

## Creating a Strong Resume

A resume details your professional preparation and background in relation to your current career objective. Usually one page in length, it should be easy to read and a potential employer should be able to quickly identify your strengths and abilities. No resume lands you the job, but a good resume convinces an employer you are worth the time to interview.

There is *no one right way* to prepare a resume; however, there are general principles to follow:

- One to two pages maximum for a new college graduate, including references.
- Error free. This is non-negotiable.
- List-based. A resume is not a letter, so avoid paragraph structure.
- Visually pleasing, with a balanced use of white space and strategic graphics.

Talk with a Career Development Center representative about your particular needs, or use our resume-critique drop off service so that you will get the optimum results from your resume.

***Your resume is the first impression an employer has about you;  
first impressions are lasting ones.***

### Ways to Organize your Resume

Two resume types are **Chronological** and **Functional**.

Chronological resumes are commonly the first resume written by students. Chronological resumes are easy to prepare. The information categories (education, employment history, activities) are listed in a time order, from the *most recent* to the least recent (backwards). It focuses on where you were and when you were there. The employment section provides detail about your work duties.

Functional resumes focus on your skills. Information is organized based on skill categories, such as computers, communication, leadership, project management, fund raising or marketing. The skills-based resume also includes your educational credentials and your employment history. Each skill is listed and described in detail. It focuses on what you have done, and what experiences you have that match the employer's need.

### Major Categories (usually) included on a Resume

#### Contact Information: Name and Address

- Your name should be listed at the top and stand out in some way (bigger font size; bold it). Use your full name, do not include nicknames. If your resume is more than one page, your name should be at the top of each successive page.
- If you include two addresses (college and permanent), set them up in an easy to read style (see sample). Include your phone number(s). *Be sure that the phone number you are using will be answered in a professional manner.* Now is not the time for silly outgoing messages.
- Include your e-mail address (and URL of website if you have one), only if professional and tested to make sure it is working. Remember everything on your resume gives the employer an impression of the type of employee you will be. Even your email address can create a negative impression. For example, "partybrat@..." isn't a strong start.
- Make your contact information symmetrical at the top of the page.

#### Career Objective or Candidate Summary Statement

- Write your objective so it communicates what *you* can offer the employer; *not* what you want *from* the employer. Spin your objective so it expresses what you bring to the table.
- Be specific. Avoid "position where I can grow" or "where I can utilize my skills and abilities." Offer yourself as a solution to the reader's problem: "to bring my exceptional



- organization skills to build your fundraising efforts by 10%”
- If you are applying for more than one type of job, prepare a different resume for each, each with its own slant for that particular job.
- Sometimes, a Candidate Summary statement is more effective than a Career Objective statement. A Summary is simply that: a condensed (two sentences max) statement of your key abilities and skills relevant to the specific job for which you are applying. “Skilled, dedicated and enthusiastic marketing professional seeking to join a cutting edge advertising firm with a socially-responsible client base.”

### Education

- Colleges and Universities should be listed in reverse chronological order (most recent first). Do not include high school information.
- Don’t use abbreviations for your degree. Bachelor of Science (not B.S.) is correct.
- Our official name is Mansfield University of Pennsylvania. Use it.
- If you are several months or more away from graduation—use “Candidate for Bachelors in Arts, May 200X . . .” Make sure you include your major!
- If your grade point average is *above* a 3.00 (GPA 3.41/4.00), list it. If it’s above a 3.00 only in your major, you need to label it that way (Major GPA 3.62/4.00) Be sure to include the 4.00 since some colleges use a 5.00 scale.
- Major courses can be listed as a subheading of education. Listing key coursework helps the reader know what you’ve learned. Don’t list all your courses (that’s a transcript).
- Academic honors and awards can also be listed as a subheading, if there are two or more.
- If you have completed a senior thesis/project, or a significant internship, you should include this as part of the Education section.
- You should also include industry-related certifications and licenses. If you have more than a few, this can be included in a separate section.

### Skills

- If you have chosen a skills (or functional) resume, this should be the main focus on your resume. You will want to consider your experiences and break them up into relevant categories. For example, “Computer,” “Project Management,” “Teaching/Coaching,” “Leadership,” “Marketing,” “Communication,” “Organization,” “Office Administration,” “Customer Service,” “Performance” might be categories to use.
- For professional educators, you might wish to include a brief list of courses you are prepared to teach.
- For a chronological resume, you will be listing each employment experience (in reverse order), and your duties or responsibilities for each job. These are the skills that you would want the employer to notice. Be precise in the skill name.
- Use industry related “keywords,” abbreviations, lingo, buzzwords, etc., whatever is accepted within the field.

