

10 Top Resume Tips

A resume is a marketing tool that reveals your personal career goals and showcases your education, experience, skills and abilities. It should craft a big picture of who you are and what you hope to accomplish in your career. Remember employers have less than 15 seconds to look at your resume. Is it saying what you want it to say?

1. **Make your resume look good.** Use the same standard of paper for your cover letter and envelope. Do not use odd colored paper. Keep an electronic copy of your resume so you can print copies neatly, be able to make updates as necessary, and submit it online. Do not send a bad photocopy or improperly formatted electronic copy.
2. **Proofread.** Make several drafts and ask as many people as possible to check over your resume for grammar and spelling errors. Do run spell-check/grammar-check but do not rely on it to catch everything. Nothing will kill your chances for success faster than a document full of mistakes.
3. **Keep your resume brief.** As a rule of thumb, resumes should be kept to a one-page fact sheet. If you cannot describe your career on one page, two pages are acceptable.
4. **Write it yourself.** Sure, refer to examples and styles, but your resume should reflect you and your target career. Be honest. Exaggeration or lies may come back to haunt you.
5. **Avoid gimmicks.** Do not use odd colored paper, clipart or photos.
6. **Focus on your strongest assets,** especially those relevant to the job you are applying for.
7. **Make it easy for the potential employer to see your skills and selling points.** Use aligned bullets, an easy-to-read typeface, and sufficient white space. When possible, try to stick to a 1 inch margin.
8. **Be specific.** Instead of saying you work well with people, say "I supervised three people and increased productivity by 40%." Keep your resume active and positive, while not overdoing clichéd resume phrases.
9. **Make every word count.** If a word or phrase does not support your objective, whether you list an objective or not, edit it out.
10. **Quantify your experience and/or accomplishments wherever possible.** Cite numerical figures, which demonstrate your progress or accomplishments directly due to your work.

Style

Although there is no absolutely "correct" way to present information on your resume, these guidelines will enhance your making the best impression possible:

- Put your most important information near the **top** and **left** to attract the reader's attention.
- List dates of employment on the **right** or after the job title, employer name, and location of job.
- Create a resume using key words that describe your skills, traits, and knowledge since some employers now scan resumes into their databases.
- If you have both related and unrelated experience, consider having two experience sections. For example, someone in the environmental field may have two sections, one labeled Environmental Experience and another labeled Other Experience.
- Choose the resume style that best suits the position you seek.

Chronological

Best used by people whose work experience and history (internships or jobs) is clearly relevant to their job target and by people in fields where the chronological resume is very traditional.

- An outline of relevant information listed in reverse chronological order (most recent first).
- The easiest resume to prepare and often preferred by employers.

Functional

Best used by individuals without related paid work experience, career changers, and for people entering or re-entering the job market.

- Contains a work history section but emphasizes concrete (verifiable) skills where outcomes or quantifications (\$, %) may strengthen the accomplishments listed.
- Skills that are transferred from past experience (not limited to paid work experience) to a future job.
- What you actually can do, such as organizing, communicating, analyzing, and managing.
- Select those skill areas that most apply to the position you are seeking and then briefly describe the experiences that developed those skills. It is not enough just to say you have "strong analytical ability" without providing proof. Communicate what distinguishes you from other applicants with similar skills.

RESUME SECTIONS:

Contact Information

- Always placed at the top of the page since electronic databases scan for this information within the first few lines of the resume.
- Include your name, street address, city, state, zip code, home telephone number and an email address.
- If you feel comfortable, you may include your business telephone number.

Career Objective (optional)

Convince the employer to interview you by relating everything on your resume to the job objective.

- Use in most situations.
- Provide a concise statement of the position and/or the industry or field desired.
- If you do not include a job objective, be sure to describe your objective in the cover letter.
- Specifically name the job title and industry you want to target.

Education

- List degrees, certificates, credentials, licenses, and GPA.
- High school information is usually excluded unless it significantly contributes to the vision.
- May be listed before the Experience section if it is more relevant to the employer than your jobs.

Include the following information:

- Your degree (e.g. BS or Bachelor of Science), major, and minor. If you have more than one degree, list your most recent and relevant degree first. You may spell out the degree (Bachelor of Arts) or use abbreviations (BA) if commonly understood.
- The name of the college or university, city, state, and graduation date.
- Similar information for any past degrees.

Optional items:

- A short list of relevant classes or projects completed.
- High GPA, honors, awards, scholarships, special projects, and certifications.

Employment

- Include your most recent job title, employer, city, state, beginning and end dates of employment (month and year), a description of job accomplishments, and outcomes.
- Quantify accomplishments using numbers, percentages, time frames, and other specific details.
- Describe your accomplishments and outcomes using bullets and action verbs (see page 5).

Experience

- Highlight Internships and recent academic projects relevant to the industry.
- This is also a good opportunity if you lack paid job experience, include relevant unpaid experience (volunteer).

Accomplishments/Qualifications

Employers want to learn about your accomplishments and results in the following areas:

- Saving time or money • Improving products or services
- Solving problems • Managing a crisis
- Enhancing performance • Increasing profits or services

References

- As a rule of thumb, you should at least have two to five references. But, before you list them be sure to ask them first!
- Provide your references on a separate sheet of paper. Also, use the same formatting and header style as you did on your resume.
- Do not include “References Available upon Request” on your resume. It is understood by the interviewer.

How to list references:

- Name
- Job Title
- Name of Business
- Business Address
- Phone Number
- Email Address

Additional Headings

You can create headings to fit the skills you want to highlight. Foreign languages, computer languages, and hardware/software are also often included in a special section. Include a heading if it is relevant in helping the employer get the best possible impression of you and if it relates to the job.

Sample Headings

Leadership Experience	Professional Associations
Honors and Awards	Publications
Extracurricular Activities	Volunteer/Service Work
Computer Skills	Foreign Languages
International Experience	Presentations
Research Projects	Certifications and Licenses

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOSE WITH EXTENSIVE PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

A Summary of Qualifications section highlights your skills, relevant accomplishments, and educational background in either a paragraph or bulleted format at the top of the resume (below the contact information). The summary may be used in place of, or in addition to, a career objective.

Sample of Summary of Qualification—in paragraph format:

Over six years experience teaching young children. Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology. Certificate in Elementary Education. Successfully organized early childhood programs. Bilingual in Spanish and English.

Sample of Summary of Qualifications—with bullets:

- Sixteen years of CIS and Telecommunications consulting experience with Fortune 100 companies.
- Comprehensive expertise in frame relay fiber optics, computer networks, ATM's and telephony.
- Master in Telecommunications and Bachelor of Science in CIS from the University of Denver.
- Six years experience in Project Management with cross functional teams of up to 40 people.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Some people have individual situations or concerns that may impact their resumes. If you are unsure of how to best present yourself on a resume, please schedule a meeting with a Career Consultant at Lamar University Career and Testing Center to discuss your concerns.

Special situations may include:

- Gaps in employment history
- Being downsized or laid off
- Involvement in controversial organizations
- Termination from a job