

Writing Your Resume

You've done your background work and now it's time to put together the pieces you've assembled into a resume that "sells" you to an employer.

That's right—resume writing is selling. Your resume is an advertisement for what you can bring to an employer. Similar to newspaper and TV advertising, to be effective your resume must do the following:

- Capture attention in the first few seconds.
- Establish credibility—a reason for the reader to believe you can do what you say.
- Inspire the reader to want to know more.

When you're making a big purchase, an ad alone will not usually inspire you to act. (Have you ever bought a car or a computer based solely on a magazine or TV ad?) But a good advertisement will create interest in the product and make you want to know more. That's what your resume should do for you. Your goal in sending your resume is to get the employer to become interested enough to pick up the phone and call you for an interview.

But your resume can do more than just get you in the door for an interview! It will also serve as a basis for the questions and discussions you'll have with the hiring authority. So for your interviews, you must be prepared to explain every item on your resume in a way that continues selling the "product"—you!

In this chapter, you'll start by creating a powerful introduction that quickly draws notice to your most important qualifications. You'll then move through the other sections of the resume, detailing your credentials, and learn the importance of adding numbers, results, and accomplishments as further support for the "proof" you compiled in the preceding chapter. And finally, you'll proofread and polish your draft to perfection.

Before we launch into writing your resume, let's take a look at a few frequently asked questions and clear up some common misperceptions about resumes.



FAQs

Does my resume have to be just one page?

Whereas most new college graduates can fit their most compelling and relevant information onto one page, some simply cannot... and it would be a mistake to try. There are absolutely no rules about resume length. Most of the samples in this book are one page; some are two pages. In each case, the decision on "how long should it be" was made after the resume was written, based entirely on the amount and type of information to be presented. **Recommendation:** Write your resume first, following the guidelines later in this chapter. Organize and format the information, and then see whether you can fit everything comfortably on one page. Use the samples in this book to get some creative inspiration for layout and design that will create maximum impact and readability within a fairly concise format. Strive for one page—edit and condense your first draft—but don't sacrifice information that is truly important.

(continues)

*(continued)****I've been told I need a "functional" resume. What is it and how do I get it?***

A functional resume groups and emphasizes related skills (functions) instead of presenting every fact within a chronological category on the resume. The functional style is a great way to pull together "proof" from different areas of your background. For instance, you might create a "Leadership Skills" section that includes examples from your college activities, part-time work experience, and volunteer activities—"proof" that might be overlooked if each stood alone in a purely chronological history. For *experienced* employees, a chronological resume usually works best, because employers can see at a glance their career progression and the specific responsibilities and achievements of each position. But if your work experience is not your strongest qualifier (and it usually isn't for new grads), a functional style may work better. Most of the resume samples in this book use a *combination* style that groups strengths into a skills summary at the top and then follows with a roughly chronological listing of education, experience, and activities.

Recommendation: *Don't worry whether your resume is strictly "functional" or strictly "chronological." Create a strong summary (as described later in this chapter), and then organize your other information into sections that make it easy for the reader to pick up relevant information.*

I don't have any real work experience. Why would an employer be interested in me?

By now, following the guidelines in chapter 1, you should have compiled plenty of "raw material" to write a resume that will sell you for the job you want. Prior work experience is only one thing employers look for. They realize that most new grads will not have work history that is really relevant to their professional careers. The employer might rely on an employment history to prove work ethic, time-management skills, reliability, interpersonal skills, and other attributes that make a good employee; so if you don't have prior paid work experience, make sure you document these important traits from other areas of your background. Volunteer activities, unpaid work experience, leadership of student organizations, extensive personal travel, even undocumented work experience such as baby-sitting can all be used to provide evidence of valuable, provable skills.

Recommendation: *Use your diverse experiences to "prove" you have the attributes of a good employee. But don't worry too much about what you don't have. Instead, put your best foot forward with what you do have to offer and feel confident about your abilities!*

All of my work experience is from part-time retail sales jobs. Does this really count to an employer?

Yes, indeed! As noted above, employers will look for evidence of your "good employee" traits by looking at your past work experience. If you can prove you were a good employee for someone else, the employer can guess that you're likely to repeat that success in another job. Every job exists for a reason and is very important to the organization. So even though you might not think much of your part-time cashier job at Megastore, you learned some valuable skills (customer service, teamwork, and flexibility, for instance).

