

GENERAL RESUME GUIDELINES

Building a great resume is the first step in landing your dream job! The main purpose of your resume is to gain an employer's interest so they contact you for an interview. The information you include on your resume, combined with how you present that information, will determine whether or not you get that initial contact.

Typically, your resume has only a few seconds to impress the employer. They will be making a judgment about you based on the content, format, language, grammar and tone of your resume. Therefore, it is important to understand what employers are expecting from a resume as well as what they are looking for in a candidate. Your resume should be an honest representation of your skills, qualifications and experiences. It should be clear, concise and targeted to the job opportunity for which you are applying. Although there are many resources devoted to resume writing and many opinions on how to construct the "perfect" resume, there are some basic fundamentals of writing a successful resume. Below are general guidelines on content and format that will help you write a strong, effective resume.

Content

Personal Information

- **Name:** If you go by a nickname, include it with your full name. For example Crystal (Chrissy) Edwards or Qi "Patrick" Chen.
- **Address:** Use your local address. If you have a permanent address, you can list it as well but only if you expect to be contacted there.
- **Phone:** Include a phone number where you can be reached reliably and where employers can leave messages. Remember to change your outgoing voicemail message to something appropriate and professional.
- **Email:** Include an email address that you check frequently. The address should be professional (i.e. nothing that could be considered offensive or inappropriate) and should be available throughout your job search.
- **Website:** If you have a personal website, you can include it only if it pertains solely to your career objectives (i.e. you are a graphic designer and have an online portfolio).
- Remember that no other personal information should be included on your resume (i.e. your birthday, social security number, license, etc.).

Objective

- Your objective statement should be clear, concise and targeted to the job position (see “The Objective Statement” on page 6).

Education

- Include the institution name, city and state, as well as your degree, major, minor, any areas of concentration, and date of graduation.
- You can also include study abroad experience as well as any relevant coursework, projects, research papers, academic scholarships, honors, licensing, special training and/or credentials.

Experience

- List your work experience in reverse chronological order (i.e. your most recent job should come first).
- Include all full-time, part-time, summer and/or military positions, including internships and co-ops. You can list experience even if you weren't paid for it.
- For each job, include the start and end dates, name of the employer with location (city and state only), and your position title.
- Write strong accomplishment statements that effectively describe your work experience (see “The Accomplishment Statement” on page 7).
- Use the present tense for work you are currently doing and use past tense for previous work.

Additional Information

- You can also include other information that is relevant to the job for which you are applying. These sections can include extracurricular activities, leadership experience, community service/volunteer work, language skills, computer skills, professional associations, research, publications, recognitions and awards.
- Here is what **not** to include on your resume: the word “Resume” at the top of your resume, personal information (such as social security number, drivers license, demographic information etc.), salary information, the full address of employer, names of supervisors, reasons for leaving jobs, and references.

Format

Appearance

- Your resume should be visually appealing and inviting to the reader. It should be well organized and easy to read.
- Avoid overcrowding. It's okay to leave white space.
- Use formatting tools to help with emphasis. Remember there should be uniformity and consistency in the use of italics, capital letters, bullets, boldface, and underlining (i.e. if you italicize one position title then you should italicize all position titles).
- Do not make your reader squint! Use a font size that is legible (no smaller than 10 pt).
- Use a standard font such as Arial or Times.
- Try to leave at least one inch margins on your page.

Layout

- There are two basic types of resumes: the ***chronological*** resume and the ***combination*** or functional resume.
 - **Chronological** is the most common resume format. Many recruiters and employers prefer this format. It lists your education and experience in reverse chronological order and highlights accomplishments within each position.
 - **Combination** or Functional is best used when you are transitioning into a new career or if you have large gaps in employment. It focuses on general areas of skills (such as communication, leadership, sales, etc.) and draws attention to accomplishments rather than work experience.
- The basic resume layout should have your contact information at the top of the page followed by the objective statement, education (if you are still in school or have recently graduated), work experience, and then any additional information that you want to include.
- See "Sample Resumes" starting on page 9 for some examples of different types of layouts.

Length

- Do not make your resume into a novel! Remember that you are trying to keep the reader's attention.
- Try to keep your resume to one page. However, if you need to go to two pages make sure that you use at least half of the second page and that you are including information that is relevant to the job for which you are applying.

Language

- Stay away from jargon, colloquialisms, acronyms and abbreviations.
- Use a thesaurus and the list of action verbs on page 17 to avoid repetitious words.

