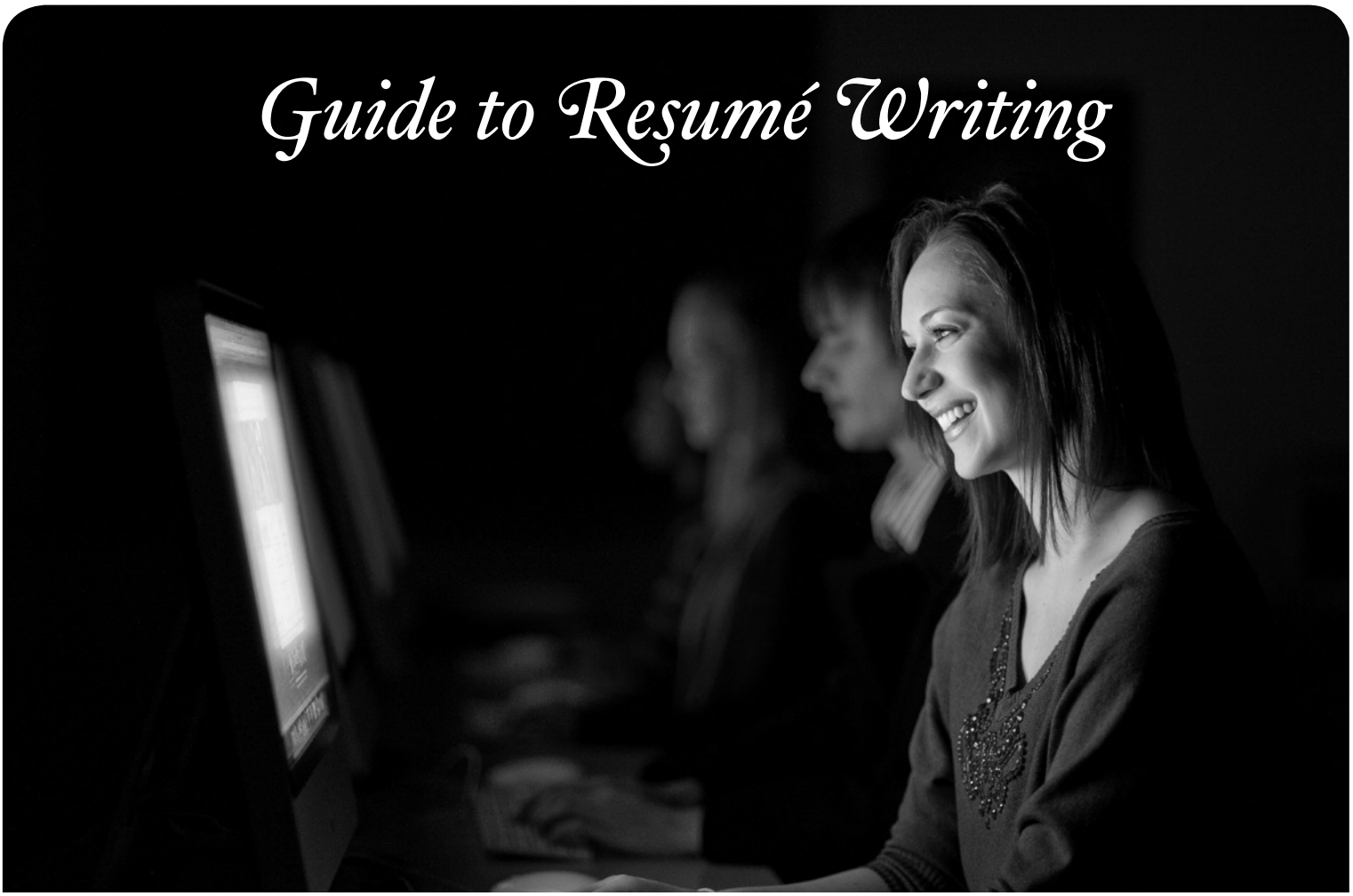
Guide to Resumé Writing



What is a Resumé?

Your resumé is your advertisement. It is a one-page (sometimes two-page) summary of your experiences and skills relevant to the field of work you are entering. It highlights your accomplishments to show a potential employer that you are qualified for the work you want. It is not a biography of everything you have done. The most effective resumés are clearly focused on a specific job title and address the employer's stated requirements for the position. The more you know about the duties and skills required for the job – and organize your resumé around these points – the more effective the resumé. Always keep in mind that the goal of the resumé is to get you an interview.