Recommendation: *When writing about your past positions on your resume, don't inflate your responsibilities or importance (don't make your pizza-delivery job sound like you were the CEO), but do communicate the value you brought to the organization and the kinds of skills you used every day.*

Should I include high school information?

That depends. If it's truly impressive and adds weight to your more recent college information, there is a good argument for including it. But don't overemphasize it—you don't want to appear as if you "peaked" at age 18 and have done nothing memorable since!

Recommendation: *Include high school information that's truly relevant, adds to your qualifications, or will give you a competitive advantage. Don't overload your resume with high school activities, and be sure that they are balanced by more recent examples of your success.*

Where do I start?! It all seems overwhelming.

Take a deep breath and relax! If you followed the guidelines in chapter 1, you have already gathered the raw material you'll need for your resume. In this chapter, I'll guide you through the process, step by step, and you'll see how smoothly everything falls into place.

How will I know when it's right?

Perhaps the number-one misconception is that there is a "right" and a "wrong" way to write your resume. In fact, there are no rules! You can include what you like (as long as it's truthful), emphasize the most important information, and organize and present the material in any way that makes sense to paint the perfect picture of who you are and what you have to offer. **Recommendation:** *You'll know your resume is right for you when it helps you define and organize your skills and attracts interviews for jobs you're interested in. Your friend's or roommate's or cousin's resume is not the right resume for you, no matter how well it worked for them; and yours will not be right for anyone else. It's as unique as you are.*

When I have my resume done, what do I do next?

Now it's time to put your resume to work. You'll need to get it out to potential employers and networking contacts (you'll read more on this in chapter 3) and create an action plan that will keep you on track as you move from new grad to newly employed. No one can do it for you, but your college career center, parents, friends, and other advisors can give you a great deal of help and guidance. And the more you learn about the process of looking for a job, the more successful you'll be in every job transition of your working life.

Resumes are incredibly flexible documents. There are no "rules" about what you must or cannot include, how or where to present the information, or any real taboos except that your resume must not contain any spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors. You can select and present the most positive, impressive things about you—things that relate to the employer's needs, as you've identified them in your Core Qualifications list. But because a good resume is concisely written and tightly formatted, it's important that you start out with a good organizational structure so that you can include just the right information, arranged for maximum impact.

To create that structure, resumes are sectioned into five principal categories:

- **Header/Contact Information:** A well-organized presentation of your name and contact information (one or more mailing addresses, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and other ways of reaching you).
- **Objective and/or Skills Summary:** A section at the top of your resume that immediately identifies what you're looking for and highlights your most important qualifications.
- **Education:** All facets of your recent college experience, such things as coursework, academic honors, internships, and activities.
- **Work Experience:** The details of your employment experience, whether co-op or internship, part-time during school year or summers, or full-time experience before, during, or since you graduated from college.
- **Extras:** The many bits of information that you'd like to include but that don't fit neatly into any of the prior categories.

You can start with the easy stuff and work your way through the process.

STEP 4: Start Strongly with Well-Organized Contact Information

Give potential employers the information they need in a format that makes it easy for them to find what they're looking for. Your name should be prominent. Use bold and/or larger type to catch the reader's attention.

Should you use a nickname? Because a resume is a fairly formal business document, it's traditional to use your full given name (Richard J. Williams, not Ricky Williams). But you might want to consider using a nickname in the following circumstances:

- If no one ever uses your real name (for example, Jay Vasipoli rather than Mortimer J. Vasipoli III).
- Your name appears difficult to pronounce (for example, Shayna O'Riordan, not Séadhna O'Riordan).
- You want to use an Americanized name or nickname in place of or to supplement your traditional name (for example, Manh "Mike" Nguyen).

If you are sending out your resume while you are still living at school, you'll need to include both school and home addresses and telephone numbers. If the best way to reach you is on your mobile phone, be sure to include that number as well. And be certain that you have a reliable answering service for any number you include. Don't include pagers or fax numbers unless there really is no better way to contact you.

You must have an e-mail address that's professional, permanent, and reliable. Consider getting a separate Hotmail or Yahoo address just for your job search (this is especially important if your everyday e-mail address is something like fratparty@bigu.edu).

