

CAREER EDUCATION CENTER

WRITING A RÉSUMÉ

What is a résumé?

A résumé is a summary of your experience, education, and skills. Résumés are used to screen applicants for interviews and determine which candidates have the background that most closely matches what the employer is seeking.

How do I begin? I don't have enough experience.

Sure you do! Before you start writing, take a look at your skills and experience. In general, think about all of your experiences past and present including internships, summer jobs, volunteer, and extracurricular activities to identify what you have to offer employers. Do not short-change yourself by only listing experiences that were paid. Employers are interested in skills and education you may have gained in a variety of settings. Assess the skills you gained from academic, community, and volunteer projects along with hobbies and interests. Prioritize the information in order to highlight what is most significant and relevant in relation to current employment objectives and goals.

What should my résumé look like?

A one page résumé is preferable for most fields; two page résumés are typically appropriate only for those with extensive work experience. Remember that a résumé is a first impression. Considering that employers may only spend 10 seconds scanning your résumé, the importance of an attractive résumé cannot be overemphasized.

Additional Assistance in the Career Education Center

At the Career Education Center we can assist you with your résumé from initial draft to final submission. Different formats can help you to change the way in which you highlight your experience, depending on the type of position you are seeking. Preparing several versions of your résumé is a good idea, especially if you are interested in more than one career area. Make an appointment in [Handshake](#) to meet with a Career Coach or our Peer Career Advisor.

TYPES OF RÉSUMÉS

A. Chronological

Jobs and other experiences are listed in reverse chronological order, i.e., most recent first. This method is often used if you have a progression of relevant experiences to the opportunity.

B. Functional

This format is to emphasize qualifications, skills, and related accomplishments, with less emphasis on employment dates or titles. The skills that you have acquired through all of your experiences are highlighted under special headings of your choice (e.g. management, communications, training, administration, personal skills), rather than described for each individual job. Functional résumés may be effective for those with a variety of experiences or those changing careers.

C. Combination

This format combines both the chronological and functional. It allows you to stress skills and competencies, while providing the employer with information on specific jobs in your work history.

In terms of format, most students and recent graduates use functional as it allows you to organize experiences by how relevant they are to an opportunity and not by when they were carried out.

A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

When you sit down to write your résumé, remember that this is your opportunity to make the best possible impression on your prospective employer. It is helpful to go through the process step by step. Here are six logical steps to assist you in designing a résumé that will show your experience and skills in the best light.

1. **Analyze your accomplishments and discover your skills.** Review everything from your educational and work history to your personal strengths, skills, interests, awards, and honors. What have you done and what do you do best?
2. **Plan layout.** Your résumé should be attractive and easy to read. Entries should be listed in reverse chronological order with specific headings. Your skills, accomplishments, and relevant experience should catch an employer's attention.
3. **Prepare the first draft.** Get it all down on paper even if the final draft is a long way off. Type it out and bring the rough first draft the Career Education and Alumni Engagement Center for review.
4. **Critique and edit.** Have other people look at your draft. Consult with someone who has knowledge of hiring practices, résumé writing, or your career field. Get some reactions and revise your résumé based on the critique and your common sense. Be honest about your experiences and be thorough in proofreading. Accuracy in content, grammar, and spelling is essential in a résumé.
5. **Prepare a cover letter for each employer you contact.** This is a brief professional letter (or email) of introduction to an employer or other career connection and highlights some of your qualifications.
6. **Remember this is your document.** You need to feel comfortable with what is written about you so that you will enter the interview with confidence and ease. Your preferences about the format and presentation should be considered first and foremost.

DESIGNING YOUR RÉSUMÉ

What could my résumé include?

Generally, the following items are considered to be of value in a résumé.

1. **Identifying Data:** Name, telephone number and e-mail address. Mailing address is optional.
2. **Branding Statement:** Statement reflecting your background and skills. This is optional but a good statement of the skills and experience you are bringing to the table.
3. **Educational Background:** Degrees received or pending, majors, minors, grade point average, academic accomplishments, honors, scholarships, assistantships, study abroad, related course work, or continuing education. May also include licensures, certifications, language fluency, computer skills, and laboratory skills where applicable.
4. **Professional Experiences:** Internships and work in your field of interest, whether paid or volunteer. These should demonstrate skills, abilities, accomplishments, and responsibilities related to professional goals.
5. **General Work Experience:** Full-time or part-time employment positions that are not directly related to your professional goals, but demonstrate skills, responsibility, and work history that might interest a prospective employer.
6. **Activities:** Include clubs, athletics, and community organizations, both high school and SMC.
7. **Skills:** Include computer knowledge, foreign languages, technical skills, as well any lab skills learned in science courses.
8. **Interests:** Hobbies and interests you pursue in your spare time. If you want to add this personal element to your résumé, make sure to be specific.

What should NOT be included?

Personal information such as age or marital status.

Repetition of words such as “responsibilities” and “duties included” before description.

Use of the first person “I” or extensive narrative.

List of references.

USING ACTION WORDS

In describing your experiences on your résumé, it is essential that you use engaging phrasing that starts with action words. This format is probably a little different from anything you have written before. Here are some suggestions for selecting words and phrases.

1. Use action words in short, clearly written phrases.
2. Use the minimum number of words necessary to convey accurately what you wish to say.
3. Select words that will mean something to the person who will read your résumé.
4. Avoid introductory phrases such as "my duties included" or "I was in charge of."
5. List accomplishments and outcomes whenever possible.
6. Always keep the needs of the employer in mind. What can you do for them?
7. Here are some examples for using action words in phrases.
 - Planned and implemented learning center activities for grades 6 to 8.
 - Researched and evaluated program proposals, resulting in greater cost effectiveness for company.

ACTION VERB LIST
(helpful in writing résumés)

accelerated
accomplished
achieved
adapted
administered
aided
allocated
amplified
analyzed
answered
appointed
approved
arbitrated
arranged
assisted
assumed
awarded
began
broadened
built
calculated
catalogued
chaired
compiled
completed
conceived
conducted
constructed
consulted
contracted
contrived
controlled
cooperated
coordinated
counseled
created
delegated
demonstrated
designed
determined
developed
devised
devoted
diagrammed
directed
displayed
distributed
documented
edited

effected
eliminated
employed
established
evaluated
examined
expanded
expedited
extended
fabricated
focused
fortified
founded
generated
guided
handled
harmonized
headed
implemented
improved
incorporated
increased
influenced
initiated
installed
instituted
instructed
interpreted
introduced
launched
led
lectured
listed
maintained
managed
modified
monitored
motivated
negotiated
observed
operated
organized
oriented
originated
overhauled
participated
performed
planned
pinpointed

prepared
presented
preserved
processed
produced
programmed
proposed
provided
received
recommended
recorded
recruited
rectified
reduced
reestablished
regulated
rehearsed
reinforced
reorganized
researched
reshaped
restituted
restored
revamped
reviewed
revised
scheduled
selected
set up
simplified
solved
specialized
streamlined
structured
substituted
suggested
supervised
supported
systematized
taught
trained
tutored
unified
used
utilized
volunteered
widened
worked
wrote