



Recruiting top talent for top companies

Verity HR's Guide to Resume Writing

INTRODUCTION

The resume is typically the first encounter a potential employer has with the job seeker and is used to screen applicants. Many people often wonder on the difference between a resume and as CV. Resume is comparable to a CV in many ways, however, in some countries it is considerably different. Primarily, the differences are the length, content and the function. A resume is usually one or two page summary of skills, experience and education. The purpose of resume is to give a brief overview, since the resume reader will probably spend only a few minutes in reviewing qualifications and suitability to the position. A Curriculum Vitae (CV) is a longer (two or more pages) version of your resume with a more detailed view of educational and professional experience, including presentations, awards, honors, affiliations and other relevant details.

A good resume is your key to getting an interview and is the first step in getting your dream job. Many people do not put the effort into writing a good resume when applying for a job and then are disappointed when they don't get any response. It is important to keep in mind that no matter how qualified or skilled you are for the job, a bad resume will get you nowhere.

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To win an interview, you need a well-organized and easy to read resume that demonstrates relevant experience, skills and qualifications. If you have a short list of essential information at the beginning, it can be a great starting point but is not really necessary.

Ensure the accuracy of your resume contents and avoid big gaps of time out of your employment history. If you have periods of unemployment, be sure to explain why, such as travelling, re-training or raising children, etc. A good resume should draw attention to your strengths and gloss over your weaknesses. Highlight your skills, education, qualifications, experiences and accomplishments.

If possible, customize the contents of your resume to suit each position that you apply for, to emphasize your suitability using key words that the company is looking for. If your resume does not stand out and prove to the reader that you are suitable right away, it will be tossed



away before they read any further. It is not unusual for some people to have different versions of their resume for different type of positions.

Before applying for any position, proofread, proofread, and proofread! Any typos, spelling or grammatical errors can put off the reader regardless whether you are suitable for the job. An error-free professional resume expresses attention to detail and communication skills, a valuable strength for any job. Do not rely blindly to spell checks or AutoCorrect options since they don't pick up every single mistake. It is recommended that you get another person to proofread your resume, since a fresh pair of eyes can always see mistakes or misconceptions from another angle.

A good resume is as brief as possible, written in simple language and uses bullet points wherever possible. The following are various categories found in a resume, but keep in mind to choose to include only relevant information that will strengthen your application.

Personal Details

List your name, address, phone numbers and e-mail address at the top of the first page. Only include a personal e-mail address that you check for incoming messages at least once a day. Do not use your work e-mail address or number as this shows that you are looking for a job on your employer's time, this will not be something that is viewed positively.

There is no longer a need to include personal details such as age, marital status, religion, ethnicity or health, many experts strongly advice against it.

In a professional world, there is no need to attach your photo with your resume unless specifically asked. In fact, in some countries attaching your photo is considered unethical and strongly advised against as it allows an employer to make judgments about age/gender/race of applicants. However if you must, make sure to choose a passport sized professional photo with a plain background. Do not use a photo of you at a social occasion or holiday, you need to keep it professional at all times.



Career Objective

There are different opinions regarding career objective and whether it should be included or not and if so, what should it say. For people just starting out in the workplace, a Career Objective would be useful as it will give a synopsis of what you want to achieve and what you can do for the company.

For those who have had some work experience, a career overview or career summary would be more appropriate. This would be a brief summary of what the rest of the resume tells the reader but focus on relevant experience, qualifications and skills relating to the job applied. We recommend a one sentence career objective that expresses your long-term career goals.

Work Experience

List out your most recent experience first, continuing in reverse chronological order. Since the best resumes are brief and informative, make sure that every word counts. It is best practice to provide the most details about your current job. If you've been in the workforce for a long period of time, then provide less detail for each job as you go down the list.

Include per each position:

- Title of position
- Name of company
- Work location (city, country)
- Start and end dates (month and years)
- Description of your work responsibilities
- Key achievements/accomplishments (3 maximum)

It can be useful to give a brief description on each employer such as what the company does, how large and anything else that is relevant. This could be important when applying for a certain position and the person reading your resume may not necessary know your previous employer/s.



You are not expected to list every job you've ever had, especially if you've been working for a long period of time. Make sure you list only relevant responsibilities and avoid including details on the simplest of tasks. However, focus on your special achievements, but no more than three achievements per role. This needs to show how you have contributed to your employer's business.

Education

List details of your education by order of the most recent experience first. The level of details provided should balance with your qualifications, work experience and relevancy to the job. A typical formula is to list: name of qualification, the date you graduated and the institution which granted it.