Create a new word-processing document or use the resume development worksheet in appendix D to organize your contact information. Here are a few sample formats to consider:

Meredith Johnson

School Address

780 Columbus Avenue #3-G
Boston, MA 02120
(617) 559-9049

meredithjay@yahoo.com

Permanent Address

4520 Hillview Circle
Cincinnati, OH 45249
(513) 729-8350

Tyler Van Aark

tylervanaark@hotmail.com

Through 6/15/02: Fellowes Hall #4-G, Loyola College, Baltimore, MD 21210 — 410-349-7009

After 6/15/02: 759 Pfeiffer Road, Hendersonville, TN 37075 — 615-942-4493

EDWARD J. NILSSON III

ejIII@tampabay.rr.com

257 West Shell Court, Bradenton, FL 34201
941-459-3890 Home — 941-709-3490 Mobile

Dale Okenga, MD

Telephone 781-523-0909
 Pager 617-990-4389
 Email daleokenga@worldnet.att.net
 Residence 7 Willow Drive
 Winchester, MA 01890

MORGAN VALLENCOURT

Home address 7409 37th Avenue SW, Seattle, WA 98136 • 206-923-1761
 Contact through June 2003 415-552-0983 • m.vallencourt@ucla.edu

STEP 5: Sell Your Strongest Qualifications in a Powerful Skills Summary

This important introductory section of your resume should present a quick “snapshot” of who you are and what you have to offer. Whether you use a formal Objective statement, use both an Objective and a Skills Summary, or combine the two into some kind of Summary/Profile, be sure you do the following for greatest impact:

- Instantly communicate just what kind of job you’re looking for.
- Highlight your strongest qualifications.

This essential information must be crystal-clear in just a quick glance at the top part of your resume. Equally important, you must write this section with the employer’s interests in mind. Stating *what you want* is not nearly as effective as telling employers *what you can do for them*.

Write Your Objective/Skills Summary

There are many interesting ways to communicate your objective and key skills. To make it easy for you, first I’ll walk you through a step-by-step process. Then, if you’re feeling creative or would like to consider a different way of presenting this information, we’ll review a variety of options and examples for alternatives to a simple Skills Summary.

Possible Titles for Your Objective/Skills Summary Section

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Accomplishment Summary | Immediate and Long-Range Goals | Qualifications Summary |
| Areas of Interest | Job Target | Related Skills and Achievements |
| Capabilities | Key Credentials | Selected Accomplishments |
| Career Focus | Key Qualifications | Skills |
| Career Interests | Objective | Skills and Accomplishments |
| Competencies | Position Sought | Skills Summary |
| Core Competencies | Professional Qualifications | Skills Synopsis |
| Goal | Profile | Summary |
| Highlights of Skills and Experience | Proven Capabilities | Summary of Qualifications |
| | Qualifications | Value Offered |

Write an Objective, Goal, or Target Statement

Although it's not strictly necessary to lead off your resume with an objective, I do recommend it for new graduates. It is a quick, easy way to focus the employer's attention on your areas of interest. Otherwise, because you probably don't have a lengthy or relevant employment history, it might be difficult for the employer to understand what jobs you're qualified for.

When writing your objective, be specific, brief, and direct; avoid meaningless statements such as "Seeking a challenging, rewarding position with the opportunity for career advancement."

Here are a few examples:

OBJECTIVE

To be one of the 15 transfer students selected this year for Florida State University's School of Motion Pictures, Television, and Recording Arts.

Seeking an entry-level position in the capacity of

Marketing Associate

OBJECTIVE: Entry-level position utilizing training and skills in financial research, strategic planning, investing, and financial analysis.

Career Focus

Entry Level, Full-Time Law Associate

• Corporate • Labor • Civil

Goal: Internship—Summer 2003

Public Relations / Marketing / Media Production

Objective

A **Contract Design Internship** utilizing communication and organizational skills in a team-oriented environment. Qualified by a unique blend of design knowledge and a business administration background.

Write your objective statement directly below your contact information on your resume.

