

Writing Your Resume

What is a resume?

- Your resume is your greatest marketing tool. It is your personal marketing brochure. A great resume communicates a compelling reason for the prospective employer to need and want your services. It will enable you to present your qualifications to potential employers, and get an interview.

How do I get started?

- ✓ Make a list of all extracurricular activities you are involved in (social clubs, honor organizations, major-specific organizations, student government, etc.)
- ✓ Compile a list of all community activities of which you are a part (PTA, church, clubs, volunteer work, etc.)
- ✓ What leadership positions have you held?
- ✓ Gather job descriptions from your past positions. If you haven't saved copies of these, you should from now on!
- ✓ Before you write, take time to do a self-assessment on paper. Outline your skills and abilities as well as your work experience and extracurricular activities. This will make it easier to prepare a thorough resume.

The following guidelines will help you develop an effective resume:

- Keep it short. For recent college graduates, one page should be sufficient. If you have ten or more years of professional experience, it can be two pages.
- Portray what you can do by revealing what you have done.
- Highlight results. This is more impressive than highlighting only responsibilities.
- Keep it simple and straightforward. The more you can simplify it for the recruiter or hiring manager, the better your chances. Avoid the obvious.
- An effective resume will present company names, dates, job titles, academic information, and all other pertinent data in a clear manner, so that a quick glance will tell the contact person what they need to know.
- Target your resume to be as specific to the position you are applying for as possible
- Be accurate. Discrepancies will be discovered.
- Do not use personal pronouns such as "I", "me", or "my".
- Make your resume visually attractive and easy to read.
- Use white space effectively. No one wants to read a text-heavy document with sentences that run on for four or five lines. You must get your point across quickly, with a minimum of words presented as bulleted sentences within special sections (i.e. Professional Experience, Education, Qualifications Summary), separated by well-placed white space.
- Use quality resume paper.
- Choose white, off-white, cream or buff colors.
- Pay attention to the balance of white space and type.
- Print your resume on a laser printer rather than photocopying it.
- Print on one side of the paper.
- Ensure that your Microsoft Word resume looks as you intended it to on your potential employer's computer? Select a font that is standard on most systems (Arial, Verdana, Tahoma, Garamond, Century Schoolbook and Times New Roman). When in doubt about font choice, *always* err on the conservative side.
- Use a font size 10 to 14 points, no smaller, or the text will be difficult to read.
- Left and right side margins should always be the same size. As a general rule, margins should be no smaller than .5 inches and no larger than 1 inch.
- Do not fold or staple your resume.
- If you must mail your resume, put it in a large envelope.

* McMurry Career Services is available to assist you. Make an appointment for a resume consultation.

What should I include in my resume?

There are several basic components to a resume:

HINT: Develop each component individually. By creating your resume in stages, you can easily put together an effective document.

1. Personal data

All your contact information should go at the top of your resume. This includes your name, address, telephone number and e-mail. The information should be current. Hand corrections are not acceptable.

- Bold or capitalize your name, using letters two to six points larger than the rest of the text. Place your name on the first line of your page. The traditional place to put the name is at the center of the page, but many now prefer to right justify their names so when the resume lands in a folder, your name is clearly visible.
 - Use a permanent address. Use your parents' address, a friend's address, or the address you plan to use after graduation.
 - Use a permanent telephone number and include the area code. If you have an answering machine, record a neutral greeting. Avoid cute greetings
 - If you must use your cellular phone number - be sure not to answer it every time it rings. If you are not in a position to have a professional conversation and consult your calendar to make an appointment - DON'T answer; rather, let your voicemail pick it up and you can return the call when you are ready.
 - Choose an e-mail address that sounds professional. Check it on a regular basis (everyday!)
 - Don't include information about your marital status, age, race, etc. These could trigger a negative bias in the reader.

For Example: Sarah Black

 932 Elmwood Drive
 Abilene, Texas 79605
 (325) 699-9999
 sarahblack@hotmail.com

or: **Sarah Black**

 932 Elmwood Drive (325) 699-9999
 Abilene, Texas 79605 sarahblack@hotmail.com

2. Career Objective

Including a career objective helps you target a specific employment opportunity and increases the effectiveness of your resume.

An objective tells potential employers the sort of work you're hoping to do.

- An objective is like the thesis statement of your resume. Everything you include after it should support it!
 - Ideally target your objective to include job title desired, position level, field, industry, and/or company name. If you are sending this resume for a specific position at a specific company - SAY IT HERE!
 - Be specific about the job you want.

- Tailor your objective to each employer you target and every job you seek.
- Avoid trite phrases such “a chance to apply my skills,” and “a challenging opportunity” or “an opportunity for growth.”

Examples:

An entry-level position in office management

An executive secretary position to utilize organizational skills, and attention to detail, to create an efficient and friendly environment.

To obtain a professional position within a financial institution requiring strong analytical and organizational skills.

To obtain a summer position in the field of marketing to expand experience with market research and analyzation.

