

## Resume Tips

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A resume is a document that job seekers use as a way to attract the attention of employers in the hopes of being called in for an interview. As such, it is intended as a **summary** of your experiences that you believe to be **relevant** to the job for which you are applying.

It is not uncommon to have a few versions of your resume that you tailor to different jobs.

Included below are some tips for writing effective resumes.

### When **formatting** your resume:

- **Be mindful of your font size and style.** Use a font size no smaller than 10 point and no larger than 12 point. Anything smaller is difficult to read, and anything larger looks out of place. Choose a font style that is easy to read and professional looking. Note that 10 point in one style may look smaller or larger than 10 point in another style – this is why it is important to print out a copy when you are done to see what it actually looks like off-screen to ensure readability.
- **Use your margins wisely.** Margins on a resume should be no less than 0.5 inches and no greater than 1.0 inches.
- **Be consistent with font styles, font sizes, punctuation, headings, etc.** In other words, if the heading for your “Education” section is 12 point bold Helvetica, then the heading for the “Experience” section should be the same. If you choose to use periods at the end of each bullet, you need to do so throughout the resume. If you choose not to use periods at the end of a bullet, then you need to continue this format throughout the document. Similarly, if you choose to include a GPA for your undergraduate degree, then it is recommended that you include a GPA for your graduate degree, too. (If your GPA is under 3.0, it is recommended to omit GPA’s from the resume.)
- **Ensure your resume looks clean, easy-to-read and includes white space.** White space on a resume allows the reader’s eye to take a break, and in turn makes it easier for the reader to notice all the experience you are including on your resume. Resumes without white space simply look like a lot of text – and like a lot of work to read! They are not welcoming. Print out your resume and examine the hard copy. Is there white space? Does it look neat? Get a second, and even third, opinion.
- **Avoid excessive use of graphic elements.** The best resume design is one that doesn’t call attention to itself. Avoid using color, graphics, and borders. Thin lines under section headings are appropriate for some layouts, but they should always be used with restraint. When it comes to resume design, less is more!
- **Watch the length.** The appropriate length of the resume ultimately depends on the length and relevance of your work experience and the type of position for which you are applying. A resume that is one or two pages is most common. However, if you have many publications or presentations that you are including, it is common for those to require a third or even fourth page.

When **organizing** the contents of the resume:

- **Organize information in reverse chronological order if you are using a chronological resume format (most common format).** This means that in each separate section of your resume, the most recent experience should be listed on top, followed by the next recent, etc. Note that the end date of each experience is the one you should use when ordering the chronology.
- **Include relevant section titles.** At its most basic, a resume often contains an Education section and an Experience section. You may choose to include a Skills section that highlights your language abilities or computer competencies. Other sections that you may consider including are: Qualifications Summary (a tailored summary of your experiences that indicate why you are a good match for the position, inserted at the top of the resume), Volunteer Experience, Activities, Publications, and Presentations.

When **writing** the resume:

- **Customize your resume.** Make sure your work, extracurricular, volunteer, and academic experiences are highlighted in a way to emphasize what is most applicable to the specific job and overall industry you are targeting. Look at the words that are used in the job description; borrow some of them for your own resume.
- **Be to the point, but descriptive.** Edit your resume after writing a draft or two, removing unnecessary words. Ask yourself if you could say the same thing in fewer words. But be sure to include important, impressive details and accomplishments. Oftentimes, it helps to quantify descriptions where possible. Rather than saying, “Led health presentation for kids,” you might want to say “Created and led twice-weekly health presentation for a group of approximately 20 children aged 7-10.”
- **Speak of your experience in terms of impact and achievement rather than just responsibility.** Employers want to know what you accomplished within your role, not just what you were responsible for doing. For example, something as mundane as “Responsible for filing documents” becomes more impressive when written, “Implemented a data management system that resulted in improved office organization.” Quantified descriptions can help you convey the impact of your work.
- **Include multiple titles/roles in each place of employment if you have had more than one title/role there.** Make sure you include the coincident dates with each title. Including the various positions shows the promotions that you received.
- **Use strong action verbs to start each sentence/bullet describing your experience, and be sure to vary your verbs.** It is important to choose powerful words and to not repeat the same word over and over again.
- **Use appropriate verb tenses.** A common error people make is to use the wrong verb tense. Always use the past tense when describing positions that are in the past, and use present tense for current positions. If your current position includes tasks that are already completed and not ongoing, you can describe those tasks in the past tense, while including your ongoing tasks in present tense.

- **Avoid using the word "I" or other first-person pronouns (e.g., me, myself, mine, our, we, etc.)** Resumes are not meant to be in the first-person. They are intended to be formal documents.
- **Do NOT use abbreviations or acronyms without explanation.** You may know what the acronym for your GW club stands for, but do not expect an employer to know.
- **Do not include an objective or information about references.** Although both an objective and contact information for references used to be standard on resumes, this information is no longer needed. Your resume should be tailored for a specific job, which makes an objective unnecessary. Additionally, it is assumed that you will provide contact information for your references when it is requested, so unless application instructions specifically ask for references, you don't need to make any mention of "References available upon request" on your resume.
- **Steer clear of lies.** Anything you write on your resume is fair game for discussion. Plus, many employers conduct background checks and lies could easily be caught. Keep it honest with your job descriptions and the dates of employment.
- **Include a professional email address.** Your email address can be your school address or your personal address, but either way it should be professional, (not, for example, llovetodrink@gmail.com). Similarly, include a phone number where you can be reached, and be certain your voicemail greeting is professional enough, as well.

**When sending the resume:**

- **Use spell-checker first, and then use another method or two to check the spelling before you send.** Yes, you should use spell-check. But you should also proofread your resume, and have someone else proofread it too. Spell-check cannot catch incorrect names of companies or people. Spell-check also cannot catch words that are spelled correctly, but are simply not the words you intended to use!
- **Save and send your resume and cover letter as PDF documents, if possible.** To ensure the formatting you created stays the way you want it to, create a PDF. Sometimes sending a Word document can alter the formatting, making the document difficult to read.
- **Keep a running master copy of your resume.** You may choose to expand and condense some information as you tailor your resume to specific opportunities. However, it will be helpful to keep a full and complete master record of your experience that you can pull from as you create each version of your resume.