

Writing your Resume

Introduction

Together with your cover letter, your resume provides an employer with the information they use to decide whether or not to select you for an interview. Your resume will usually be one of many viewed by an employer in the selection process, so it is vital that it contains only relevant information about you, addresses the job requirements, is concise and structured.

Your resume is an opportunity for you to demonstrate to a future employer your written communication skills, in particular your skills in bringing together information from various sources in order to provide a summary of your background and abilities. These skills should be familiar to you as they are very similar to the academic skills developed through assembling, drafting and submitting written work during a course.

Resume format

Your resume must be concise; that means that it should be between 2-3 pages for a young graduate and 2-4 pages for a person with significant work history. Academic resumes may be longer. The information needs to be presented in an organised, logical and coherent fashion.

Key points:

- Use a conventional font, e.g. Times New Roman or Arial
- Use text size 9 to 12
- Use headings and bullet lists
- Use plain business English - avoid SMS language, abbreviations, jargon and slang
- The formatting must be consistent and clear
- Consider converting your resume to .pdf format for consistent formatting
- Have plenty of 'white space' on the page; i.e. have enough space between paragraphs, make sure margins are not too narrow
- Check and double check for spelling and grammatical errors; computer spelling and grammar checks are useful but not enough. Have another person proof-read your resume

Resume styles

(Reverse) Chronological

This is the most common format for resumes and almost certainly the one a recent graduate should start with. On this resume the most recent experience or education is put first with all other information following in reverse chronological order. Employers tend to prefer this type of resume as it is easy for them to see your career story. Remember, this is chronological by heading only, you can split your employment experience into two sections and put "Professional Experience" first so you can highlight relevant information on the front page and put your less relevant casual jobs on a later page under "General Experience".

Functional/Combination

Functional resumes are organised by the skills you have developed and are more commonly used by experienced professionals who are career changing or have had a break in work. That is first part of the resume would highlight the skills and evidence (ie jobs) where you acquired or developed them and the second part of the resume would give a brief chronology of your work / educational history. In the USA this style of resume is called a Combination resume; do not confuse these with the USA Functional resumes which are not used in Australia.

Academic

Resumes for academic fellowships, courses or academic related jobs will be different from ordinary chronological resumes in that they should detail your academic achievements, conference presentations, publications in journals, books and websites etc and projects you have worked on. They should give an indication of your research area and teaching expertise. Academic resumes are usually longer than all other resume types.

Creative

When applying for jobs within the creative industry it is useful to remember that your resume will also be used as a tool to enable the recruiter judge of your creative skill, so it is important to include information about accessing your portfolio and examples of your work. In fact it would be useful to go further and if you were applying for a job as a graphic designer to see your resume as an important graphic design project, but remember not to let the design overwhelm and make it hard for a hiring manager to find out the information they need.

Resume content

Personal details

Include your first and last name, residential address, postal address (if different from residential), home phone number, mobile phone number (make sure any phone-busy message is professional), and e-mail address (avoid humorous, nickname-based terminology). If you are applying for overseas jobs, you may need to include international codes and provide your citizenship and/or Permanent Resident status.

Education

For each qualification include the full and correct qualification title, institution name, majors, minors and dates of completion or expected completion. You could include up to three relevant subjects (only if relevant), but don't list all subjects as these will be available in your academic transcripts. Include your GPA or average result, if they are credit average or better. The qualifications should be presented in reverse chronological order (i.e. most recent listed first). Including your year 12 details is optional, but common for young graduates.

Awards

Include any awards or scholarships you have attained. For recent graduates, don't go back further than year 11, for older graduates it is not usual to include any school awards. The awards do not have to be academic, they can be any area such as sport, music, community involvement.

Professional Development

List other relevant courses or professional development you have completed

Employment history

List jobs in reverse chronological order (unless writing a functional resume). For each job, include the job title, organisation's name, period of employment and your key responsibilities.

Any course-related employment should be prominently listed. Consider dividing your employment section into 'Professional Experience' and 'General Experience'. General jobs should be included if you have little course related work experience; employers can gain valuable information about your general skills from your part-time/casual employment. It is not necessary to include all your past jobs; the test is to determine whether those other jobs demonstrate any of the employability skills (outlined above) and/or the criteria sought by the employer.

Voluntary and community work

Previous or current participation in community work, clubs, sport or youth groups can demonstrate your strong willingness to use your initiative or leadership skills, interpersonal and organisational skills. Employers value people who are worldly, culturally aware, independent and mature. Detail your involvement with organisations, making sure you highlight any particular responsibilities or achievements.

