RESUMES

For job seekers competing for work, an effective resume is critical to be selected to interview. There are no effective one-size-fits-all resumes. If you are exploring several work alternatives, write a resume to target each, selecting content that proves your ability to do that work.

Employers get hundreds of applicants, screening out all but a small pool of potential candidates to consider. Many employers use computerized applicant tracking systems (ATS) which strip formatting and search text for specific job related needs. Show your suitability with words. If you are considering a creative format send it directly to the hiring manager or it may result in a computer being unable to find or extract your information – losing you. Whether using an ATS or quickly skimming applications to pre-screen, employers use resume content to decide:

1. *"Does it seem this candidate could do the job?"*

2. *"Does the candidate have the qualifications needed?"*

3. *"Would this person be a better candidate to interview than another competitor?"*

Three to six 'best fit' candidates who have the ability to do the work are interviewed. When well written, emphasizing accomplishments relating to job needs, a resume will generate interviews. Candidates submitting poorly written resumes – offering no proof of job related competencies – are not considered.

Don't know where to begin? Not getting calls for interviews?

Follow these 4 simple steps:

1. Determine the work you want to target with this resume. Research competencies and experience employers expect in addition to education. Use this as a guideline for what to speak to in your resume to pass basic screening. Unsure about what work to target? Make an appointment with Career Services to help find focus.

2. Make a list of tasks in previous jobs, volunteer activities and class projects that reflect those identified as job-relevant in #1 above, demonstrating your ability in areas that matter to the reader. This will make up the bulk of your resume. Describe each using a **STAR** formula:

   Situation/challenge, **T**ask, specific **A**ction taken, **R**esult/impact achieved.

3. Make a chronological list of jobs you've held and education, professional development and training taken.

4. Once you have identified your specific experiences that address the job needs, evaluate what format will prioritize those points best in two pages to help a reader understand you are a good fit with the work.

   ✓ A chronological resume is best for emphasizing a logical progression from one job to the next in your desired field. It organizes information by job, beginning with current work and moving back in time. A summary near the top ensures three to five most relevant projects, qualifications or achievements are seen quickly.

   ✓ A combination resume showcases the most relevant achievements, projects and experiences under two to three job-relevant skill set headings, followed by additional details chronologically organized under each paid or volunteer position.

Resume sections

Resume sections help readers and ATS find information they need to assess your ability to do a particular job. Common headings ensure related information is not overlooked. While section headings may vary, they typically include:

Contact information – Required

- Name, phone number, email address and LinkedIn address. Including a street address is optional. City, Province and Postal Code may be used as filters for regional hiring.

  » When posting your resume online, include only name, cell phone and email address to safeguard your personal information.

- Ensure your name, contact information and content are of similar size font. Overly large font is like yelling.

Objective and Key Qualifications – Recommended

Objectives are a brief statement to help the employer understand the type of work you are proposing to do in their organization. Avoid being too vague such as "a challenging position" or "helping people". Objectives require you to clarify what you want to do next, with what industry or client base and are most often used by students, recent grads or new professionals. Objectives can be focused on:

» **Position:** A social work position in a hospital setting working with children in distress.

» **Field:** A position in the field of education working with adult skill development.

» **Skills:** Experienced commissioned sales person with strong negotiation and closing skills.

Key Qualifications should focus on specific, verifiable facts that can be substantiated and linked to the position targeted. It captures the top three to six reasons you are qualified for the work to which you've applied, based on your research on the role. While inserted near the top of the resume, this section is best crafted last.

Summary or Profile – Alternative to Objective and Key Qualifications

A summary or profile, like the objective and qualifications above, should clearly convey the role you propose to take on in an employer's organization, but does so by drawing on relevant past achievements to show how you can fill this employer's needs. These are frequently used by professionals with a track record of related successes.

Education *(may be joint or separate from professional development or relevant certifications)* – Required

A recent graduate with limited professional experience may place it near the beginning, while someone with extensive relevant achievements may choose to place this section near the end of the resume.

- Use the formal name of the degree or program, and name and location of your university, school or program. List in reverse chronological order. Include anticipated graduation date (if currently enrolled) and major (if declared). Do not include future educational plans.

- Awards, honours, scholarships and GPA are optional. If including GPA, cite the scale (4.5/5.0 or 3.5/4.0).

- Do not list courses. Relevant class/lab/project details may be used to demonstrate experience with a job-critical competency as points under the degree or in a separate section.

