

Overview: How to Write an Effective Resume

Your résumé advertises you as a candidate for a job, internship or other position.

Résumés are used as a primary screening to determine the most qualified applicants. The first step to catch the recruiter's eye or pass through an electronic screening system is creating a résumé that effectively shows your experiences and skills.

Your résumé should highlight your knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences and accomplishments as they relate to your career goals.

Chronological Résumé

The chronological format is recommended for most people seeking jobs and internships. Education and other experiences are presented in reverse chronological order starting with most recent.

Functional Résumé

The functional format often works well for professionals with vast experience seeking a career change or for people who have gaps in employment. Marketable skills and other areas of expertise are emphasized, as opposed to work experience. Skills are organized into clusters (e.g., fundraising experience or communication skills) instead of a timeline.

Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Used to apply for scientific, research and often graduate school positions, a CV is a thorough record of all of an applicant's academic work (research, presentations, publications). Organizations will ask for a CV if they prefer it over a standard résumé.

Federal or State Government Résumé

This type of résumé is typically 3-5 pages long and must include a record of every required skill or experience listed in the job description. It also includes supervisors' names and hours worked in previous jobs. Visit [USAJobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov) for information on government résumés.

Common Résumé Sections

Your résumé **connects your experiences and skills to the position you apply for** and shows why they make you the ideal candidate. Elaborate on the skills you gained from your experiences, don't just list them. Tailor each résumé to a specific opportunity. Every company and field is different; get advice on résumé norms from a professor, advisor or someone working in the industry.

Education

- Breakdown of undergraduate and graduate education, study abroad and internships.
- Include GPA if it's requested or above a 3.0. You may use your cumulative or program-specific GPA.

Work Experience

- Dynamic, action- and results-oriented summary of professional experiences.

Study Abroad

- Explanation/description of study-abroad programs.

Volunteer Experience

- Summation of volunteer and community involvement.

Projects

- Projects, research, field work or specific coursework that relate to the position.

Summary of Qualifications/ Professional Summary

- Replaces the traditional objective statement.
- One to three lines or bullet points at the top of the résumé that summarize your top skills for that employer. Avoid personal pronouns. Example: "Computer science major with programming expertise in C++, Python and Java and real-world experience building robust websites and programs for the City of Corvallis."

Leadership and Involvement

- Clubs, community engagement, experiences in athletics, fraternity and sorority involvement, and leadership activities.

Skills/Languages

- Proficiencies in computer programs, languages, etc.

Awards/Acknowledgements

- Work, educational and other awards and scholarships describing the award and listing the date and awarding organization.

Relevant Coursework

- Top 4-8 courses that relate specifically to the position. Avoid jargon and course numbers, use the full course titles instead (e.g., plant propagation).

Additional Section Examples

- Scientific fieldwork
- Computer languages
- Intercultural experience and languages
- Technical skills
- Communication experience
- Professional memberships and activities
- Licenses and certifications
- Military service and training
- Practicum experience
- Teaching and coaching experience
- Public speaking experience

Power Statements

Power statements create a more powerful résumé. They highlight your achievements, illustrate your tasks, quantify your results and show your impact in a role. **Jobs, internships, community service, club involvement, military experience and projects should all be backed up with power statements.** A power statement should be no more than two lines.

Power Statement



Action Component

ACTION WORD AND CONCISE DESCRIPTION OF TASK

- Describe your actions to complete a task or solve a problem by using an action word.
- Focus on key skills and words found in your industry.
- Use the position description as a guide on what skills and words to use.



Result Component

QUANTIFIED RESULTS AND OTHER CONCRETE EVIDENCE

- Your results illustrate how your efforts can translate to the organization to which you are applying.
- Quantify with numbers, including percentages, dollars or volume.
- Only quantify when appropriate. This can be overdone if forced into every bullet point.

Baseline

“Served sandwiches to satisfy customer requests.”

- This is a description of responsibilities. While it supports that you have customer service experience, it lacks connections to your transferable skills.

On Your Way

“Provided excellent customer service by listening to successfully serve customers.”

- This statement is more appealing because it demonstrates transferable skills and includes a desirable outcome.

Finish Line

“Provided excellent customer service by listening and responding to customer needs and diffusing tension during rush times. Implemented new processes to reduce ingredient waste by 30% over the year.”