List Your Most Important Skills

Next, make a list of the four or five most important skills or credentials you possess that are directly related to your target position. This is easy—you've already identified the core skills as part of your prep work. Because you probably have more than just four or five skills listed, select those that you feel are *most* important for your target job and correlate *most strongly* to your qualifications. Write them here:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Summarize Your Evidence

Next to each skill, summarize your "evidence" to show that you possess that requirement. Here's an example:

GOAL: Management Training Opportunity with Emphasis in Human Resources and Operations Management

| Core Skill or Requirement | Evidence |
|---|--|
| Bachelor's degree in business or management | Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, with concentration in management and additional coursework in organizational behavior. |
| Human resources or training experience | Chosen to train all new employees and new managers for a 12-store retail district. |
| Leadership skills | Able to effectively supervise and motivate staff to high performance levels. |
| Management knowledge or experience | Two years' management experience in a fast-paced retail environment. |
| Reliability and work ethic | Track record of advancement based on proven capabilities, work ethic, and enthusiasm. Promoted five times in seven years with Blockbuster Video. |

To see how this summary was finalized and integrated into a completed resume, see the resume on page 88.

Here's another example:

GOAL: Position as Counselor, Teacher, or Case Manager for Special-Needs Youth

| Core Skill or Requirement | Evidence |
|---|--|
| B.S. or M.S. in Social Work or Special Education | Master of Arts in Special Education/California Teaching Credential expected in 2003. |
| Experience diagnosing and treating developmental disabilities | Seven years' case-management experience—specialist in diagnosis and treatment of developmental disabilities. |
| Communication skills | Bilingual teaching experience: Spanish/English. |

You can see the finished resume, including the skills summary, on page 170.

Here's one more:

**GOAL: Internship in Public Relations/Marketing/
Media Production**

| Core Skill or Requirement | Evidence |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Knowledge of media production | Two hands-on summer internships with a multimedia producer of major corporate programs and events. |
| Presentation and communication skills | Comfortable speaking before groups and in business settings. Model, spokesperson, guide, and peer advisor. Strong writing and editing skills. |
| Leadership | Repeatedly took on leadership roles in school and community activities. Demonstrated initiative, drive, and ability to manage multiple priorities. |
| Teamwork and interaction | At my best when interacting with others and working in a team environment. |

The finished resume, with this skills summary, appears on page 70.

Now it's your turn. Use this worksheet, copy one from appendix C, or enter this information directly into your resume in the word-processing file.

[illegible]

[illegible]

Now, assemble your proof (the “Evidence” column) into a Skills Summary just below the objective statement in your resume.

Alternatives to a Simple Skills Summary

A Skills Summary like the one you've just written is a relatively easy and usually effective way to highlight your most important qualifications. But it's not the only way! The sample resumes in this book show dozens of different ways to start off your resume. If you're not fully satisfied with your Skills Summary or want to consider a different approach, consider these ideas or flip through the samples for more inspiration:

- With or without a category title, describe the value you offer in your target position:

Profit-building capabilities I can bring to Melcor as a Customer Service Representative:

- Ability to find and fix customers' problems
- Experience to help people want to succeed
- Confidence to master steep learning curves fast

- Fold your objective into a Summary of Qualifications (see this complete resume on page 194):

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

Energetic, dedicated **Physician Assistant** with strong interpersonal skills • Emergency Medical Technician background • Proven ability to work effectively with people of various ages, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses • Long-time interest in medicine and desire to assist those who are suffering physically or emotionally • Provide high-quality medical care with an emphasis on treating patients as unique and valuable individuals • Well-developed organizational skills • Fluent in Spanish language

- Combine an objective with a brief summary paragraph and a “keyword” list of core competencies (this complete resume appears on page 96):

Seeking an entry-level position in the capacity of

Marketing Associate

Offer a Bachelor’s degree in Marketing, diverse experience, and a solid understanding of marketing strategies illustrated through academic projects and an Internet venture that continues to develop and test theoretical marketing strategies and business management skills in the areas of

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Conceptual Planning | Web-based Marketing | Advertising Campaigns |
| Strategy Development | Marketing Penetration | Media/Client Relations |
| Project Management | Competitive Analysis | Ad Copy Creation |

- Create a “profile” that describes your strongest capabilities (this complete resume is on page 103):

OBJECTIVE Sales Associate—Retail Sales

PROFILE

- College student with more than 4 years of retail sales experience.
- Professional and approachable manner. Talent for identifying customers’ needs and presenting solutions that drive purchases.
- Highly motivated team player—willing to take on added responsibilities.
- Proven skills in problem solving and customer relations. Fluent Spanish.



RECAP

The Objective/Skills Summary section of your resume should provide a quick snapshot of who you are and the best you have to offer as it relates to your target positions. Organize and format your material to create a cohesive introduction and capture immediate attention.

