

An effective resume succinctly describes your education and experience in relation to the job for which you are applying. You will often make your first impressions on employers through your writing, and you'll want those impressions to be outstanding. Your resume is a written snapshot that should clearly support your career goal and be tailored to that position. Information on the resume should be presented in order of relevance to the position to which you are applying.

Developing a Resume

1. Analyze the job description for skills and abilities

Review job descriptions for the skills and abilities that employers are seeking. Read through the descriptions and highlight the required skills, attributes and qualifications. Use these words in your resume.

2. Create a list of accomplishments

Take some time to think about your accomplishments: things that you did well, enjoyed doing, and were proud of. Include education/training, volunteer opportunities, jobs, projects, school assignments, travel and group/team activities. Describe in detail what you did, with whom you did it, what equipment you used and what happened. Use commonly understood terminology. Identify the personal strengths and skills that you used to achieve your accomplishments. Do not be humble; this is your chance to promote your skills and abilities.

3. Analyze experiences for relevant skill areas

Analyze your experiences to identify your skill areas, using the skills list in this handout.

4. Write descriptive phrases

Using action verbs, write short phrases to describe what you did that illustrate each skill. Be concise and specific.

5. Choose the appropriate format

There are several resume formats to choose from so be sure to choose the format that best presents your background and qualifications. See pages 3 and 4 for examples.

Chronological: This resume lists your background in a reverse chronological sequence, starting with the most recent. This format works best when your work, volunteer and academic experiences relate directly to the type of job for which you are applying. *Chronological resumes are preferred by most on-campus recruiters and business employers.*

Skills/Functional: This resume highlights your achievements by functional area. You select areas to fit your experience and job you're applying for. Job titles, employers and dates of employment are listed in a brief section at the bottom of the page. This format allows you to highlight skills, knowledge and abilities relevant to the position regardless of where and when you obtained them. Arrange the descriptive phrases in order of relevance to the position for which you are applying. It works well when your work is not directly related to your career goal, you are entering the job market for the first time, or you are making a career change.

Combination: This lists your experiences in reverse chronological order, but divides your experiences into 2-3 sections, with functional headers. This allows you to lead with your most relevant work experience, even if more recent work is less relevant. *Combination resumes are also well received by most employers.*

6. Get your resume checked by an Advisor or Career Peer Mentor. Drop-ins with a Peer Advisor Mon-Thurs., 9:00-4:00 PM. Or call 664-2196 for an appointment with a Career Advisor.

Resume Do's and Don'ts

Do

Be specific in your objective, if you have one.
Emphasize results produced and significant achievements.
Begin sentences with action verbs such as *developed* or *wrote*.
Quantify when possible and use examples ("trained staff of 6")
Get feedback and proofreading from several people.
Use good quality paper, a laser printer, and 11 pt. font or larger.

Don't

Begin phrases with "I" or "my."
Mention controversial activities or associations.
Exaggerate your experience. Truth is important!
Use meaningless phrases like "seek challenging job."
Use abbreviations or flashy graphics.
Use underlining or italics (scanners can't read them).

Resume Tips for First Year Students

- As a first or even a second year student, it is okay to include work experience, leadership or highlights of activities and accomplishments from high school. By your third year in college resumes usually do not list your high school attended.
- Experiences and courses that most strongly demonstrate skills related to your job objective should appear nearer the top of your resume.

Sending Resumes and Letters Electronically

- When submitting a resume via an organization's website, use the formatting and display style recommended by the website. **Many employers do not open attachments, as they do not want to introduce viruses into their system!!**
- It is almost always important to include a cover letter with your resume. Send both the resume and cover letter in one email message.
- To send your resume via email, find out the employer's format preference when possible. Although some recruiters accept attachments, most prefer your resume be included in the text of the email message. If you are unable to ask for the employer's preference, send it both ways in one message.
- If—and only if—employer specifies a preference of an attached resume document, give the document a name the recruiter will associate with you, such as "MillerJennifer.doc". This will enable a recruiter to find your resume once it's saved on a computer. Do not name the document "Resume.doc." Also, be absolutely sure your document is free of viruses.
- Send it electronically to a friend to ensure formatting is correct and document is virus-free.

Tips for sending your resume in the text of the email message

The cover letter should appear above your resume.

- Do not use bold, underlining, bullets, distinctive fonts, colored text, or html codes. Consider using asterisks (*), plus signs (+), dashes (-), and all capital letters to highlight text.
- Limit lines to 60 characters in width to avoid line wraps.
- Left justify; avoid columns and centering

Developing a Scannable Resume

Many employers use resume database tracking systems. They scan incoming resumes into a database (sometimes

letters, too) and when they have openings, retrieve resumes using relevant keywords.

- It is permissible to ask an employer if you should provide a scannable resume. Some companies will indicate on their website if they scan resumes and even give tips on how to format your resume.
- Include industry or job-specific keywords, especially relevant skills, understandable abbreviations, major, fields of study, experience (e.g., market research, Java, html, sales, Spanish).
- Use 11- to 14- point font size, either Times or Arial font.
- Margins on top, bottom, and sides can be as small as 0.75 inches.
- Avoid italics, underlining, fancy fonts, and multiple columns. Use spacing or all capitals for emphasis.
- Boldface may not be accepted by all systems; unless instructed otherwise, it is probably OK.
- Print on white paper with a laser printer.
- When submitting by mail, do not fold.

Job Search Letters

Although the letter you send with your resume can make all the difference in an employer's response to you, there is no single formula or model letter that will work well for every occasion. Effective letters are part of a larger job search campaign, and allow you to communicate more fully person-to-person, with your recipient. Job search letters are used to:

- Apply to an advertised position.
- Accompany a resume to a target organization you have researched.
- Apply for an internship, summer job, or volunteer position to build experience or "get your foot in the door."
- Request an informational interview to ask for advice about a career field or organization.
- Thank an employer for an interview (very important!). Each letter should be tailored to your recipient, and address the fit between their needs and your strengths and experience. See SSU handouts "Job Search Strategies," "Cover Letters that Work," and "Networking Guidelines" for more details and examples.