To obtain a position in pharmaceutical sales utilizing business background and knowledge of biology.

3. Summary of Qualifications

This consolidates the best you have to bring to the job, really makes you stand out and pulls the employer in for a closer look. Exaggeration! Misrepresentation! LYING is a deadly error. Don't do it! Employers do background checks. Only solid facts and verifiable experience should highlight your experience and accomplishments. This should be a brief paragraph that showcases your most effective skills and experience as they pertain to this job. More importantly, it's your chance to convince a hiring manager of the skills you can bring to the position. This is essential, given that hiring managers generally afford no more than *10 seconds* to an applicant's resume, unless they're compelled to read further.

4. Education

List your educational background in reverse chronological order beginning with your most recent achievement. Do not include high school information. Include the following information:

- Period of attendance or graduation date
- Degree attained
- Program of study including your specialization
- Name and location (City and State) of educational institution

Examples:

McMurry University	Abilene, Texas
B.S. in Mathematics	2004

McMurry University	Abilene, Texas
B.A Major – Psychology	May 2005 Anticipated
Minor - Sociology	

You may consider including:

- Scholarships or academic awards
- Field placements
- Related courses, workshops, etc (only if they directly relate to the job sought).
- GPA, if greater than 3.0
- Honors bestowed at graduation

5. Work Experience

Work experience will be the main body of your resume. List your experience in reverse chronological order beginning with the most recent position held.

Include:

- Position title and dates of employment
- Name and location (city and state) of the employer
- In bullets under each job, list major accomplishments to describe your contributions. Try to avoid our resume should not be a boring list of job duties and responsibilities. Go beyond showing what was required and demonstrate how you made a difference at each company, providing specific examples. When developing your achievements and accomplishments, ask yourself:
 - How did you perform the job better than others?
 - What were the problems or challenges faced? How did you overcome them? What were the results?
 - How did the company benefit from your performance?
 - Did you receive any awards, special recognition or promotions as a result?

What is an Accomplishment?

1. Increasing the company's bottom line (i.e. facilitating its growth)
2. Streamlining procedures
3. Promotions
4. Special projects successfully completed
5. Decreasing costs
6. Company- or industry-sponsored awards
7. Certifications and licensure

What is *not* an Accomplishment?

1. Daily responsibilities that are included in your job description
2. Regular attendance at work
3. Getting along with co-workers
4. Working full-time while going to college at night
5. Volunteer or community service *unless* it has a direct bearing on your job search

Examples:

2004-present

ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT
Custodial Trust Company

Abilene, Texas

- Analyzed financial statements, reconciled bank and general ledger accounts, and investment funds.
- Collaborated on the design of a new billing system.
- Achieved a \$2,500 monthly savings for company within three months of hire by streamlining procedures.

Begin with an action verb and be specific (e.g. quantify and qualify whenever possible).

To make your resume stand out, use action phrases that hold the reader's attention and highlight the outcomes of your work. It is important to create energy in order to entice the recruiter to want to contact you for more information.

57 Action Verbs

This list of action verbs will assist you as you write your accomplishment statements. These words can be applied to virtually any field or industry to demonstrate how your skills would be beneficial to an employer.

achieved	directed	organized
administered	eliminated	planned
advanced	established	prepared
advised	evaluated	produced
analyzed	expanded	promoted
authored	focused	provided
automated	headed up	published
coached	identified	reduced
conceptualized	implemented	researched
conducted	improved	restructured
contained	increased	reversed
contracted	initiated	saved
controlled	innovated	scheduled
coordinated	instituted	solved
created	introduced	streamlined
cut	led	supervised
decreased	maintained	taught
designed	managed	trained
developed	negotiated	trimmed

Key Words

Think about the words which may catch the reader's attention. The first pair of eyes to look at your resume may not be human. Many companies scan resumes into a database, and then select applicants by searching keywords. So you need to include a broad range of the right keywords in your resume. Determine what ones to include by checking job listings to see which buzzwords appear in the descriptions of positions that interest you. Make a list of all the words you can truthfully include on your resume, and then work them into your job descriptions.

Action Phrases

To make your resume stand out, employ words that attract and hold the reader's attention. An interview-winning resume contains a balance of job content and accomplishments.

Dull

1. Raised level of sales previous year.
2. Started new employee programs that lowered turnover.
3. Handled books for elderly pop group.

With impact

1. Reversed negative sales trend; sales up 41 per cent over prior year.
2. Created and implemented two new employee relations programs resulting in a 33 per cent reduction in turnover.
3. Managed bookings, travel and accommodations for sexagenarian sextet.

4. Housewife of household with six people for past 7 years.
4. Managed and organized six-member household with annual budget of \$65,000.
5. Handled incoming calls.
5. Handled over 200 calls daily for insurance claims center.

6. Professional Affiliations

List current memberships in organizations that are related to the industry in which you are seeking employment. This will give the impression that you are serious about developing your career.