Skills

Highlight your relevant skills and attributes under a separate heading; include both technical skills (also called job specific skills) and employability skills (also called transferable or general skills). Technical skill could include: research skills gained through academic programs; management skills gained through supervisory positions, etc. Employability skills consist of: communication, team work, problem solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, learning, using technology and self-management.

Each skill needs to be substantiated with a short example that proves your claim. It is essential that you can communicate effectively any skill mentioned with vocational, educational or extra-curricular experiences.

Employers will be looking for evidence of your academic and employability skills from your: academic performance, employment and extra-curricular activities, incorporating involvements on and off campus. More information about Employability Skills is available at www.careers.monash.edu.

Professional associations and affiliations

Include memberships (they may be associate or student memberships) of professional bodies that are relevant to your studies or industry, this is a very efficient way of indicating your long-standing interest and commitment to a profession or industry.

Interests/Hobbies

Employers are usually interested in you 'the person'; they will be curious to know about your talents or hobbies. Your interests can also be an icebreaker, a good talking point in an interview situation. You can include information on personal interests, particularly if they involve group/team activities such as community, sporting, or cultural pursuits.

Referees

The final part of your resume should list two or three individuals who can provide a reference on your behalf. Include their name, position title, organisation and contact details. Referees should have witnessed your capabilities in an employment or academic environment, and have the authority to provide a prospective employer with credible comments. Ensure it is clear as to how you know them, if they have moved on from your mutual workplace for example include a note in brackets to clarify (eg. Previously Supervisor at Coles)

Do not use personal friends, family members and non-work or non-academic associates as referees.

Make sure you have sought permission from these people before listing them as referees.

An alternative approach is to omit details of referees on your resume but state that referees are available on request.

Resume Checklist

General Impression	
Your resume is tailored to the job advertisement and includes skills asked for in the advertisement	
An appropriate style has been used – chronological, functional, academic, combination	
All sections of the resume are in a logical order	
The information is grouped correctly with appropriate headings	
Format	
Margins of the page are an appropriate width (eg. 2cm – 2.5cm)The resume is between 2-4 pages (or in line with the employer’s requested length)	
A consistent style, layout and design is followed	
Your resume is easy to skim read, with clear layout and enough white space on each page	
Your resume is between 2-4 pages or in line with the employer’s requested length	
Short statements and bullet points rather than lengthy paragraphs have been used	
The dot points and indents line up throughout the document	
Font is consistent and uses an appropriate size and style eg. Size 10-12, Arial, Times New Roman or other clear and legible font style	
Headers and/or footers with page numbers and your name are used	
Page breaks are well placed to avoid split lists	
Language	
Your resume has a positive tone. Positive action words are used	
No abbreviations are used (such as B.Bus, &, eg)	
1-10 are written as words not symbols. Acronyms are written in full when first used	
Your resume has not used first person singular (I) or first person plural (we) or third person (he/she, his/her) Has not used inappropriate use of own name, especially within career objective or examples	
Spelling is of a satisfactory standard	
Grammar is of a satisfactory standard	
Punctuation is of a satisfactory standard	

Content

Irrelevant information has NOT been included:

Date of birth, marital status, nationality, religion, health and number of children have not been included

Education includes:

Dates (to and from)
Title of the qualification/s
Institution studied with
Majors/minors
Achievements

Professional development includes:

Examples include - Certificates and training relevant to the industry
Dates (to and from)
Title of the certificate/training
Institution studied with

Employment includes:

Dates
Title of your position
Name of the organisation
Responsibilities
Specific achievements in this role

Skills summary includes:

Skills the employer wants are clearly mentioned
Skills related to the position applied for have been listed
Relevant transferable skills (example: leadership, teamwork, communication) are mentioned
Specific examples of experiences to demonstrate your skills are listed

Professional memberships includes:

Name of the organisation
Type of membership
Level of participation

Awards and achievements includes:

Dates (to and from)
Title of the award/achievement
Name of the organisation who generated the award
Optional – a short sentence explaining the criteria for receiving the award (especially if awarded for academic excellence)

Extra-curricular activities / voluntary work / interests includes:

Dates (to and from)
Name of the activities / voluntary work / interest
Name of the organisation
Type of membership (if applicable)
Level of participation

Referees includes:

Two to three referees with their name, job title, organisation, phone number and e-mail address
OR stated that are available on request

General enquiries

T: 9905 4170

E: info@careers.monash.edu.au

W: careers.monash.edu.au

Disclaimer: Information was current at the time of writing and is intended as a guide only. Adapted by Monash University Employment and Career Development, 2011