

RESUMES

The resume is the first impression an employer receives about you as a candidate and also serves as your marketing tool. The resume is your first opportunity to relay pertinent information about skills, experiences, and career goals to a potential employer. This may mean that you will be creating a few versions of your resume, each tailored to specific career areas. Since a resume is made up of sections that help employers learn about the candidate, some sections are essential, while others are optional. There is not one exact way to write a resume. Even though you can get ideas from many people and many samples, you are the final judge of what best communicates your most important information to an employer. Getting feedback from potential employers prior to the job search is also recommended.

Content:

- Keep it to one page in length. Advanced degree students and candidates who have worked for several years may require more than one page. If you do use more than one page, make sure your name is at the top of the second page.
- Include items that are most relevant to and supportive of a career goal.
- Consider including a career objective to show self-awareness and commitment to a field.
- Order items so that the most relevant items appear first.
- Use action verbs and highlight achievements, quantifying results if possible.
- Avoid abbreviating names of organizations, titles and descriptors.
- Include both campus and permanent addresses, if applicable, so employers can easily locate you.
- Include your e-mail address. You may include your home page address if showing sample work, but be certain all aspects of your home page are suitable for employer viewing.

Format:

- Be sure it is easy to read with clean, simple lines and reasonable use of white space on the page. Artistic resumes should not be over-designed. Your portfolio is a better place to show your work.
- Use light-colored paper, standard 8 1/2" x 11".
- Print only on one side of a two-page resume.
- Use a font that is readable, typically no smaller than 10 point or larger than 14 point (name may be up to 32 points, if desired).
- Use formatting, such as boldfacing, underlining, and italicizing sparingly. Do not use two special formats in one phrase.

Sections to Include in a Resume

Identifying information

The top section of your resume should include all of the identifying information. This includes name, both present and permanent addresses, telephone number, and email address. Personal web pages can be included if they are appropriate and relevant. This section is also where you can indicate if you are a US Citizen or Permanent Resident.

Objective

A well-written objective can give you an edge on the competition. A poorly written one can make you appear either indecisive or too specialized. You may hear many different opinions on how to write an objective or whether one is even necessary. Describing it in a cover letter is often cited as an alternative. As with the entire resume, it is a personal decision. A good objective simply reflects knowledge of your intended field, self-awareness, and some preferences in job functions. Whether or not an objective is necessary depends on your college and program of study. Check with your career consultant to get specific recommendations on whether or not an objective is necessary.

Sample Objectives:

The following are sample objectives that you can use as guidelines in preparing your individual and unique statement:

- Internship in the management information systems field. Areas of interest include applications programming and system analysis and design.
- To work in the field of industrial design using a modern approach to create new products.
- A position in the health field using experience in organizing groups, clarifying ideas and problems, making public addresses, and writing reports and newsletters.
- Research responsibility in a public affairs area of a corporation.
- To obtain a position as an engineer in the field of structural engineering, stress analysis, or civil engineering.
- A position as an assistant in product marketing, development or general research.

Education

The education section includes the name and location of your college/university. It also includes the degree(s) you are pursuing, major(s), minor(s), and graduation date. GPA should be included in this section if it is over a 3.0. Check with your career consultant, as some colleges have different recommendations about listing your GPA.

Relevant Coursework

This is an important section to include, especially when applying for internships, as employers like to know your familiarity with their particular field. List the highest level of coursework taken in your major, as well as any coursework related to your career goal. Be sure to list the courses in two or three columns, so they may be read more easily.

Projects

If you have completed any relevant projects in your classes you can include them here. A project section highlights relevant technical and teamwork skills which are of interest to an employer. List the name of each project and the semester in which it was completed. Use phrases to describe the project, and start each phrase on it's own line with an action verb. Be sure to discuss your role in the project, the purpose of the project, and how you met the challenges presented.

Skills

A skills section is important to include, especially when applying for positions which require some level of technical knowledge. Be sure to list distinct skills which are specific to your field. Students in some colleges may need to list more specific or specialized skills, based on their field of study or industry. Skill categories which may be listed include: Computer Software, Laboratory/Instrumentation, Spoken Languages, and Machines.

Experience

In the experience section any relevant work, volunteer, or leadership experience should be listed. Traditional resume formats begin with present/last position and record information in reverse chronological order. However, your most important and relevant experiences should ideally appear first. In order to highlight relevant experiences, try creating more specific categories such as "Writing Experience, Computer Experience, Work Experience", and list experiences accordingly. Usually, listing experiences in these types of categories will naturally result in a reverse chronological order within each category.

Each experience should be listed separately with the job title, name of department, name of organization, city and state, and dates of employment being included. Under each experience, list accomplishments that would be of interest to an employer and translate your experiences into results, quantifying when possible. Use an action verb to start each phrase, and remember that it is okay to include fragments and incomplete sentences. Do not downplay your accomplishments, it's okay to brag!

Activities

In the activities section any professional memberships should be listed, as well as all clubs, organizations, and activities of which you are a member. Include the year(s) that you participated in each activity, as well as any leadership positions held in the organizations. Start with Carnegie Mellon activities, and if there is still room on the page a few can be added from high school (freshmen and sophomores only!).

Honors

The purpose of listing honors is to indicate strong academic abilities and to relate them to the mission of the employer. These should be listed in chronological order, with the most recent first. They can include the month and year the honor was received, and high school honors and award can be included if there is room. Examples of honors include special awards, Dean's List, and scholarships.

Achievements

Shows, Exhibits, Publications (can also be listed in a separate section)

NOTE: The appropriate way to write Carnegie Mellon is without a hyphen. Also "CMU" is an abbreviation often used within the university, but should not be used when writing resumes, cover letters, and other official documents.

Plain Text Resumes:

It is becoming more commonplace for companies to have job applicants apply online, and the resume is submitted in text boxes. When submitting a resume online, these formatting guidelines should be followed:

- Use sans serif fonts (Arial, Helvetica).
- List your phone number on its own line.
- Focus on nouns and verbs that describe your skills, experiences, education and professional affiliations. Computer scanners are programmed to search resumes for key words that describe the requirements for a job. You may include action verbs for sentence flow and human eyes, but make sure you have also included numerous key words such as writer, French (language fluency), BS, Java, and Society of Technical Communications.
- Use common headings such as: Objective, Education, Experience, Employment, Positions Held, Accomplishments, Skills, Summary of Qualifications, Strengths, Affiliations, Publications, Papers, Licenses, Certifications, Examinations, Honors, and References.
- Use jargon and acronyms specific to your field.
- Avoid bold, italic or underlined text. Capitalized words are okay as long as letters do not touch each other.
- Avoid graphics, shading or reverses (white letters on a black background.) Don't compress spaces between letters.
- Avoid vertical and horizontal lines as well as boxes. Avoid a two-column format.

College of Fine Arts Resumes

Resumes for students in the College of Fine Arts differ greatly from those discussed above. The above resume format can be used for campus jobs, but when developing a resume for internship and job searches, students should check with their consultant.

Set up an appointment with your Career Consultant

Writing this document is an important part of your career development, and your Career Consultant can be an excellent resource to help you through this process.

To schedule an appointment, call the Career and Professional Development Center at 412-268-2064.