### Employment/Relevant Experience (may be placed before or after skills)

- Usually listed from the most recent work experience and work backwards.
- Include dates of employment (August 2001 to December 2002, not 08/2001-12/02), correct name of company/organization (“The American Red Cross”), accurate job title, (“Volunteer Coordinator”).
- Be Specific! Job descriptions should include specific job duties, accomplishments and achievements. Use percentages, numbers or statistics to demonstrate the quality of your work. Bullets or lists are often used to set apart each responsibility.
- Include full-time, part-time, summer and volunteer work, on campus work and internships. If you have several under one category you can separate by type of work.
- If you have varied experiences, you may want to use only those that show your best



- experience, or those closely related to your career field.
- Sometimes you may want to create a “Relevant Experience” section, which lists those jobs most pertinent to the one you’re going for, and another section, “Additional Experience” which shows the rest of your work history.
- Don’t include pay rates unless the job application instructions require you to do so.

#### Activities, Interests, Affiliations, Honors

- List only those that relate best to your career. Include any that demonstrate leadership.
- Acknowledge leadership positions such as Captain, President, etc.
- Only include interests if they are directly related to your career objective or if you have limited work experience.
- Do not include interests or affiliations that would be considered controversial or unimpressive to the employer. Religious, political or social activism groups may give the reader concern.
- Use a brief explanation if the reader might be unfamiliar with the purpose of a specific award or title.
- Be cautious about including social organizations to which you belong.

#### References

- It is best to create a separate reference sheet. Including your professional references helps the reader move you forward in the hiring process—you are offering needed information up front and the employer doesn’t have to chase you down to ask you for it.
- Use 3-5 references. Include name, title, place of work and phone number.
- At least one reference should be a faculty member, and at least one reference should be work related. Do not include personal/family members. They really can’t speak to your credentials as a potential employee.
- “References Available on Request” can be the kiss of death. Don’t do it.

#### **Truths about Resumes**

- Your resume will only receive about *10-15 seconds for the first reading* by an employer to decide if you are “interview worthy”.
- The top 1/3 of the resume (after the contact info) is considered the “selling zone”. Put your most impressive information here.
- There should be no misspellings or typing errors...proofread and have others proofread. Using spell check is not enough—you might be spelling the word correctly, but using the wrong word. Four human checkers are recommended.
- Do not use the word “I;” do not use the first person. A resume is not a letter.
- Avoid paragraph structure. Use lists, bullets and “easy to spot” layout.
- Highlight, bold, underline the points that you want the reader to see first, but be selective. Don’t overdo the graphics.
- Use action verbs such as examined, detailed, prepared, improved, searched, compiled, tutored, supplied, sorted, sold, constructed, enhanced, established, planned.
- Stick with one format and make sure that everything lines up. Inconsistent margins and spaces create a messy look.
- Do not change fonts.
- Do not mention why you left a position. Do not mention salary.
- Do not include information unless you are able to discuss it or prove your ability. If you mention a skill, could you demonstrate it? If you mention an organization, can you discuss their purpose or mission? If not, don’t list it on your resume.
- Avoid using templates, as they do not allow you to change their set format. This is *your* resume; make your *own* template. Template-generated resumes mark you as someone who can’t generate your own communication.



Today, many resumes are only accepted on-line through a company's website. Resumes collected this way go into a database, which is then queried by recruiters to find skill sets they need to fill positions within the organization. Thus, it's very important that your resume is "scannable", which means a clean font, not too many bullets, and includes keywords, acronyms and buzzwords that will be found during a search. If your resume doesn't use the key skills that are relevant to your major, then your resume won't be retrieved when a recruiter goes looking for a particular skill set.

**If nothing else, remember this:** Your resume should be *written for the reader*, not for you. Give the reader a reason to be interested in you. *Help* the reader like you. You have, on average, only 10 seconds to get the reader's attention.

**For more help:** The Resource Room in the Career Center has many books with hundreds of sample resumes for you to study. Come on in!

