Writing a Resume

Basic Resume Guidelines

Choose a format that best highlights your education, skills and experience. A chronological format lists your most recent information first and moves backward in describing your education, skills and experience. This type of format is easier to write and is often used by college students and recent graduates. An achievement format highlights the successes you have experienced in college and employment. Achievements rather than job titles are described. A functional resume is organized by skills and is often used by people with graduate degrees or those who have accumulated many different job experiences.

Use standard typefaces such as Courier and Helvetica. It is important that the letters do not touch each other so they can be read if scanned into a database. Use a font size of 10 to 14 points. In a scannable resume, avoid italics, underlines, vertical and horizontal lines or any special effects that might alter the scannability of your resume. A laser printer original maintains the high-quality resume product. Also, references can be listed on a separate piece of paper with your name at the top.

The following headings are appropriate to use in your resume:

Identification: Begin the resume with your name, mailing address, and phone number. List both a college and permanent address, if appropriate, as well as a home phone, work phone, or message phone.

Career/Job Objective (optional): This statement, usually one or two sentences, should indicate the kind of job that you are seeking, the type of organization you prefer, and the career field in which you are interested. Strike a balance between being too specific (limiting your opportunities) and too general (vague and generic doesn't give any information).

Education: Concentrate on your college education, listing the name and location of school, degree received, year of (expected) graduation, academic major and minor. If you attended a school but did not receive a degree, list the school, major area of study, and inclusive dates of attendance. List your GPA if above 3.0—GPA in major, upper division GPA, overall GPA—whatever works best for you. Research projects, thesis title, internships or co-op education, etc., can also be listed, along with phrases such as, "Earned 90 percent of college expenses."

Experience: For a chronological resume, list company name and location, job title, a short job description using "action verbs," and dates of employment. For a functional resume, list only the job descriptions and skills utilized (e.g., "management skills," "communications skills," "supervisory skills," etc.) and identify company names and locations later in the resume.

Special Skills (optional): Computer familiarity, bilingual ability, certificates, licenses, etc., especially if related to your career.

Activities/Honors/Awards/Volunteer/Community Service (optional) The category can be very broad or broken down into individual categories. It can include clubs or activities from college, civic or community groups, professional memberships or organizations, scholarships and University awards, etc.

Interests (optional): More than just hobbies, this is a list of active involvement, especially in areas related to your career. It shows diversity and variety in your personal and professional lifestyle.

Don't include: marital status, health, birthdate, height/weight, religion, a picture, or other items which could be used in a discriminatory way. References should be placed on a separate page with the same header as your resume. A computer or word processor is recommended for typing both cover letter and resume, but make sure they're printed on a laser printer and not on an Imagewriter or dot matrix printer. Once on a computer disk, it's easy to change or update parts of your cover letter or resume.

For additional samples or for more information please visit The Career Guide on our website at http://oregonstate.edu/career/students/job-search-strategies-preparation