Education can be listed before or after your work experience, depending on the position you are applying for. If this is your first job or you have little work experience then you should list your education details before your professional experience.

Professional Training

List qualifications and licenses specific to the job applied, in order of most recent experience first. Professional training may go under a different heading, such as "Training and Certification", "Licenses and Certificates" or just "Training". Only include training that is current and you can provide details when requested to do so. On the other hand, if you have any other courses that you think may be relevant, but aren't current, include these, with the year they have been completed. It is also a common practice to list professional training in Education section of resume too.

References

In today's day and age, employers rarely provide written references for former employees, regardless of how great the employees were. This is due to companies not wanting the responsibility of the paperwork and also because prospective employers today prefer to just contact referees personally and ask questions that are essential to them.



While it is not necessary to include referees on your resume, you should always state that reference details are available on request. This is a preferred option for some with the concern that former employer are contacted without their permission.

Choose your referees carefully. Prospective employers will prefer references from former employers and referees are your supervisor or manager rather than colleague. If you are new to work or haven't worked for a long time, personal references from a teacher or institution will be an appropriate alternative.

It is recommended to provide two work references and use referees from the last five years of employment. Include your referee's name, company, position title and contact details so they can be reached directly by any prospective employers. Always contact your referees for their agreement before including them on your resume. Make absolutely certain that the contact phone numbers of references are current and correct.

Interests

Keep personal information like hobbies, interests/activities to a minimum or leave it out altogether. It is good to share a little information about yourself but this is you are not going to get hired because of your hobbies. If you do include, however, make sure that these interests are appropriate and not too flamboyant.

Additional Information

Your resume content and layout should depend on the type of role and industry you work in, including the categories you choose to sell yourself with.

Additional information and categories you may include:

- Licenses, certificates, registrations and accreditations
- Professional affiliations and memberships
- Skills (such as computer knowledge and interpersonal skills)
- Knowledge of foreign languages
- Publications (for professionals that have written articles on their specialist areas)



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- Awards and industry recognition

RESUME CUSTOMISATION

To guarantee that your resume stands out, you need to customize your resume to each job you apply for. This may sound like a lot of work but every job is different and every company is unique. Remember, the reader is probably reading a lot of resumes for the same job. If the reader does not spot the right skills and experiences, your resume is likely to go into the NO pile without reading further.

The key is to focus on what the employer needs and not what you want. Research the company, industry and occupation to find out what they are all looking for and what they need from you. Then from your research, tailor your resume by presenting information and key words that will stand out to the recruiter.

Research sources include:

- Job Advertisement
- Position description
- Company annual reports, brochures or newsletters
- Company and industry websites
- Trade magazines
- Business section of newspapers
- Government websites and job guides



RESUME DO'S AND DON'TS

The following do's and don'ts should be applied when writing your resume.

Resume Do's:

- Do use high quality A4 white or off-white paper
- Do use simple language that is easily read
- Do put as much information in bullet point form so it's easy and quick to read
- Do use key words that will stand out to the employer
- Do use action words, such as developed, managed, implemented and designed
- Do present yourself as professional, with a straightforward email address or website
- Do use your current home address, personal email address, and phone number
- Do have a professional outgoing message on your mobile number
- Do be honest and tell the truth
- Do list work history in order of the most recent
- Do list qualifications in order of the most recent
- Do discuss two or three of your most relevant strengths with achievement statements
- Do check for spelling and grammar errors
- Do proofread and proofread again
- Do get another person to proofread your resume
- Do include an appropriate professional photo, if you must

Resume Don'ts:

- Don't use colored paper (it won't fax or photocopy clearly)
- Don't use a tiny font size or lines of italic
- Don't sacrifice legibility for making it look good, so if your favorite font is hard to read don't use it
- Don't waste paper with a cover sheet
- Don't bloat by using flowery language or trendy jargon
- Don't use clip art



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- Don't include email addresses or websites that have the potential to reveal controversial or inappropriate personal information
- Don't use your current work email or phone number as contact information
- Don't give too much personal information, such as names/ages of all your children
- Don't exaggerate your skills and experience, you want a job that you can actually do
- Don't portray yourself as a jack-of-all-trades in the hope that something is relevant
- Don't list certificates or irrelevant achievements like 'School Councilor'
- Don't list information on things that aren't relevant to the job
- Don't give details why you left each job, you can explain this in the interview if asked
- Don't trust your computer spell check
- Don't include a casual photo of yourself on a social occasion or holiday