STEP 6: Emphasize Education as a Key Credential

Because you’ve just completed a degree, the Education section of your resume is quite important. As you mature in your career, this section will become less prominent and will simply take its place, in abbreviated form, toward the end of your resume. But for now, create a section that communicates the value of your education in terms of your career target and a company’s desired core qualifications.

Write Your Education Section

Use the resume-development form in appendix D or work directly on your computer draft. Start by listing your degree (you can use abbreviations such as B.S., B.A., M.S., or J.D. if you like), major, minor if applicable, year of graduation (it’s not necessary to list the year you started), and your school’s name and location (city and state).

If you’ve earned a license or credential as a result of your education, be sure to list it. You can also include relevant training that you completed outside the scope of your degree. For instance, you might have taken sales-training courses or earned CPR certification.

Next, review the evidence you compiled in chapter 1 and pull out any education-related information to add to this section. If you find a theme—for instance, three examples that show strong leadership skills—consider creating a subheading to group together these items and call attention to them.



Education FAQs

Should I include my GPA?

That depends. If it's good (generally speaking, 3.0 or above), include it. Sometimes an effective strategy is to list your "GPA in Major," if it's higher than your overall GPA. If your GPA is unimpressive, omit it; including it on your resume can only harm you. Sure, the first question you're asked in an interview might be, "What was your GPA?" But you might not even be in that interview if you had listed a low GPA on your resume. Don't get yourself screened out of consideration by including a low GPA.

I spent my first two years at a community college, then transferred to State U. Should I list both?

It's not necessary to list any school except the one granting your degree. Include other institutions only if you have a specific reason for doing so—say you're going to network with alumni of your first school, or your first school has higher prestige than your graduating school. Two years at Harvard are valuable even if you finished up at Nondescript U.

How do I indicate my graduation date if I haven't finished my degree yet?

If you're starting your job search within a few months of graduation, it's not necessary to qualify the date—a resume with "Bachelor of Fine Arts, June 2003" that is circulated in March does not need to be explained. But if you're using your resume while still in college (say for an internship, co-op job, or part-time employment), use the word "projected" or "anticipated" along with the graduation date: "BSBA anticipated 2004."

Should I list my courses?

In general, I don't recommend taking up valuable space on your resume with an entire course listing. But consider adding "Relevant Coursework" or "Highlights of Courses" if you took unusual or advanced classes or if your degree or major course of study is not well known. Course listings can also be helpful for students applying for internships or co-op jobs where employers will not know which of the undergraduate courses in your major you've already completed.

Do I need to include high school information?

In most cases you can omit high school information. But if you have legitimate reasons to include it, do so. Perhaps you went to an out-of-state college but are now back in your hometown hoping to make connections with fellow graduates of Midtown High. Or you might have achieved some very impressive honors and awards during high school; it's okay to include these as long as they don't overshadow your college career. Younger students (those seeking internships or co-op jobs) can usually make a stronger case for including notable high school information.

Possible Subheadings You Can Use Within the Education Section

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Academic Honors | Fellowships | Major Projects |
| Area of Concentration | High School | Relevant Coursework |
| Athletics | Honors and Awards | Research |
| Co-op Experience | International Study | Scholarships |
| Extracurricular Activities | Internship Experience | Thesis |
| | Leadership Experience | Volunteer Activities |
| | Licenses/Credentials | |

Sample Education Sections

Here are a few sample Education sections taken from the resumes in this book:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| EDUCATION | |
| Medical | Baylor College of Medicine, Houston TX M.D. |
| Undergraduate | Washington & Jefferson College, Washington PA B.A. Biology |

| |
|---|
| <u>EDUCATION</u> |
| Bachelor of Arts, English, expected May 2002 Saint Thomas Aquinas College, Spring Valley, NY Alpha Sigma Lambda Honor Society |

| | |
|--|---------------|
| ■ EDUCATION | |
| Bachelor of Arts, Psychology (Magna Cum Laude) VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY ; Nashville, Tennessee Coursework included: Childhood Psychopathology, Abnormal Psychology, Psychology of Women, Multicultural Communications, Racial and Ethnic Diversity, and numerous other Human Service courses. | 2002 Graduate |

| |
|---|
| Education |
| BS, Iowa State University Ames, IA (May 2002) AGRICULTURAL STUDIES |
| TEAM PROJECTS: Nutrient Management Fly-Ash Environmental Soil Management |
| AAS, Des Moines Area Community College Ankeny, IA 1999 AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS |

| | | |
|---------------------|--|---|
| EDUCATION | Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA | |
| December 2002 | Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration | Area of Emphasis: Management |
| Relevant Coursework | Accounting Economics Finance Business Law Statistics | Organizational Management Small Business Management Administrative Personnel Systems Quantitative Methods for Business High Performance Teams in Business |
| | | Organizational Behavior Operations Management First Line Supervisor Introduction to Computers |
| Accomplishments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personally financed 100% of college education through full-time employment; completed bachelor's degree in 4 ½ years. Won Coach's Award as member of track team, freshman year. | |



RECAP

Your resume's Education section might be a brief one-liner, or it could take up a large part of the page. Choose information that is relevant to your career goal and paints a picture of you in the way you want to be perceived—perhaps as a leader, a high achiever, an involved citizen, a hard worker, or someone respected by peers and administrators.

STEP 7: Describe Your Work Experience with a Focus on Skills and Achievements

Even if your jobs have been totally unrelated to your current goal, they gave you the chance to learn and practice specific skills. When you describe your work experience, relate what you did to a skill you learned or a contribution you made to the business. Try to phrase your work experience in the form of achievements rather than job duties. For instance, rather than simply list your job duties as an Admissions Representative for your college, communicate the achievement and importance of that role in a sentence like this:

Admissions Representative: Chosen through competitive interview process to work with Admissions Office and represent Boston University to prospective students.

Wherever possible, support your achievement statements with specific numbers and results. Numbers add substance and credibility and are ten times more effective at selling your capabilities than words are. (Doesn't that last sentence have greater impact and believability than if I just said "much more effective"?)

Even if you can't add numbers, demonstrate that you contributed to the success of the business where you worked. Did you save money or increase efficiency? Multiply sales? Improve customer service or customer satisfaction? Think of a better way to do things? Help co-workers be more productive? Save a sale or placate an unhappy customer? Come to the rescue when the business was short-handed? Come up with an idea for a partnership with another business that added to the success of both? Your achievement statements don't have to be earthshaking; even small things that you did on the job will demonstrate your value as an employee.

Possible Titles for Your Work Experience Section

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Career Highlights | Experience | Professional Experience |
| Career History | Experience and Accomplishments | Relevant Experience |
| Co-op Experience | Experience Summary | Relevant Work History |
| Employment Experience | Highlights of Experience | Work Background |
| Employment History | Internship Experience | Work Experience |

Write Your Experience Section

List your job titles, dates of employment, and the name and location of the company where you worked. Add statements that convey the skills you learned and the ways you contributed to the business. You can use the resume development form in appendix D or enter this section directly into your draft resume on your computer.

Don't go overboard trying to make your positions sound impressive. Generally, employers know what's involved in the typical retail sales, restaurant service, office administration, and customer-service jobs many students hold during high school and college years. Focus on the things that are unique to you and those that demonstrate skill or achievement.

If you have experience that is related to your career target—perhaps through a co-op job, internship, or position you held between attaining your bachelor's and master's degrees—you can provide more detail of your job duties. These duties relate to your current goal and position you as a person with experience rather than an entry-level employee. In these positions, too, you should focus on skills and achievements instead of simply listing the duties of the job. What did you learn or do that will make you an even more valuable employee? What were your unique contributions?

Sample Job Experience Phrasings

Here are a few examples of how you might phrase your job experiences to add impact and value to your resume. All of these examples were taken from the resumes in this book. Most of the statements refer to part-time employment that is typical of many new college graduates.

- Developed loyal clientele and increased sales through personal attention to customers' needs. Resolved customer complaints diplomatically.
- Supported the pharmacy operations, as necessary fulfilling the role of pharmaceutical technician.
- Generated a list of 160 sales leads and contacts through aggressive cold-calling from a database of 1,100 companies.
- Devised 13 on-site strategies to effectively meet and recruit more than 750 Multi-Campus Hillel members in 18 months.
- Implemented creative learning techniques that resulted in student passing exams.
- Kept events running smoothly through effective problem-solving and good decision-making.
- Successfully completed the project on time to specification with full user interactivity.
- Publicized an urban youth organization to the media, the general community, and potential supporters. Wrote and designed a brochure for the organization.
- Defrayed college expenses and gained problem-solving, decision-making, communication, and leadership skills through diverse customer service, training, and supervisory positions.

