

Resume Writing Guidelines

A resume is a summary of your professional and educational experiences. As a concise, easy-to-read, compelling document that outlines your qualifications for a position, recruiters use resumes to determine if they would like a candidate to move forward with an interview.

Recruiters spend an average of eight seconds looking at a resume. This means they only glean a small amount of information from a resume before making a decision to hold on to it or not. One spelling, grammar, or formatting error can lead to a recruiter disregarding your resume. Always double-check your resume and have someone else read it before submitting an application.

The Office of Career Management is here to help. Whether you want help getting started, tailoring your resume to a specific job, or want someone to double check your spelling [schedule an appointment](#) or stop by our office, Copeland 209, from 1:00pm to 3:00pm for drop in hours.

Getting Started

You may write your first resume for a classroom assignment, but more often than not you will write a resume to submit for a job opportunity. When you sit down to write your resume, here are a few helpful things to have:

- A list of your career goals, skills, and experience. It can be helpful to write everything down, then focus on formatting.
- A resume template. We create our templates based on industry best practices and feedback from employers. See below for more information on formatting your resume.
- A job description, when applicable. You should align your skills and experience to the qualifications in the job description.

A resume is a flexible document that can be adapted to highlight your particular skills or experiences. The content categories you select for your resume will be determined by a number of factors, especially by your strongest “selling points” relative to the type of position you are seeking. You may have several versions of your resume if you are targeting different types of career positions.

The length of a resume for undergraduate students is one page. Graduate students and individuals with several years of experience after graduation may extend their resume to more pages.

Resume Content

Identification Data – This information allows employers to contact you when they are interested in your resume. This includes your full name, address (this should be the place where the employer can best send offer information), phone number, email address, and web site or link to an online portfolio (if applicable). It is best practice to use a personal, professional email address when applying to positions.

Education – Your academic experiences should be listed in reverse chronological order with your most recent degree or experience listed first. List the proper title of your degree and GPA (a guideline is to include a GPA if it's 3.0 or above).

Experience – Your experience should include not only paid full-time positions but also internship, part-time, volunteer, field, observation, and co-op experiences. For each position, list the organization for whom you worked, the location (city and state), job title, and dates (month/year) of employment. Within the sections, your experience should be listed in reverse chronological order. It is option to highlight specific experience by separating it from general work experience in a “Relevant Experience” section of your resume. [Schedule an appointment](#) with the Office of Career Management if you would like help customizing your resume for a specific job opportunity.

- Give a brief description of the skills and responsibilities for each position using short phrases and clauses rather than full sentences.
- Begin each bullet point with an action verb. Avoid the use of any personal pronouns (I, my, or me).
- Take credit for what you have done – especially for those activities that you initiated, developed, or supervised. Be careful not to exaggerate your responsibilities, but do not undersell yourself either.

Activities – Your involvement and leadership in clubs, student government, athletics, and social organizations shows an employer you have broadened your education with activities outside the classroom. These activities can also demonstrate important work-related skills and knowledge and the ability to work effectively with others. Be sure to include offices or other leadership positions you have held, as well as describing the positions and related tasks.

Optional Special Sections – You may list other types of information if they relate to your career and/or reflect achievements in which an employer may have interest.

- Special Skills—Computer, Equipment, Language(s)
- Professional Affiliations
- Additional Training
- Research
- Presentations/Publications
- Productions/Shows
- Study Abroad
- Volunteer
- Certifications
- Military
- Relevant Courses
- Conferences Attended

Do not include personal information, physical characteristics, religious or political affiliations, photographs, and hobbies. Additionally, as your build more experience, begin to remove irrelevant experience and replace it with more details on experiences where you made an impact.

Resume Style

There are different types of resume formats and styles. If you are writing your first resume, stick to our resume templates which feature a chronological style.

Chronological – Within sections, information is presented in reverse chronological order. Most recent information is listed first, working backward in time. This approach is the easiest to follow and best practices for recent graduates.

Functional – The focus of this style is on skills and abilities, not on when or where they were attained. Related skills are grouped together in comprehensive categories. The skill areas should relate closely to the stated career objective. It is best used by people who have extensive professional experience, may have changed careers, taken time off from their career, or who have gained their skills in volunteer or community service settings.

Curriculum Vitae – Unlike a resume which focuses on relevant work experience, a Curriculum Vitae (CV) is a fairly detailed overview of your life's accomplishments, especially those most relevant to the realm of academia. Candidates who are applying for faculty, administrative, or research positions typically prepare a CV rather than a resume. For samples of CV or help developing a CV, please [schedule an appointment](#) with the Office of Career Management.

Best Practices for Writing a Resume

As you gain more experience and identify your career goals and objectives, you will likely start customizing the resume template. As you feel comfortable changing the template, keep these best practices in mind.

