

Employers usually spend 10–30 seconds reading your resume the first time. They don't take time to analyze and synthesize your career history so you need to share only the key details.

This resume writing reference guide provides an introduction to resume layout, format, length, and content, plus numerous resources the dual career staff recommends so your resume makes the most impact in that short time.

A few select resources you can refer to for any resume-related topic are listed on page two.

Purpose of a Resume

The ultimate goal of a resume is to get you an interview. It provides a summary of your skills and experience like an over-sized business card when networking and as a highlight of your key qualifications when you apply for a job.

Many individuals find it difficult to leave details out, but a resume isn't a comprehensive history. Rather, it should focus on skills and experiences that are most related to your desired job. Later, during the interview, you can share the fuller story of your work history.

Format

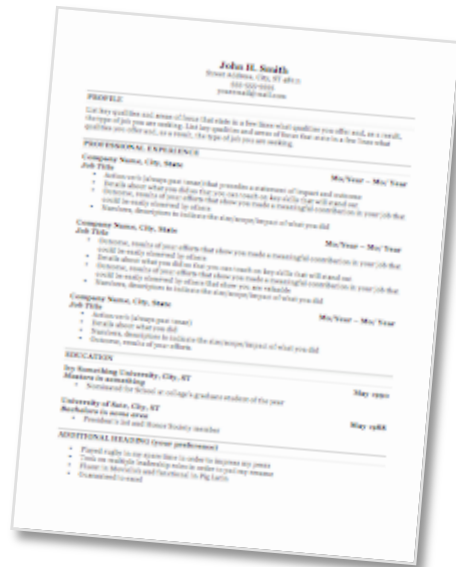
Resumes come in three general formats, each with their own strengths and weaknesses.

Chronological Format

- Lists work history in reverse chronological order
- Most common format that's most familiar and expected by employers
- Good if staying in same industry but reveals lack of experience if you're making a career change

Functional format

- Lists skills you have related to the job
- Career changers can highlight related skills while downplaying lack of direct experience
- Less common format so sometimes not well received by employers



Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)?

A CV is a lengthy, comprehensive history of work, publications and many other professional activities, sometimes including 10-20 pages. While comprehensive, it's used almost exclusively for faculty or research positions in the United States. Nearly all other job seekers – even those with decades of experience – need to use a resume that features only the best and most relevant work in just a page or two.

Combination chronological/functional

- Includes skills summary like a functional resume
- Reverse chronological work history looks more familiar to employer
- Allows career changer to highlight skills while also presenting a clear career history

For more details and examples of each format, refer to any of the following resources.

- www.quintcareers.com/best_resume_format.html
- *The Resume.Com Guide to Writing Unbeatable Resumes* by Warren Simons and Rose Curtis
- *Resume Magic: Trade Secrets of a Professional Resume Writer* by Susan Britton Whitcomb

Layout and Design

The layout and appearance of a resume are important to help employers easily read and find the information they need. From margins and font size, to white space and section headings, it is good to adhere to a few basic tenets.

- Margins: 0.5–1.0 inch
- Font: 10–12 point in traditional, not overly fancy style
- Length: 2 pages is most common for people with work experience; 3+ pages is usually too long
- Use headings, alignment, and white space to make each entry easy to spot, creating an outline of your content that is easy to skim

Additional resources regarding layout and design:

- Regarding resume length (number of pages): www.quintcareers.com/resume_length.html
- Ideas on resume design: www.lifeclever.com/give-your-resume-a-face-lift

What to Include and Leave Out

When you get down to finally deciding what content to keep on your resume, few rules exist. At a bare minimum you must put your name and contact information, related experience, and education. Other sections can include a profile, licenses/certifications, related technical skills, achievements, community involvement, languages, and many more.

Be sure *not* to include any physical characteristics (height, weight, gender, etc.), pictures, references (include these as a separate page), ID numbers, marital status, children, or other personal information. Religious and political membership should be omitted unless you have related experience that comes from serving in a position with one of these organizations.

All of the recommended resources provide details about sections you can include in your resume.

Descriptions

A common mistake when writing descriptions for work experience is to simply list responsibilities and duties performed. “Responsibilities included” or “Duties performed” tells the reader very little about your accomplishments and contributions.

Descriptions need to focus on actions and accomplishments by starting with a verb and then using the “P.A.R.” format whenever possible: state the *problem* – or the scenario – you encountered, the *action* you took, and the *result*. This enables you to communicate not only your duties and responsibilities but what impact and improvements you made while in that job.

Include descriptions in your resume based on their relevance to the job you’re seeking. Learn all you can about the job you are seeking and identify the key experiences, skills, and traits needed to fulfill that role. In your descriptions, make sure you include details that specifically address the key elements you identify and leave out descriptions that are not relevant. Because different positions can require different skills, you will need different versions of your resume for different jobs.

A few resources recommended for your reference in writing strong descriptions include:

- Sample action-focused descriptions: www.quintcareers.com/action_verb_samples.html
- Description with multiple examples of writing resume bullet points: www.careercenter.umich.edu/students/resume/bulletplus.html

Finishing Touches

Before submitting your resume for a position, it is good to do the following.

- Proofread for accuracy, grammar, and spelling
- Have another person review it
- Customize the content for each position
- Leave off references (include these on a separate page if they are requested)
- Make sure all content is accurate and honest

Sample Resumes

- Examples of resumes from different industries and experience levels: <https://umich.optimalresume.com>
- Sample resumes with explanations of what resume writing challenge they are intended to solve: <http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/samples.php>
- Variety of resumes from different industries and experience levels: www.quintcareers.com/sample_resumes.html
- Both *The Resume.Com Guide* and *Resume Magic* include a number of sample resumes

Recommended Resources

- *The Resume.Com Guide to Writing Unbeatable Resumes* by Warren Simons and Rose Curtis
- *Resume Magic: Trade Secrets of a Professional Resume Writer* by Susan Britton Whitcomb
- www.quintcareers.com/resres.html
- *The Career Change Resume* by Kim Isaacs and Karen Hofferber
- *The Damn Good Resume Guide: A Crash Course in Resume Writing* by Yana Parker

Books can be found at the Ann Arbor District Library (www.aadl.org), the UM Center for the Education of Women (www.cew.umich.edu), University libraries (www.lib.umich.edu), or purchased at most booksellers.