Include awards, honors, recognition, and other evidence that you were a standout employee. Here are a few examples:

- Earned perfect job evaluation.
- Won three contests for selling the most dinner specials from among 15 servers.
- Received Outstanding Service Award, 1999–2000.
- Was requested to return for third summer internship.



RECAP

Write an Experience section that demonstrates your “employability” skills by sharing your achievements and success as an employee.

STEP 8: Add the Extras to Give Yourself a Competitive Advantage

What makes you special? Each person has unique attributes, knowledge, and experiences that might not fit into the standard resume sections or match a list of job requirements. Perhaps you speak fluent Urdu, backpacked across Europe for a summer, or devoted hours and hours of time to disadvantaged kids. Sometimes these “extras” are related to your job target, even though they might seem to be totally irrelevant. They say something unique about you and can set you apart from other candidates.

Just as you did in the Work Experience section of your resume, try to communicate skills and accomplishments, with results where possible, when detailing these “extras.” If you volunteered, what were the benefits of your efforts? If you held a leadership role with an organization, did you introduce new programs that boosted membership or increased member involvement? Did you self-finance a summer of travel through nine months of part-time work experience? Use this section of your resume to continue the message of capability and success you’ve communicated throughout your resume.

Possible Category Titles for Your Resume “Extras”

Additional Information

Additional Qualifications

Affiliations/Memberships/Organizations/Professional Associations

Community Involvement/Community Service

Computer Capabilities/Computer Skills/Technical Expertise/Technical Proficiency

Languages

Military Service

Personal Information

Travel

Volunteer Experience

What Do Others Say About You?

If you have performance evaluations, letters of recommendation, customer letters, or other written commendations that sing your praises, consider incorporating one or a few quotes from these sources into your resume. This kind of third-party endorsement is extremely powerful, adds credibility to your resume, and lets you “boast” about yourself by using the words of others.

Quotes can be inserted on your resume in a number of places with great effect:

- As part of your Skills Summary, add a quote as a separate item or in a box to one side.
- Quotes from professors can be placed under Education, quotes from employers under Work Experience.
- Quotes can be positioned in a narrow left or right column running the length of the page.
- A quote can be positioned as a final, powerful footnote at the end of the resume.

Write Your Extra Section(s)

List the unique points that make you special. Organize them into separate sections (with their own headings) or combine them under one umbrella heading. If you're using quotes, select one or a few that say the most relevant and positive things about you. Determine where on your resume you'll place them.



RECAP

The "extras" will make your resume more memorable, might hit on a helpful but not "required" job attribute, and at the very least can provide interesting material for an interview discussion.

STEP 9: Format, Edit, and Polish Your Draft

Now that you've finished drafting the material for your resume, it's time to wordsmith your draft copy and then organize and format the material to create an attractive, easily skimmed document.

Use Formatting to Guide the Reader

Use formatting to guide readers through your document and focus attention where you want it. Create a "structural hierarchy"—similar to the outline format you would use when planning a research paper. Use indents, different type styles and enhancements, and different type sizes to create a consistent and logical flow for your resume, while drawing the reader's eye to the information you consider most important.

Here's a structural hierarchy you might use in your resume:

| CATEGORY TITLE | |
|----------------|--|
| Subhead | |
| Paragraph Text | |
| • Bullet Text | |

And here's how that hierarchy would look with text inserted into it:

| WORK EXPERIENCE | |
|---|---------------------|
| Sales Associate: Tower Records, New Haven, CT | 5/01 to 6/02 |
| Filled custom orders and assisted retail customers of full-service music store. Managed store opening and closing in manager's absence. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Sales Associate of the Month" 6 of 13 months—top performer among 12 part-time sales staff.• Trained all new employees in online research for custom orders. | |

Keep It Short

Avoid overly long paragraphs—dense text is hard to read and even harder to skim for essential information. To break up text-heavy sections, do the following:

- Write concisely.
- Divide a long paragraph into two or more paragraphs.
- List key points in short bullet-point statements.
- Use subheadings to grab attention and divide long lists into shorter, more manageable groupings.

Use Type Creatively Yet Appropriately

There are dozens of font choices available on most computers. Experiment to find one or two that you like and that contribute to the impact and readability of your resume. But don't go crazy with unusual or ornate fonts. A resume is a business document, and readability is key!