- This statement encompasses the positive aspect of the two previous examples. It also explains efforts and includes a quantified desirable outcome that translated to various fields and positions.

Action Words

Use action words to **illustrate your skills**. Each statement in your résumé should begin with an action word. Use present tense for current positions and past tense for previous ones.

Communication

addressed	corresponded	joined	publicized
advertised	critiqued	lectured	reasoned
arbitrated	defined	linked	recommended
arranged	described	listened	reinforced
articulated	discussed	marketed	reported
clarified	edited	mediated	represented
collaborated	elicited	moderated	revised
communicated	explained	negotiated	solicited
conferred	expressed	participated	spoke
consulted	formulated	persuaded	suggested
contacted	informed	perused	summarized
contributed	interacted	presented	synthesized
conveyed	interviewed	promoted	translated
convinced	involved	proposed	

Creative

abstracted	developed	illustrated	orchestrated
acted	devised	improvised	originated
adapted	directed	initiated	performed
authored	displayed	innovated	photographed
combined	drafted	inspired	revamped
composed	entertained	introduced	shaped
conceptualized	envisioned	invented	solved
created	fashioned	launched	tailored
customized	founded	modeled	visualized
designed	generated	modernized	wrote

Financial

acquired	calculated	invested	reduced
adjusted	computed	issued	regulated
administered	corrected	maximized	retrieved
allocated	decreased	minimized	specified
apportioned	determined	multiplied	submitted
appraised	disbursed	planned	tabulated
approximated	enumerated	prepared	tested
assessed	estimated	projected	validated
audited	figured	rated	
balanced	forecasted	realized	
budgeted	increased	reconciled	

Helping

accommodated	counseled	helped	satisfied
advocated	dedicated	motivated	served
aided	eased	prevented	smoothed
alleviated	elevated	provided	supplemented
ameliorated	empowered	referred	supported
assisted	encouraged	reformed	sustained
bolstered	expedited	rehabilitated	volunteered
boosted	fostered	relieved	
cared for	furthered	remedied	
cooperated	guided	revitalized	

Leadership

accomplished	developed	improved	reorganized
achieved	directed	increased	reviewed
administered	eliminated	influenced	salvaged
advanced	enforced	instituted	saved
appointed	enhanced	launched	scheduled
attained	established	led	screened
chaired	exceeded	managed	secured
consolidated	excelled	motivated	selected
controlled	expanded	oversaw	sought
coordinated	fine-tuned	planned	spearheaded
cut	generated	prioritized	streamlined
decided	grew	produced	strengthened
delegated	handled	raised	succeeded
demonstrated	hired	recovered	surpassed
designated	hosted	recruited	

Organization

accelerated	corrected	integrated	purchased
accomplished	customized	logged	recorded
addressed	devised	maintained	refined
approved	dispatched	maximized	reserved
arranged	distributed	mobilized	responded
assigned	enlisted	modified	scheduled
brainstormed	executed	monitored	screened
catalogued	filed	obtained	set up
categorized	finalized	organized	standardized
coded	followed	planned	systematized
compiled	formulated	prepared	tabulated
completed	generated	prioritized	updated
configured	implemented	processed	verified
contracted	incorporated	procured	

Research

analyzed	converted	extrapolated	questioned
catalogued	correlated	formulated	researched
benchmarked	deciphered	gathered	reviewed
branded	determined	identified	recognized
critiqued	documented	indexed	searched
classified	diagnosed	inspected	solved
collected	evaluated	interpreted	submitted
compared	examined	investigated	substantiated
concluded	experimented	measured	surveyed
conducted	explored	linked	synthesized
confirmed	extracted	queried	

Teaching

adapted	developed	explained	persuaded
adopted	educated	facilitated	schoolled
advised	empowered	guided	stimulated
briefed	enabled	individualized	taught
coached	encouraged	influenced	tested
coordinated	enriched	instructed	trained
counseled	evaluated	motivated	tutored

Technical

adapted	converted	installed	remodeled
applied	debugged	maintained	repaired
assembled	deconstructed	modeled	restored
built	designed	operated	specialized
calculated	engineered	overhauled	upgraded
computed	fixed	programmed	utilized
constructed	fortified	redesigned	

References

References are **people who can attest to your professionalism, character and qualifications**. They support your résumé and cover letter. They should know you well and have a positive perception of you to share with potential employers.