Experience and relevant accomplishments – Required

Prior to writing your resume, brainstorm examples of your competencies using three to four categories related to the position sought, such as:

- Fund-raising
- Training and Supervising
- Laboratory Skills
- Research and Writing
- Customer Sales/Service
- Presenting

Ask yourself, *"When did I do this in the past, how did I go about it and what was the impact of my contribution?"* For example: if you would like a position planning events, highlight your specific contributions to planning, implementing and troubleshooting for past events, paid or unpaid.

Employers want details about what you have done that meets the needs of their position and want to make up their own minds, so relay your competencies using facts and plain language rather than beliefs or claims. Don't simply tell employers that you did something – **describe** what you did. Focus on process or results that capture your contribution or actions. Use specific quantities, percentages or amounts where possible.

Instead of...	Consider...
Handled customers	Assisted 200 customers daily select equipment by suggesting alternative choices for client's lifestyle considerations and price point.
Assisted with organization of event	Booked conference lecture rooms and coordinated arrivals, departures and accommodations for 500 participants.
Supervised employees	Trained, mentored and coordinated 20 employees including interviewing, annual performance reviews and shift scheduling.
Excellent database skills	Proficient in building and manipulating Excel spreadsheets, importing and exporting data to and from other software.
Bilingual English and French	Explained critical treatment plans in both English and French, ensuring patient understanding at discharge. Provided written translation for incoming records.

Work history *(also called employment history)* – Required

- » Include employment details: job title, employer name, city/province and dates of employment using years (2018 – present) or month and year (July 2018 – present).

- » Transfer relevant points (identified above) to their appropriate job/place in a reverse chronological or combination resume. Avoid and jargon that prospective employers may not understand.

- » For jobs with little direct relevance, simply list employment details with one or two achievements.

Professional affiliations

Indicate relevant on-campus groups or off-campus professional associations to which you belong with related committee positions and contributions, if any.

Other – Optional

Community/volunteer involvement, interests and hobbies may be included but use only those that enhance your qualifications or demonstrate your ability to perform the job targeted.

References/portfolio available

"References on Request" is not necessary. You may indicate *"Portfolio Available on Request"* if you have one.

Tips

- ✓ Take the time to understand the work you are applying to do, and organize your resume to show you can meet the deliverables it requires. It takes time to create a resume that gets interviews.

- ✓ Use universal fonts and a font size of 11 to 12 points throughout the resume.

- ✓ Eighty per cent (+/-) of companies are believed to use one of 200+ different ATS which gather resumes submitted online, uploaded or scanned into the system. Sections are 'data mined' for specific details, extracting only a limited number of applications/resumes to be seen by a person who will select interviewees. Not all ATS can read PDF's.

- ✓ Templates, wizards, headers/footer, graphics, columns, shading, boxes, other higher level formatting, even dates before company and position may result in a resume which is impossible for an ATS to successfully find or read your relevant information. Format your document simply. Adjust layout and font size to evenly distribute over two pages. Ensure it is easily read by both human and robot. Even creative industries use ATS and prefer to see creativity in a portfolio, or when meeting in person rather than on an application document.

Common errors

- Not understanding the needs of the reader and the position results in a reliance on vague, overused self-congratulating terms such as excellent communication, skilled leadership, multi-tasking, etc. What specific accomplishments, skills and expertise set you apart from your competitors?

- A one-size-fits-all resume has no specific focus and is often discarded. It leaves out details that quantify the size and scope of what has been done that is relevant.

- Personal pronouns (I, me, my) and phrases like 'responsible for' or 'duties' are no longer used. Personal data such as photos, gender, race, weight, date/place of birth, marital status, disability/illness, salary, memberships in political/religious organizations or clubs that are not job-related should be eliminated.

- Even one spelling mistake shows poor attention to detail. Errors suggest the writer does not care or will be unconcerned about on-the-job mistakes. **Proofread!** Spell check does not catch all errors.

Still unable to narrow your target?

Finding a job takes longer for those who hope employers will figure out what they want. Assess your skills and research occupational tasks before writing your resume(s). Learn what your target audience wants and what activities will be of greatest interest to them rather than using only work history.

The ability to prioritize information for your audience is crucial – in resume writing, job hunting and on the job.

Career Services can help you:

Meet with a Certified Career Development Professional to discuss your career options.	Have your resume critiqued and get one-on-one interview preparation assistance.	Find relevant part-time, summer and post graduation work through events, fairs and job postings.

CAREER SERVICES

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