocopies of photocopies!
- ☞ **Misspelled and ungrammatical throughout:** These errors made your professors cringe and they’ll make employers take you off the pile of applicants.
- ☞ **Lacking a career objective:** Be clear about your goals.
- ☞ **Boastful:** Confidence is good – overconfidence is obnoxious.
- ☞ **Dishonest:** The resume is not the place to stretch the truth; lies will come back to haunt you!
- ☞ **Gimmicky:** Though you are using a resume to “sell yourself,” and you want to make it reflect who you are, departing far from the norm may hurt your chances. Again –

REMEMBER YOUR AUDIENCE!