



The Ultimate Resume Writing Guide for Students

What is a resume?

Resumes are a summary of your selected professional experiences in the context of where you want to go next. They are not meant to be a comprehensive list of your every activity or accomplishment. Resumes serve as a marketing tool to get you to an interview – meaning you select the “message” of accomplishments that will show you are qualified for a particular job.

The skills you illustrate in your resume must match the requirements of the job. If you are applying to multiple types of jobs or multiple types of employers, you will likely find more success in your job applications by creating multiple versions of your resume. Because a resume concisely summarizes your experience, education and skills as they relate to a specific career field or job, it is important that you are familiar with the industry, career field and organizations that interest you. You will write a more effective resume if you do this research and are informed about potential employers.

The unique challenges of a student resume

As a recent or upcoming graduate, you will often find yourself in the classic Catch-22 situation where employers would like to see some experience, but you don't have any because you've spent the last three to four years as a full-time student. So the challenge is to convince prospective employers that you have what it takes to do the job...even though you've never done it before.

Students have been able to overcome this by exhibiting characteristics that are indicative of how you will perform on the job based on things such as leadership roles in student organizations, an exemplary academic record, strong performance on major capstone projects, and of course, relevant internship experience.

Where to start?

Every resume should include information about your education and relevant professional experience. Many other sections may be added, including a job objective, summary of qualifications, honors and awards, extracurricular and community activities, certifications, professional memberships, languages, computer and research skills, and background information. Choose categories that showcase your strengths in relation to the job(s) that interests you. Organize the contents of your resume by highlighting whatever category of information is most important, given your career goal. Within each category, give information in reverse chronological order (listing the most recent first, and then going back in time). In general, whatever is most relevant merits the most space.

Common sections of the resume

Contact Information

Be sure to include your name, email, address(es), and phone number(s). Contact information can be centered or in left or right corners. If appropriate, include both a current address and a permanent address along with your email address. Students with an academic year address and a summer address can include both or use just the address at which they are residing when submitting applications for internships or jobs. If space is a problem, you may want to put all your identifying information on one line across the page. There is no need to include the word "resume" at the top, as this is obvious. Be sure to regularly update your contact information on your resume, as it is vital that employers are able to reach you and you are able to respond to any messages left for you. If you cannot be reached during certain business hours, be sure to check your phone and email messages periodically. If applicable, you may want to add a work phone number where you can be reached during the day. Only include your cell phone number if you want to be accessible at all times.

Qualifications Statement/Summary of Qualifications/Profile (optional)

This category allows you to summarize the outstanding features of your background that are pertinent to the job(s) you are seeking. A well written qualifications section can direct the reader to what you want her/him to know, and provide clues about what to focus on. This kind of statement is generally used by professionals with quite a bit of experience; if you are a current student or recent graduate and have less experience, your qualifications will be obvious from your descriptions of your previous positions and you do not need to add this section to your resume. Click [here](#) for more information on crafting a strong summary.

Education (you may also include Honors, Awards and Activities in this section if desired)

The education section of your resume will focus on your academic background. Thus, the education section is very important for most current students and recent college graduates and should be emphasized by candidates with little work experience. Well-planned development of this area on your resume may answer a prospective employer's frequently asked questions regarding your academic program and performance, leadership/managerial capabilities, technical abilities, interests and general preparedness.

Your educational history should be listed in reverse chronological order, beginning with your most recent or current degree program(s). Include the name of your institution, degree(s) received, major(s)/concentration(s), and date of graduation (month and year). When listing dates, it is not necessary to list the years you attended the school, it is only necessary to list the date (month and year) you received (or will receive) your degree.

Work Experience

The work experience category may be titled "Experience," "Work Experience," "Professional Experience," "Electrical Engineering Experience" or whatever best highlights your qualifications. No matter what you have done, whether it was working in retail sales at Macy's, volunteering at a shelter, performing military duty, or working in new product development at Google, employers want to know that you have work experience. Many students are hesitant to put down summer jobs (not considered internships), part-time employment, work-study positions, volunteer experiences, or a responsible college activity that may seem unrelated to their career

objectives. This is a mistake. Employers realize that some college students do not have relevant or career-related work experience, but are still very interested to know that you have had responsibilities, been hired by other employers for positions, had diverse experiences and opportunities to demonstrate your skills.