CAREER SERVICES

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General Guidelines

Length
In general, if you are an undergraduate student or recent graduate with modest experience, you want to try to limit your resumé to one page. An employer takes an average of 30 seconds to review your resumé. The less they have to sift through to get to the most relevant information, the better.

Paper
When printing your resumé for submission by mail or in-person, use high-quality bond paper in conservative colors (white, ivory, or very pale gray). Do not use paper with visible flecks in it. Use a laser printer to print your document.

Header
Utilize the same header on all documents (resumé, list of references, and cover letter). Include your name and your complete contact information. Be certain your email address sounds professional (e.g., not "prettypinkprincess@whatever.com"). Do not use your work email address. Put your name at the top of page two on a two-page resume.

Font & Styling
Use a standard font (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Garamond). Avoid casual fonts like Comic Sans. Text size should be 10-11 points. Your name and section headings can and should be a bit larger. Fully utilize styling tools such as **bolding,** • bullets, *italics* and ALL CAPITALS for ease when skimming.

Order
Readers lose interest as they read down and across the page. Thus, prioritize information in order of importance, with the most important text up high and to the left where it is most likely to be read.

Numbers & Abbreviations
Spell out numbers under and including ten; use the numerical form for numbers over and including 11 (as a general rule), unless they are the first words in a sentence. Spell out abbreviations unless they are unquestionably obvious.

Format
Formulate bulleted statements rather than using paragraphs of text:

- Use as much white space between sections of writing as possible.
- Keep sentences as short and direct as possible.
- Maintain uniformity, such as either using periods or not using them after all bulleted statements.
- Start each bulleted statement with an action verb. Use present tense verbs for jobs you are still doing, and past tense verbs for tasks you have completed or are no longer doing.
- Avoid use of the first person (e.g., "I," "me," "my," "mine"). For example, "Organized filing system" instead of "I organized the filing system".
- Margins should be approximately 1" on top and sides.

Accuracy
Proofread for spelling and grammar very carefully! Make sure all information is accurate and truthful. Watch your verb tense: If the accomplishment is completed, it should be past tense. If the task is still underway, it should be present tense.

Information to Avoid
Do not include personal information such as age, height, weight, health status, marital status, number of children, military classification, photographs, etc. unless it is required for the specific position.

Templates and Sample Resumés
Templates and sample resumés will give you an idea of what the format of your resumé should look like. However, there is no one right way to write your resumé. You can use a template as a guide, but customize it to fit your needs.

If you would like to have your resumé reviewed, contact the Office of Career Services to schedule an appointment. Please plan to drop off or email your documents at least 24 hours in advance of your appointment time.

Parts of the Resumé

Objective
An objective is optional. You may find that an objective is good for one version of your resume and not needed for another. The purpose of an objective statement is to let the employer know what position or type of job you are applying for, and your qualifications for that position. Focus on what you have to offer rather than on what the job can offer you. Employers are not so much interested in what you hope to get out of a job with them so much as they want to know whether you fit their needs. In this section, you want to assert yourself as the best person for the job.

Summary of Qualifications
This section is also optional. In the interest of space, it is best to include an Objective *or* Summary of Qualifications – not both. A Summary consists of 3-5 concise statements that focus the reader's attention on the most important qualities, achievements and abilities you have to offer. The rest of your resumé will need to include information which supports your summary statements. In this section, you want to assert yourself as the best person for the job.

Education
This section should be listed first on your resumé as long as you are in school (after your Objective or Summary if you choose to include). Begin with your most recent level of education and degree and list in reverse chronological order. Include the name and location of schools, expected date of completion (not dates of attendance), major fields of study, and degrees received. Do not list your high school information unless you are a freshman or sophomore applying for an internship. Your GPA should be included if it is above 3.0. (Most recruiters will assume that it is below 3.0 if they do not see it on your resumé). Honors and awards that are directly related to your academics may also be listed under this section.

Experience
This section can include full-time, part-time, internship, and volunteer experiences – both paid and unpaid. Start with your most recent employer. Give dates of employment, your job title, name of the company, and the company's city and state. This section should detail your accomplishments, transferable skills, and important responsibilities. *It should not be a listing of your job duties.* Begin each statement using action verbs. See the list of action verbs included in this packet. Avoid "Responsible for…" or "Duties Included…" Use numbers and percentages to provide measurable results when appropriate (e.g., number of people supervised; number of children in classroom; size of event; budget you oversaw, etc.). Use keywords where possible.