Ideal Candidates

- Past professors/teachers
- Previous employers/supervisors
- Trainers
- Volunteer managers

Sometimes employers will request a 'peer reference.' This means fellow students, coworkers, team members, etc. The reason is to gain an understanding of how you work and interact with others on your level.

Reference Sheet Format

A reference list is typically a single page with three to four entries set up as illustrated below. Your name and contact information are listed at the top exactly like on your résumé and cover letter.

First Name Last Name Email Address Phone Number Physical Address/LinkedIn
Reference name, job title Company/organization Physical address Phone number Email address Relation to you
Reference name, job title Company/organization Physical address Phone number Email address Relation to you
Reference name, job title Company/organization Physical address Phone number Email address Relation to you

Tips

- Never list family members as references.
- Always ask people when you want to list them as a reference, even if you used them before. Ask them several weeks before they might be contacted.
- Make sure your references know what the position and organization is so they can speak to that. Tell references you've used in the past if they will be contacted again. Asking once is not sufficient for all requests.
- Give your references a copy of your most current and relevant résumé and remind them of your interactions with them, so they can give an accurate and positive report about you.
- Never ask your references to lie for your gain.
- It's never too early to start building your pool of references.

Letters of Recommendation

Similar to verbal references, letters of recommendation from supervisors, professors, advisors, etc. **attest to your successes, character, progress and other impressive achievements.** As with references, letters of recommendation should be provided by those who have great respect and appreciation for you and can communicate that.

Asking

You must ask someone to write a letter of recommendation. Some people decline: they don't have the time, they don't feel it's appropriate, they don't write letters of recommendation in general, etc.

When you ask, explain what program or position and organization you are applying to. This will help them gauge what to highlight in the letter. Also clarify the deadline and how to submit the letter—to you or the employer directly, electronic or hard copy.

Give the letter writers your résumé and a list of your top achievements. Let them know how you've worked with them in the past, what your top skills are, etc. This is not boasting; it's helpful.

Many professionals have previously written or are trained to write letters of recommendation; you shouldn't have to guide them. Do communicate to them any specific requests from the employer or program, such as only one page, address to _____, specifically speak to the candidate's _____.

Many professionals, especially instructors and professors, are often flooded with recommendation requests. Therefore, they might ask you to draft your own letter for them to proof, edit and sign. In this case, have other mentors and peers review your letter and help you think of qualities, skills and experiences to include. This may feel unusual to you, but is a common practice.

The more advance notice you give, the more likely someone will be able to accommodate your request. Aim for a minimum of two weeks.

Required Information

- Their title and organization
- How they know you and how long they have known you
- Brief evaluation/summary of their observation of your skills, strengths, qualifications, etc., with examples as needed
- Direct statement of recommendation and why

Suggested Information

- Potential
- Dependability/consistency
- Motivation/initiative
- Character
- Work ethic
- Examples of contributions
- Examples of achievements

Developing Your Portfolio

A portfolio is a **collection of documents, works, samples, publications, etc.** compiled in a case or binder or on a personal webpage. It is essential for design and art majors to showcase accomplishments and credentials. It should be added to throughout your education and career to illustrate present skills and progress.

Types

Academic (group or individual)

- Research
- Papers
- Projects
- Awards
- Other successful or impressive coursework

Professional

- Résumé
- Cover letter
- Letters of recommendation
- Performance evaluations
- Awards
- Other impressive professional acknowledgments or achievements

Self-Curated

- Awards
- Artwork
- Personal accomplishments or creations you want to showcase

Organization

Chronological

- In order from newest to oldest or vice versa

Narrative

- Display each piece in the form of a story or message you want to convey about yourself
- Primarily for art or design portfolios

Informational/Professional

- Introduction/brand page (optional)
- Résumé
- Cover letter
- References
- Letters of recommendation
- Closing/thank you page

Platforms

Web-Based

Create a personal website to display your work suited to your style and preference. Suggested sites:

- wix.com
- weebly.com
- sites.google.com
- squarespace.com
- wordpress.com
- Programs such as Adobe Portfolio

Hard Copy

Create, edit or scan your documents, then print and compile them into a physical case.

- A more traditional and direct method of sharing your work with employers, recruiters, investors, etc.