- It is essential to have no errors (spelling, grammar, punctuation, and formatting). Always have at least one other person review your resume.
- Resumes use easy to read fonts (such as Times New Roman, Garamond, Arial, Cambria, or Helvetica)
- Start each bullet point with an active verb to focus on various skills developed during work experience. It is best practice to start each bullet point with a different action verb.
- Quantify result when possible (e.g., Wrote internal communications newsletter monthly for 100+ employees).
- List approximately 3 – 5 bullets for each position.
- Use past tense for previous positions (e.g. Facilitated) and present tense for current positions (e.g. Facilitate).
- Your margins should be no smaller than 0.5 inches. You can adjust your margins to help your resume fit nicely on one page.
- Text size should be no smaller than size 10 and no larger than size 14. You name at the top of the page is one exception and should be larger than the rest of the text on your resume (typical size 16 or 18).
- Use abbreviations sparingly. Spell out your degree, the name of the university, and organizations to which you belong.
- Always PDF your resume before sending electronically to employers. It is more professional and prevents any changes from being made to your resume.
- Title electronic copies of your resume with your name, the company and/or position you are applying for, and the date of your application.
- Print your resume on quality paper and use a laser or letter quality printer. White, cream, or ivory are appropriate paper color options.
- You must get your point across quickly and clearly. Use key words and well-written bullet points. Recruiters spend an initial eight seconds looking at resume to decide if they want to read it, then only another 30-45 second actually reading the resume.
- Consistency is key. The best resumes are consistent, making it easy for a recruiter to read. Inconsistencies clearly stand out, especially to recruiters that see hundreds of resumes.

Action Verbs

See below for a list of action verbs to help describe your skills and experience. It is best practice to start each bullet point on your resume with a different action verb. Use strong, compelling action verbs that will stand out to a recruiter.

See below for examples of compelling action verbs, brought to you by [The Muse](#). The Muse is an online career resource that offers a behind-the-scenes look at job opportunities with hundreds of companies and career advice from prominent experts.

You Led a Project

If you were in charge of a project or initiative from start to finish, skip "led" and instead try:

1. Chaired
2. Controlled
3. Coordinated
4. Executed
5. Headed
6. Operated
7. Orchestrated
8. Organized

9. Oversaw
10. Planned
11. Produced
12. Programmed

You Envisioned and Brought to Life a Project

And if you actually developed, created, or introduced that project into your company? Try:

13. Administered
14. Built
15. Charted
16. Created

17. Designed
18. Developed
19. Devised
20. Founded
21. Engineered
22. Established
23. Formalized
24. Formed
25. Formulated
26. Implemented
27. Incorporated
28. Initiated
29. Instituted
30. Introduced
31. Launched
32. Pioneered
33. Spearheaded

You Saved the Company Time or Money

Hiring managers love candidates who've helped a team operate more efficiently or cost-effectively. To show just how much you saved, try:

34. Conserved
35. Consolidated
36. Decreased
37. Deducted
38. Diagnosed
39. Lessened
40. Reconciled
41. Reduced
42. Yielded

You Increased Efficiency, Sales, Revenue, or Customer Satisfaction

Along similar lines, if you can show that your work boosted the company's numbers in some way, you're bound to impress. In these cases, consider:

43. Accelerated
44. Achieved
45. Advanced

46. Amplified
47. Boosted
48. Capitalized
49. Delivered
50. Enhanced
51. Expanded
52. Expedited
53. Furthered
54. Gained
55. Generated
56. Improved
57. Lifted
58. Maximized
59. Outpaced
60. Stimulated
61. Sustained

You Changed or Improved Something

So, you brought your department's invoicing system out of the Stone Age and onto the interwebs? Talk about the amazing changes you made at your office with these words:

62. Centralized
63. Clarified
64. Converted
65. Customized
66. Influenced
67. Integrated
68. Merged
69. Modified
70. Overhauled
71. Redesigned
72. Refined
73. Refocused
74. Rehabilitated
75. Remodeled
76. Reorganized
77. Replaced
78. Restructured

- 79. Revamped
- 80. Revitalized
- 81. Simplified
- 82. Standardized
- 83. Streamlined
- 84. Strengthened
- 85. Updated
- 86. Upgraded
- 87. Transformed

You Managed a Team

Instead of reciting your management duties, like “Led a team...” or “Managed employees...” show what an inspirational leader you were, with terms like:

- 88. Aligned
- 89. Cultivated
- 90. Directed
- 91. Enabled
- 92. Facilitated
- 93. Fostered
- 94. Guided
- 95. Hired
- 96. Inspired
- 97. Mentored
- 98. Mobilized
- 99. Motivated
- 100. Recruited
- 101. Regulated
- 102. Shaped
- 103. Supervised
- 104. Taught
- 105. Trained
- 106. Unified
- 107. United

You Brought in Partners, Funding, or Resources

Were you “responsible for” a great new partner, sponsor, or source of funding? Try:

- 108. Acquired
- 109. Forged
- 110. Navigated
- 111. Negotiated
- 112. Partnered
- 113. Secured

You Supported Customers

Because manning the phones or answering questions really means you’re advising customers and meeting their needs, use:

- 114. Advised
- 115. Advocated
- 116. Arbitrated
- 117. Coached
- 118. Consulted
- 119. Educated
- 120. Fielded
- 121. Informed
- 122. Resolved