7. Other Categories

You may include any of the following if applicable: Additional Skills, Additional Qualifications, Interest/Activities, Honors/Awards, Extracurricular Interests / Activities. This section is optional. If this section does not support your qualifications for the job, why have it. If you do list these items you should include organizations in which you are a member and offices you have held. You may also wish to include awards, honors, hobbies, and interests in this category. In this section you may list both specific and general skills or activities that are noteworthy, such as knowledge of foreign or computer languages, familiarity with statistical or laboratory techniques, typing speed, volunteer work leadership positions or specific technical skills related to the position you are seeking (e.g. computer skills). Avoid listing controversial activities, particularly those that are political or religious in nature.

Language Ability. You can list this section separately or in the additional information section if there is likelihood that this ability is desirable by the employer. Specify the language(s) you read, write, and/or speak and your skill level in each.

8. References

You don't need to include references in your resume. List your references on a separate sheet. It is acceptable but not necessary to use the phrase, "References available upon request." However, be prepared with a typed list when requested. Generally, a reference sheet will consist of the name, title, and business mailing address, phone number and email addresses of three to five professional business or education references. You may want to include the number of years you have known the individual and the type of relationship (co-worker, direct report, manager, or professor, etc.) Personal references are usually seen as a less objective source of information. Ask people if they are willing to serve as references before you give their names to a potential employer. It is a good idea to use the same header and font on your references page as you used on your resume.

What should I not include in my resume?

- Photographs or illustrations unless they are required by your profession (e.g. actors' composites).
- Reasons for leaving past jobs.
- Feelings about travel or relocation.
- Recommendations. These carry more weight if you include them with the resume, not on the resume.
- The heading "Resume."
- Abbreviations, unless they are well known.
- Negative information.

- Personal data such as height, weight, health, age, marital status, sex, race, disabilities, religion, church affiliations, and political affiliations (unless they directly relate to the job).
- Salary information or address of prior employer; the name of the company and city and state where it is located is sufficient.

What are the Typical Resume Mistakes?

Mistake #1: Writing your resume to sound like a series of job descriptions (Describe achievements, not just responsibilities)

Mistake #2: Writing in the first person. Never use "I" or "My"

Mistake #3: Using passive language or no action words

Mistake #4: Repetitiveness

Mistake #5: Poor formatting or formatting that is too flashy

Mistake #6: Sending a resume without a cover letter

Mistake #7: Sending an unfocused or generic resume

Mistake #8: Typos and other spelling or grammatical errors

Mistake #9: Sending your resume to a nameless, faceless person

Mistake # 10: Lying or grandiose embellishments

Mistake # 11: No apparent accomplishments. Results sell!

Mistake # 12: Lengthy resume

Mistake #13: Use of micro-type

Things to keep in mind when writing your resume

Avoid half-truths and gross exaggerations.

Most hiring managers and recruitment professionals have had their share of résumés pass across their desks during their career. So they are usually adept at deciphering embellishments in a résumé.

Keywords can help your résumé stand out.

Rather than embellish your titles and accomplishments, use recognizable industry keywords that will jump out at hiring managers reading your résumé and communicate exactly where your expertise lies. Keywords also help your résumé get flagged if you're submitting it electronically or posting it on a job site.

Focus on quantifiable accomplishments.

Use specifics when detailing your past accomplishments -- the amount of money you saved the company, the number of employees you managed, etc. Rather than saying you saved the company millions, state precisely that you "saved the company \$2.4 million." Actual numbers and percentages sound much more credible.

Change titles only if it clarifies your position.

If your title uses little known, company-specific jargon, such as being called an "office contact," when you performed duties consistent with an "administrative assistant," then go ahead and use the better suited title. You could list your title on your résumé as "office contact/administrative assistant." Of course that doesn't give you the latitude to promote yourself to "vice president of administration."

Address gaps in your résumé.

Instead of fudging the dates of your past jobs to cover an employment gap, address the lapse in your résumé or cover letter to maintain chronological clarity. For instance, if you were out of work for a year during which time you took courses to enhance your education or professional credentials, list this academic stint on your résumé, rather than pretending the period of unemployment never happened.

Half-finished degrees should not be listed.

If you "almost" completed your degree, you cannot list it as an earned degree on your résumé. However, no education is ever wasted. Be sure to give yourself credit and list any completed coursework in a particular major or concentration.

Number Usage

Are you writing numbers correctly in your resume? Numbers one through ten should be spelled out, while figures should be used for 11 and higher. Exceptions include numbers used with dates (April 9), percentages (5%), money (\$5 million), ratios/proportions (2-to-1) and time (2 p.m.). However, some job seekers don't spell out any numbers, because the eye gravitates to numerals, drawing attention to important accomplishments. The main point: Be consistent in formatting numbers throughout your resume. Consistency is important in every aspect.

McMurry Career Services is available to critique your resume when you have it completed.
Make an appointment for a resume consultation.