While it is vital to brainstorm everything about your background in the preparation stage, it is equally important to then weed out unnecessary information and highlight what is relevant. For example, if you have prior summer work experience in sales, additional experience as a short-term volunteer at several hospitals and are looking for an full-time employment in nursing, you may not want to include every single position you have ever held. You can however, find creative ways to summarize previous experience and take up a minimal amount of space. In general, giving more detailed accounts about the most recent entries on your resume and summarized versions of experiences prior to that works well.

In deciding which experiences to include, choose those which demonstrate your most relevant skills and support your objective. If you are interested in a career in technical sales, for example, you need to show that you are people-oriented and persuasive with technical competence. This may be indicated in several ways such as participation on a sports team, election to student office, or work as a project coordinator. However, if you are seeking a career in market research then you must highlight your analytical and quantitative skills and interest. You might emphasize, for example, high academic achievement, related course work and research experience. A good way to determine what skills to highlight is to review job descriptions in your field that are of interest to you either now or later on in your career. Employers will indicate the skills and qualifications they are seeking, and those are the skills you should do your best to illustrate.

Extracurricular Activities/Leadership Experience

Employers look for the well-rounded candidate as demonstrated by involvement in extracurricular activities, leadership positions, and research projects. In this section, be sure to list the name of the organization, your role in the organization and any leadership positions held. Any involvement as part of a committee can also be included. Similar to the experience section, try to indicate accomplishments and your involvement as part of any club or activity.

Try to also indicate your level of responsibility in leadership positions. Quantify your results or outcomes when possible. If you have been involved in one or more activities for several years or have assumed greater levels of responsibility as part of an organization, highlight that information. Otherwise, dates of involvement are optional. If you were very active in college and can write paragraphs about your extracurricular activities, you should concentrate on selecting only the most interesting or impressive ones to include.

Research Interests and Publications (optional)

Students may wish to present their research, related publications and presentations in separate sections. A description of each, in reverse chronological order, is most appropriate. Try to keep everything as brief and succinct as possible. You may want to mention your faculty advisor's name, if you think it would be helpful. Publications to which you contributed and are recognized should be listed in the appropriate bibliographic format for your field.

Community Service/Involvement (optional)

Employers are frequently interested in knowing what you have done besides your work experiences, or how you have become involved as a "citizen." Such things as volunteer work with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, charity or youth organizations, alumnae/i associations, etc. can help to make you stand out as exceptional.

Publications and Presentations (optional)

These can be two separate sections or can be combined depending upon the quantity of material you have. They should be listed in standard bibliographic form for your field. If you have many entries in these areas and are applying for teaching positions in academic institutions, you will probably need to write a curriculum vitae, or "CV."

Professional Memberships (optional)

Just as "community service" shows that you are a good public citizen, listing professional memberships shows that you are an active professional citizen. In every profession, there are associations that encourage members to interact with each other and keep up with current developments in the field. It is highly advisable that you join at least one professional association (many have student chapters with reduced fees) while a student and maintain membership as a professional. If you have been active in any professional organization, (i.e., held leadership roles or participated in important committees) you might benefit by mentioning not only the organization but also your level of involvement on your resume.

Skills (optional)

You may want to include a section for skills or qualifications, which enhance your prospects for employment. Technical and computer skills, special qualifications, foreign languages you can read or speak, and/or equipment that you can operate may be mentioned in this section.

Certifications (optional)

Certifications can be listed as a separate category or included in your education section as a sub-heading. It must be clear to the reader in what state and field you are certified. When listing your licenses, you do not need to give your license numbers. It would be sufficient to say "Registered Nurse: Pennsylvania and New Jersey," or "MCSE Certified 2011." Before progressing too far in your job search, make certain you know what licenses and certifications are preferred or necessary to obtain employment in your field and location of choice. Begin the paper work early.

Additional Information (optional)

This is the section to include interesting miscellaneous information that employers may find intriguing but does not fit anywhere else. Some examples might include travel/living abroad, sports and personal interests. Be specific about your interests. A description such as: "Enjoy Chinese cooking, high-altitude mountain climbing and reading detective stories" is a lot more interesting than "Interests including cooking, mountain climbing, and reading." Some additional examples to consider including in this section are cultural or intellectual interests, artistic and musical abilities if not listed elsewhere. You may also want to include professional organizations, clubs, or associations to which you belong if not included elsewhere. Information such as physical dimensions (height, weight), age and marital status are not indicators of professional ability and should be omitted.