Activities
It is important to show involvement throughout college in areas other than the classroom. This is an optional section where you can list campus activities, as well as job-related professional, humanitarian, or other groups. These activities may be worth mentioning, particularly if you were an officer or were active in some other way.

Honors & Awards
This section can showcase any special honors and awards you may have received. If the only awards received were in school, put these under the Education section.

Skills and Certifications
List skills such as knowledge of foreign languages, computers (operating systems, relevant applications), and relevant certifications. Other skills or special abilities (e.g., quick-learner, people-oriented, dynamic public speaker) should be demonstrated through your experience section.

Other Sections
Of course, this is not a comprehensive list of all of the sections you might choose to include on your resume. Ask yourself what you want the employer to know about you, and then be sure to incorporate that information into your resume. You might also choose to include any of the following sections: Professional Affiliations & Memberships, Relevant Coursework, Community Service, Volunteer Experience, Certifications, Leadership Experience.

References
Do not list references or former supervisors on your resumé. You also do not need to write "References Available Upon Request" on your resumé – it is assumed you would provide them if requested. References should be listed on a separate page from your resumé. Try to have a diverse list of 3-5 references that know you in a professional or academic setting (current or previous employers, professors, coaches, colleagues). Be sure to ask permission before listing someone as a reference and provide them with an opportunity to refuse. Remember, no reference is better than a negative one.

Top 10 Resumé Mistakes

Before finalizing your resumé, make sure you don't commit any of these mistakes:

1. ***Failure to customize.*** Your resumé should be tailored to the targeted opportunity. Be prepared to revise your resumé many times throughout your job search and into your career. Your resume should convey why you are the perfect candidate for a specific job. If you are applying for several different positions, you should adapt your resume to each one. There is nothing wrong with having several different resumes, each specifically crafted for a different type of position. You may even want to change some parts of your resume for each job you apply for.

2. ***Highlighting job duties instead of accomplishments and transferable skills.*** Employers don't care as much about what you've done as what you've accomplished in your various activities. Highlight accomplishments and transferable skills.

3. ***Use of personal pronouns.*** Eliminate any use of personal pronouns such as I, my, we.

4. ***A bad objective statement.*** Give employers something specific and, more importantly, something that focuses on their needs, not just your own.

5. ***Listing references.*** References should be listed on separate document.

6. ***Use of abbreviations.*** In general, avoid using abbreviations except for two-letter state abbreviations.

7. ***Inconsistent or unattractive format.*** Above all, make sure your resumé looks professional. Your resume should have a simple, clean structure and be very easy to read. Be sure bulleted statements are in line, margins are approximately 1" on all sides, spacing between sections is consistent, and headings are easy to find. Use standard fonts, standard 8.5" x 11" paper, and black ink.

8. ***Typos and grammatical errors.*** Your resumé needs to be perfect from a grammatical standpoint. One typo, misspelled word, or grammatical error could eliminate you from consideration.

9. ***Use of graphics or pictures.*** Unless you are applying for a job in a creative field, graphics should not be used on a resumé. And your picture should never go on your resumé. If it's necessary, include it as an attachment.

10. ***Failure to include a cover letter.*** A cover letter should always accompany your resumé. Your cover letter is an introduction to your resume and should clearly articulate why you are the best person for the job. When submitting your resume via email, your email message will serve as your cover letter. See the *Cover Letter Guide* for tips on creating a cover letter.

Action Verbs

You can download an extensive list of action verbs organized into specific skill categories from our website.

Allocated	Counseled	Guided	Participated	Scheduled
Analyzed	Created	Helped	Persuaded	Simplified
Assessed	Debated	Hosted	Planned	Selected
Budgeted	Designed	Improved	Prepared	Solved
Chaired	Developed	Increased	Presented	Streamlined
Collaborated	Directed	Initiated	Produced	Supervised
Communicated	Drafted	Led	Promoted	Wrote
Composed	Edited	Managed	Reconciled	
Contacted	Evaluated	Monitored	Represented	
Contributed	Executed	Motivated	Researched	
Coordinated	Facilitated	Observed	Resolved	
Corresponded	Generated	Organized	Reviewed	