

How to Write Your Resume

Introduction

Taken together with your cover letter, your resume provides an employer with the information they use to decide whether or not to select you for an interview. Your resume will usually be one of many viewed by an employer in the selection process, so it is vital to ensure that it not only contains relevant information about yourself that addresses the job requirements, but does so in a readable, concise and structured way.

Your resume is an opportunity for you to demonstrate to a future employer your written communication skills, in particular your skills in bringing together information from various sources in order to provide a summary of your background and abilities. These skills should be familiar to you; they are very similar to the academic skills developed through assembling, drafting and submitting written work during your course.

Format

Your resume *must* be concise; that means that it should be 2-3 pages for a younger graduate, or 3-4 pages for a mature age graduate with a significant work history. The information on those pages needs to be presented in an organised, logical and coherent fashion.

You will not be writing the same sort of sentences in your resume as you would in your cover letter; rather, significant information should be highlighted through headings and bullet point lists.

Key points:

- Use a conventional font, e.g. Times New Roman or Arial
- Use 10 to 12 point text
- Use plain business English - avoid SMS language, abbreviations, jargon and slang
- Consistent and clear formatting should be used
- Consider converting your resume to .pdf format for consistent formatting
- Have plenty of 'white space' on the page, i.e. have enough space between paragraphs, make sure margins are not too narrow
- Check and double check for spelling **and** grammatical errors; simple spell-checks will not pick up double words, or the use of the wrong word – have another person proof-read your resume before you send it

Conveying Your Skills

Ultimately, a resume needs to provide information to a potential employer about your skills in relation to a workplace. Your academic background and achievements are clearly a major part of this, but they form only two of many parts of your resume. Evidence in resumes of both job-specific and generic workplace skills (also called 'transferable' or 'employability' skills) is vital to be successful in gaining interviews.

Employability skills consist of communication, team work, problem solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, learning, using technology and self-management. Each skill you list needs to be relevant to the job and substantiated with a short example.

Employers will be looking for evidence of academic and employability skills from your:

- academic performance – your results from all relevant qualifications, including your current course (include any academic awards or prizes)
- employment (both discipline –specific and general)
- extra-curricular activities, incorporating involvements on and off campus

The focus of the resume needs to be on the relevant skills, knowledge and experiences that show you can do the job, so that a future employer can quickly make a judgement on the contribution you could make to their organisation.

More information about Employability Skills is available on the Monash University Employment & Career Development website at www.careers.monash.edu.au.



Resume Content

Personal Details

Include your first and last name, residential address, postal address (if different from residential), home phone number, mobile phone number (make sure any phone-busy message is professional), and e-mail address (avoid humorous, nickname-based terminology). If you are applying for overseas jobs, you may need to provide your citizenship and/or Permanent Resident status.

Summary of Skills

You may decide to highlight to the employer your relevant skills and attributes under a separate heading; these could include both job-specific and general skills. Examples could include specific technical skills, fluency in languages other than English, research skills gained through academic programs, management skills gained through supervisory positions, etc.

Education

Include your tertiary and secondary qualifications, the institutions where you completed these studies and dates of completion or expected completion. This information should be presented in reverse chronological order (i.e. most recent education is listed first). Ensure that you emphasise your majors and minors, but don't list *all* subjects and results, as these will be available in your academic transcripts.

Employment History

Highlight relevant positions, summarising jobs in reverse chronological order, starting with your most recent/current position. For each job listed, include the period of employment, the organisation's name and location, the position held by you, and your key responsibilities.

Any course-related employment should be prominently listed, but other jobs should also be included; employers can gain valuable information about your general skills from new graduates' part-time/casual employment. It is not necessary to include *all* your past jobs; the test is to determine whether those other jobs demonstrate any of the employability skills outlined above.

Other Courses, Qualifications, Awards or Professional Development

List any other courses or qualifications you have completed, as well as any awards or scholarships you have attained.

Professional Associations/Affiliations

Include membership (it may be associate or student membership) of professional bodies that are relevant to your studies or industry – this is a very efficient way of indicating your long-standing interest and commitment to a profession or industry.

Voluntary Work and Other Activities

Previous or current participation in community work, clubs, sport or youth groups can demonstrate your strong willingness to use your initiative, leadership and interpersonal skills. Employers value people who are worldly, culturally aware, independent and mature. Detail your involvement with organisations, making sure you highlight any particular responsibilities or achievements.

Interests/Hobbies

Employers are usually also interested in you 'the person'; they will be curious to know about your hidden talents or hobbies. These could also prove to be an icebreaker, a good talking point in an interview situation, and further evidence of your level of general skills. You may include information on personal interests, particularly if they involve collective activities such as community, sporting, religious or cultural pursuits.

Referees

The final part of your resume should list two or three individuals that can provide a reference on your behalf. Include their name, position title, organisation and contact details. These people should be those who have witnessed your capabilities in an employment or academic environment, and have the authority to provide a prospective employer with credible comments. Make sure you have sought permission from these people before listing them as referees.

Avoid using personal friends, family members and non-work associates. If you cannot access employment or academic referees, consider your involvement in extra-curricular or community activities, and identify who might be an appropriate referee. An alternative approach is to omit details of referees on your resume, but indicate that referees are available on request, and have the information ready to provide to an employer when asked.

Contact us

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This Information was current at the time of writing and is intended as a guide only.

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