The additional information section may be an appropriate place to indicate your employment eligibility, citizenship or visa status.

If you are a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, be sure to state such information if your name, background, or education would be likely to raise questions about your ability to accept long-term employment in the United States. If you are a U.S. Citizen or Permanent Resident, but have some information which would suggest that you are not a citizen of the U.S., it can be to your advantage to specify your citizenship on the resume.

References

References are NOT included on a resume, but rather as a separate document offered to employers when requested. It is not necessary to state "References available upon request" at the bottom of your resume. Keep in mind that employers will contact you for references, regardless of whether or not you state they are available.

Action Verbs

Accelerate	Examine	Procure
Accomplish	Exceed	Project manage
Achieve	Execute	Promote
Adapt	Exhibit	Propose
Address	Expand	Provide
Advance	Expedite	Reconcile
Advise	Facilitate	Record
Advocate	Finalize	Recruit
Analyze	Generate	Redesign
Apply	Guide	Reduce
Arrange	Head	Reengineer
Assemble	Hire	Regulate
Assess	Identify	Rehabilitate
Assist	Illustrate	Reinforce
Author	Implement	Reorganize
Budget	Improve	Report
Build	Increase	Represent
Calculate	Influence	Research
Classify	Initiate	Resolve
Coach	Innovate	Restructure
Collect	Institute	Review
Communicate	Instruct	Revise
Compile	Integrate	Schedule
Conduct	Introduce	Secure
Consolidate	Invent	Select
Construct	Investigate	Simplify
Consult	Launch	Solve
Counsel	Lead	Streamline
Create	Maintain	Structure
Decrease	Manage	Succeed
Deliver	Market	Suggest

Demonstrate	Measure	Supervise
Deploy	Mediate	Support
Design	Mentor	Teach
Develop	Monitor	Test
Devise	Motivate	Train
Direct	Negotiate	Transfer
Display	Obtain	Transform
Diversify	Operate	Transition
Document	Organize	Troubleshoot
Draft	Oversee	Unite
Earn	Participate	Update
Edit	Perform	Upgrade
Educate	Persuade	Verify
Eliminate	Pilot	Win
Enforce	Plan	Write
Ensure	Prepare	
Establish	Present	
Evaluate	Process	

Resume Checklist

First Impression

- Does the resume look original and not based on a template?
- Is the resume inviting to read, with clear sections and ample white space?
- Does the design look professional rather than like a simple typing job?
- Is a qualification summary included so the reader immediately knows the applicant's value proposition?
- Is the resume's length and overall appearance appropriate given the career level and objective?

Appearance

- Does the resume provide a visually pleasing, polished presentation?
- Is the font appropriate for the career level and industry?
- Are there design elements such as bullets, bolding and lines to guide readers' eyes through the document and highlight important content?
- Is there a good balance between text and white space?
- Are margins even on all sides?
- Are design elements like spacing and font size used consistently throughout the document?
- If the resume is longer than a page, does the second page contain a heading? Is the page break formatted correctly?

Resume Sections

- Are all resume sections clearly labeled?
- Are sections placed in the best order to highlight the applicant's strongest credentials?
- Is the work history listed in reverse chronological order (most recent job first)?

Career Goal

- Is the career objective included toward the top of the resume in a headline, objective or qualifications summary?
- Is the resume targeted to a specific career goal and not trying to be a one-size-fits-all document?
- If this is a resume for career change, is the current objective clearly stated, along with supporting details showing how past experience is relevant to the new goal?

Accomplishments

- Does the resume include a solid listing of career accomplishments?
- Are accomplishments quantified by using numbers, percentages, dollar amounts or other concrete measures of success?
- Do accomplishment statements begin with strong, varied action verbs?
- Are accomplishments separated from responsibilities?

Relevance

- Is the information relevant to hiring managers' needs?
- Does the resume's content support the career goal?
- Is the resume keyword-rich, packed with appropriate buzzwords and industry acronyms?
- Is applicable additional information, such as awards and affiliations, included, while personal information like marital status, age and nationality unrelated to the job target omitted?

Writing Style

- Is the resume written in an implied first-person voice with personal pronouns, such as I, me and my, avoided?
- Is the content flow logical and easy to understand?
- Is the resume as perfect as possible, with no careless typos or spelling, grammar or syntax errors?