- Both serif (with little decorative lines or “feet” attached to the edge of each letter, as in the Times Roman font) and sans serif (plain, clean fonts lacking decorative flourishes, such as Arial) fonts can be used effectively and can be highly readable.
- Consider using two different fonts, one for your name, headlines, and other material that needs to stand out, and the other for maximum readability in the text sections.
- Because Times Roman is the font most used in resumes and other business documents, you can make your resume stand out from the others simply by choosing a different typestyle.
- As a general rule, choose a text size between 10 and 12 points.



FAQ

Can I use a resume template in Microsoft Word or another word-processing program? It would make formatting much easier.

The problem with resume templates is that they force you to fit your unique background into a rigid organizational structure. Thumb through the resume samples in chapters 5 through 9 and you'll see that there are countless ways to organize and present your qualifications. When drafting your material, it's more beneficial to do so without a template so that you are not confined to the template's categories and layout. Another point against templates is that they are widely used by do-it-yourself resume writers. The person reading your resume has probably seen dozens if not hundreds of resumes with the identical template format. Why not create something unique for yourself?

Write Using "Resume Language"

Resumes have a style all their own. Here are the most important points to keep in mind as you write:

- Write in the first person but omit the subject (*I*).
- Use present tense for current activities, past tense for past activities and achievements.
- For concise writing, omit articles (such as *a*, *an*, *the*, and *my*):

- [I] Completed [my] bachelor's degree in 3.5 years while working more than 20 hours weekly.
- [I was] Elected president of [a] 60-member student organization and created [a] new program that boosted membership 20%.
- [I] Cultivate cooperative, team-oriented relationships with [my] co-workers and managers.

- Summarize and trim to reduce wordiness and increase impact. Change this:

While I was in college, I took a full course load of Honors-level courses while holding down a part-time job, volunteering 5 hours weekly, and actively participating in several organizations on campus.

To this:

Combined intensive Honors curriculum with employment, regular volunteer work, and active participation in student organizations.

- Begin sentences with strong action verbs; avoid passive phrases such as "responsible for" or "duties included":

- Exceeded goals for speed and accuracy of data entered after just two days on the job.
- Completed bachelor's degree in 3.5 years; earned 3.7 GPA.

- Write using parallel structure for consistency and comprehensibility. For instance, avoid listings like this:

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Creative problem-solver
- Work ethic
- Earned CPA while still a senior in college
- Strong analytical skills
- Energetic, industrious, and ambitious

Instead, make the items parallel:

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS (noun format)

- Creative problem-solving skills
- Work ethic
- CPA designation—earned while still a senior in college
- Strong analytical skills
- High energy, industriousness, and ambition

Or perhaps:

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS (verb format)

- Solve problems creatively
- Work hard and industriously
- Possess CPA (earned while still a senior in college)
- Demonstrate strong analytical skills
- Display energy and drive in all endeavors

Pull It All Together

Take some time to edit your draft, and then organize and format your resume. Use the samples in this book for inspiration, if you like, or come up with something uniquely your own.

When you're done, proofread carefully! Errors in your resume are simply unacceptable. Don't rely totally on your computer spell-checker—it won't pick up common errors (for example, "advise" instead of "advice," "lead" instead of "led," and so on), nor will it check for consistency in your formatting and presentation. A careless error can cost you a job interview. Ask others to review your resume, too—friends, parents, career-center advisors, and professors. They might pick up errors or inconsistencies that you overlooked or important items you omitted.

The way you organize and present your resume material will have a big effect on readability and impact. Be consistent and clear, and make sure that the format helps readers understand and absorb your capabilities.

STEP 10: Cross-Check Your Evidence Against Core Job Qualifications

You've finished your resume...almost. Before you start circulating it, review your resume with a critical eye to be sure that it does the following:

- Clearly communicates skills and capabilities that match the core job qualifications.
- Uses accomplishments and results to add credibility.
- Makes it easy for readers by using a clear organizational structure and hierarchy.
- Draws attention to important facts and categories.
- Conveys employability—communicates that you have what it takes to be a good employee.
- Presents information that is meaningful to employers and shows that you understand business priorities (profitability, customer service, and other contributions to business success).

STEP 11: Proofread Your Final Resume

Take the time to proofread your resume one last time before sending it out. Don't let a careless error derail your job search.