You Were a Research Machine

Did your job include research, analysis, or fact-finding? Mix up your verbiage with these words:

- 123. Analyzed
- 124. Assembled
- 125. Assessed
- 126. Audited
- 127. Calculated
- 128. Discovered
- 129. Evaluated
- 130. Examined
- 131. Explored
- 132. Forecasted
- 133. Identified
- 134. Interpreted
- 135. Investigated
- 136. Mapped
- 137. Measured
- 138. Qualified

- 139. Quantified
- 140. Surveyed
- 141. Tested
- 142. Tracked

You Wrote or Communicated

Was writing, speaking, lobbying, or otherwise communicating part of your gig? You can explain just how compelling you were with words like:

- 143. Authored
- 144. Briefed
- 145. Campaigned
- 146. Co-authored
- 147. Composed
- 148. Conveyed
- 149. Convinced
- 150. Corresponded
- 151. Counseled
- 152. Critiqued
- 153. Defined
- 154. Documented
- 155. Edited
- 156. Illustrated
- 157. Lobbied
- 158. Persuaded
- 159. Promoted
- 160. Publicized
- 161. Reviewed

You Oversaw or Regulated

Whether you enforced protocol or managed your department’s requests, describe what you really did, better, with these words:

- 162. Authorized
- 163. Blocked
- 164. Delegated
- 165. Dispatched
- 166. Enforced
- 167. Ensured
- 168. Inspected
- 169. Itemized
- 170. Monitored
- 171. Screened
- 172. Scrutinized
- 173. Verified

You Achieved Something

Did you hit your goals? Win a coveted department award? Don’t forget to include that on your resume, with words like:

- 174. Attained
- 175. Awarded
- 176. Completed
- 177. Demonstrated
- 178. Earned
- 179. Exceeded
- 180. Outperformed
- 181. Reached
- 182. Showcased
- 183. Succeeded
- 184. Surpassed
- 185. Targeted

Additionally, see below for a list of more action verbs for you to consider when developing your resume.

Management and Leadership Skills

- administered
- analyzed

- appointed
- approved
- assigned
- attained

- authorized
- chaired
- considered
- consolidated

- contracted
- controlled
- converted
- coordinated

decided
delegated
developed
directed
eliminated
emphasized
enforced
enhanced
established
executed
generated
headed
hosted
improved
incorporated
increased
initiated
inspected
instituted
led
managed
merged
motivated
organized
originated
overhauled
oversaw
planned
prioritized
produced
recommended
reorganized
reviewed
scheduled
streamlined
strengthened
supervised

Communication Skills

addressed
advertised
arbitrated
arranged
articulated
authored
clarified
collaborated
communicated
composed
conferred
consulted
contacted
conveyed
convinced
corresponded
defined
described
developed
directed
discussed
drafted
explained
expressed
formulated
incorporated
influenced
interacted
interpreted
interviewed
involved
joined
lectured
listened
marketed

mediated
moderated
negotiated
observed
outlined
participated
presented
promoted
proposed
publicized
reconciled
recruited
referred
reinforced
reported
resolved
responded
solicited
specified
summarized
synthesized
translated
wrote

Research Skills

analyzed
clarified
collected
compared
conducted
critiqued
detected
determined
diagnosed
evaluated
examined
explored
extracted

formulated
gathered
identified
inspected
interpreted
interviewed
investigated
measured
organized
researched
searched
solved
summarized
surveyed
tested

Technical Skills

adapted
assembled
built
calculated
computed
conserved
constructed
converted
designed
determined
developed
engineered
fabricated
maintained
operated
programmed
regulated
remodeled
repaired
replaced
restored

solved

specialized

standardized

studied

upgraded

Teaching Skills

adapted

advised

clarified

coached

communicated

conducted

coordinated

developed

evaluated

explained

facilitated

guided

informed

instructed

motivated

trained

transmitted

Financial and

Data Skills

administered

adjusted

allocated

analyzed

appraised

assessed

audited

balanced

calculated

determined

developed

estimated

forecasted

managed

marketed

planned

programmed

projected

reconciled

reduced

researched

Creative Skills

acted

adapted

combined

conceptualized

created

customized

designed

developed

directed

established

founded

illustrated

initiated

instituted

integrated

introduced

invented

modeled

modified

performed

planned

solved

Helping Skills

adapted

aided

arranged

assessed

clarified

coached

collaborated

contributed

cooperated

demonstrated

educated

encouraged

expedited

facilitated

guided

helped

intervened

motivated

provided

presented

resolved

simplified

supported

volunteered

Organization and

Detail Skills

approved

arranged

cataloged

categorized

classified

coded

collected

compiled

corresponded

distributed

executed

generated

implemented

incorporated

inspected

logged

maintained

monitored

obtained

operated

organized

prepared

processed

provided

purchased

recorded

registered

reserved

responded

reviewed

scheduled

screened

submitted

supplied

standardized

systematized

updated

validated

verified

Accomplishments

achieved

completed

expanded

exceeded

improved

pioneered

reduced

resolved

spearheaded

succeeded

surpassed

transformed