

# Guide to Writing an Effective Resume

## THE PURPOSE OF YOUR RESUME

Your resume is one part of your overall job search strategy. Your goal is to create a resume that will:

- Summarize and highlight your experience and background relevant to the position in which you are interested,
- Market your relevant competencies and accomplishments, and
- Motivate an employer to interview you.

## WHAT TO INCLUDE ON YOUR RESUME

Your resume will be brief and to the point. In most cases, one full page will be enough room for you to say all that you need to say. In order to use that page most effectively, consider carefully the information you put on your resume. It is a good idea to create a written outline before you start to type. In your final draft, provide enough information for the employer to understand your abilities and qualifications for the position without overdoing it.

What facts, and how you list your information will depend on the focus you choose to give your resume. Typically, you may see some or all of the following sections in a resume:

**Contact Information:** Include your name, address and telephone (permanent and/or temporary), and e-mail address. When including your e-mail address, remember that employers will use it to contact you professionally. Avoid using nicknames or unprofessional automatic responses.

**Objective:** Starting your resume with an objective, while optional, is one way to demonstrate the focus of your job search. (Your focus or professional goal should always be included in your cover letter.) Beware of being too narrow or too general. Communicate to the employer some combination of: the type of position and industry or organization you want, the skills you have and want to use, and your long- or short-term goals.

**Education:** List in reverse chronological order your educational experience. Include information about your Degree, major or concentration, and graduation year. Other information you might include is your coursework (relevant to the position), honors, research or thesis work, and your GPA (if above 3.0).

**Experience:** Begin by listing your title, the organization, city and state of employment, and dates of employ. Once you have developed a reverse chronological outline of all your work experience, develop a description of your work duties. Employers want to see your responsibilities, skills, accomplishments, transferable skills, and results. Describe your activities, not the employer or the project. Use past tense action verbs to describe your work experience and activities. They help employers understand your skills and what you have to offer.

**Leadership/Activities:** Include community service or college and professional activities in your resume. These can highlight your skills, abilities, and potential in different environments. You can give employers more evidence of your leadership potential, ability to be a team player, initiative, motivation, and well roundedness. Lead with your strengths. Describe your activities if it will help to clarify the level of your involvement, but remember to be concise.

**Skills, Honors, and Interests:** Other sections you can include in your resume may list specific skills you developed, honors or awards you received, interests you have, or other important information. Anything listed here should enhance your candidacy and be relevant to the position.

## **TIPS ON WRITING YOUR RESUME**

1. Your resume should be flawless. It is a representation of you, therefore, spelling and grammar should be perfect; punctuation should be consistent.
2. It should be brief - preferably one page; two pages only if your experience warrants it.
3. Make your resume visually attractive by using proper spacing and adequate margins; content should be balanced and centered on the page. It should look like an original copy.
4. A resume is a formal business document, not an essay. Do not use the pronoun, "I".
5. Use quality bond paper, size 8 1/2" x 11" with letter-quality print.
6. A resume should include specifics, i.e. earned 75% of college expenses, elected Resident Assistant of a 50-student residence hall.
7. If you plan to include an objective, the content should be related to the job for which you are applying.
8. Your resume should be honest - do not exaggerate or lie.
9. Use action verbs or skill words to describe your experience and emphasize important action verbs with adverbs.
10. When mailing your resume, always accompany it with a cover letter.

## **FORMATTING TIPS**

- Provide the cleanest original copy and use a standard style resume.
- Do not use unusual formatting, graphics or spacing.
- Do not fold or staple.
- Use standard typefaces.
- Use a font size of 10-14, however avoid Times New Roman in 10 point.
- Avoid two-column format or newsletter styles.
- Place your name at the top of the page (in a formal Letterhead) on its own line.
- List each phone number on its own line.

## **MAKING YOUR CONTENT MATTER**

- Add key words or nouns such as medical assistant, human resources, or communications.
- Describe your experiences with concrete words.
- Use more than one page only if absolutely necessary.
- Use jargon specific to your industry or interest.