Paper

- If you will be giving an employer a hard copy of your resume, make sure you print it out on resume paper, which is usually white or off-white and a little thicker than regular paper.

Templates

- There are many templates available to help you get started on writing your resume. It is important to remember, however, that these templates are restrictive and make it more difficult for you to change formatting and content. Often times it is easier to create your resume without a template.

*****Remember to have several people proofread your resume for content and format!***

THE OBJECTIVE STATEMENT

The objective statement is located at the top of your resume and gives the employer an immediate sense of what you are seeking. It sets the focus and gives context to your resume. The following are some tips to writing a strong objective.

- Your objective should be focused, clear and concise to avoid rambling or ambivalent statements.
- It should be targeted to the job and can include the name of the employer and the position title. For example “Seeking the position of Marketing Intern for Stockton Ports Baseball Club.”
- If you do not have a specific job posting in mind, you can use the objective to show your preferred type of job, industry or company. For example “To obtain a full-time Human Resources position at a non-profit organization that works with youth and their families.”

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT STATEMENT

What is an accomplishment statement?

- Accentuates your strengths and deemphasizes your weaknesses.
- Describes your skills and qualifications that support your job objective.
- Emphasizes your most important and/or relevant responsibilities even if they are not your primary duties.
- Reflects skills and accomplishments that are directly relevant to the targeted job description as well as transferable skills such as communication, team work, leadership, etc.

How do you write an accomplishment statement?

- Brainstorm what you did at each position, what skills you used and what new skills you learned. Ask yourself what impact you made on the job, for example did you improve a task, function or process? Did you initiate new projects? Did you go above and beyond your job description and surpass expectations or standards?
- Be as concise as possible. Bullets can be a helpful way to organize your accomplishment statements as well as keep them concise.
- Begin each statement with a good action verb to highlight your skills (see “Action Verbs” on page 17). For example, you can describe your initiative by using verbs such as “proposed” or “launched.”
- Use present tense for work you do now, past tense for previous work.
- Avoid pronouns such as “I” “We” or “They”.
- Use active voice to create strong, action oriented sentences.
- Avoid repetitious writing and verb selection.
- List the most important or significant information in the first statement.
- Be specific. For example, instead of “Assisted with event planning” you can say “Assisted with event planning by ordering food, organizing daily task lists and booking venues.”
- Try to express the underlying skill behind your job duties. For example, if you are a server at a restaurant you could say “Serve food to customers” but this does not express the skills you acquired as you served food to customers. Instead, you might consider saying “Provide excellent customer service and satisfaction by being diligent to customer needs and by delivering food in a timely and courteous fashion.”
- If possible, state any tangible results you produced and quantify your achievements with numbers and percentages. For example “Trained a team of three staff members” or “increased sales revenue by 15%”

YOUR REFERENCES

References should not be included on your resume. It is also unnecessary for you to state that references are available as most employers expect that you will give them reference information when they request it. Employers usually ask for about three professional references (i.e. former employers, supervisors, professors, advisors, etc.). Your reference sheet should include the names, position titles, business addresses and phone numbers of your references. For more guidance on the formatting of your reference sheet, see a sample on page 16.

It is important to always get permission from potential references before you give their names out to employers. It is also a good idea to contact your references after you have given your reference sheet to an employer. Not only will they feel more prepared and be expecting the call, but it will give you the chance to describe the job position.

A FEW MORE TIPS!

- Mentioning personal interests is optional. Listing your hobbies can show that you are a well-rounded person but it can also work against you. Be very careful what you include (for example, your passion for “All My Children” and/or WWF should be kept to yourself).
- If you go onto two pages, remember to put your name, phone number and email address in the header or footer of page two.
- A general rule for numbers: Spell out numbers ten and under; use numerical form for numbers over 11.
- Your resume should be 100% honest. Do not stretch the truth! Keep your accomplishment statements accurate. You should be able to easily and convincingly talk about your resume in an interview.
- Don't over-abbreviate – You should assume that the employer does not know what your club acronym means.
- Complete sentences and periods are not necessary.
- Don't be afraid to express your skills. Be proud of your accomplishments!
- Proofread! Proofread! Proofread! Employers will catch the little mistakes which will reflect poorly on you. Call the Career Resource Center and make an appointment to have your resume reviewed by a Career Consultant!