



CREATING AN EFFECTIVE RESUME

Adapted from: Halpern, Jeanne W., Judith M. Kilborn, and Agnes Lokke. *Business Writing Strategies and Samples*. New York: Macmillan, 1988 and Purdue University. Revised February 22, 2007

The resume is a tool for you to sell yourself by making your unique skills stand out and helping you relate your skills to a particular job. Overall, the resume's goal is to get your foot in the door for an interview where you can sell yourself in person. Remember that an employer will typically spend less than 30 seconds reviewing a resume, and will reject a resume in less than 10 seconds. Therefore, the resume must be professional looking and must readily communicate important information. You should create a resume for two kinds of readers:

(1) **Skimmers**: these readers scan for desired information. For these readers, you must make information easy to find "at a glance" through the use of *headings*. Give the resume the 15-second test: What information stands out? What information gets lost in the rush?

(2) **Skeptics**: these readers look more closely and critically for details. Do you provide enough evidence and details for the careful reader?

To get started, collect facts about yourself and the jobs you have done. Then follow the suggestions in this handout to make your resume work for you. But remember no single resume will fit all jobs. To have an effective resume you need to:

- (1) tailor your resume for the company and the job you need,
- (2) gear it towards a specific goal,
- (3) make it original, and
- (4) be willing to prepare more than one resume.

Resume Sections

Begin to prepare your resume at least 3 to 4 weeks before you need it. You may wish to start by making a list of your accomplishments, activities, etc. To organize the information, the following headings are typically used; however, you may even want to make up a new section to relate to your special abilities.

- NAME & ADDRESS
- PROFESSIONAL/CAREER OBJECTIVE/GOAL
- EDUCATION/EDUCATIONAL RECORD
- SIGNIFICANT COURSES/PERTINENT COURSEWORK
- WORK EXPERIENCE
- SKILLS/QUALIFICATIONS
- COLLEGE ACTIVITIES AND HONORS/ACTIVITIES/MEMBERSHIPS
- REFERENCES

With this overall plan in mind, let's look at each section in more detail, with some suggestions on how you can use them.

Name & Address

All resumes must include your name, address, and phone number(s) so the employer can contact you if the resume and cover letter happen to become separated. Resumes generally use your full name. Many people use their first name, middle initial, and last name. Make it stand out: use underline, **bold text**, or ALL CAPS. Nicknames should be avoided in most situations. Also, if you have two residences (campus and permanent), you should list both addresses, phone numbers and dates/times when you can be reached at each location. Do NOT place the word “Resume” at the top of the page.

Career Objective

This section lets the employer see what you can do for them. Relate this section directly to the job you want and make sure you tie in the skills you have acquired from particular jobs, outside activities, or your education.

Ex: A position that requires knowledge of Microsoft Office along with sales/customer service abilities.

Ex: A position as a systems analyst, stressing technical, communication, and supervisory skills.

Education/Educational Record

This is a major section for most students. Include:

- (1) name of college,
- (2) degree and graduation date,
- (3) major/minor,
- (4) grade point average (optional)

Examples:

River Parishes Community College

Associate of Science: May 1997

Major: Computer Science

Minor: Industrial Technology

GPA: major 3.95; overall 3.01

OR

B.A. English Language & Literature

Minor: History

Louisiana State University, May 1997

GPA (4.0 scale): major 3.95; overall 3.01

You may want to consider a subheading called “Major Courses.” In this section, you may list the courses that are different from the ones everyone must take in your major or a few high-level courses that are really important: remember, you are pointing out some feature of your education that sets you apart.

Work Experience

- (1) List job titles, company names, city and state and dates of employment, starting with your most recent job and working backwards.
- (2) Job Description: use action verbs to describe the work you did (i.e., specific duties, responsibilities, etc.). Break this into short, descriptive sentences so your skills are highlighted

Example:

Resource Coordinator: River Parishes Community College; Sorrento, Louisiana (May 1999-June 2004)

--Supervised over thirteen student workers

--Developed over twenty handouts utilizing latest writing theories

--Conducted over 400 hours of student tutorials

--Collected and analyzed student use data to determine the effectiveness of the center

Note: Highlighting job titles is one standard way to arrange the “work experience” section; however, if you have worked for a big-name company, you may want to begin with/ highlight the company name.

Skills/Qualifications

Not all resumes include a skills section, but this is a good section to use when you want to emphasize the skills you have acquired from your various jobs or activities. To prepare this section you should:

- 1) list any jobs, club activities, projects, special offices you have had;
- 2) think of skills you have developed from these experiences, i.e.,
 - a) Wal-Mart: count cash, communicate with customers;
 - b) SGA president: lead meetings, negotiate disagreements
- 3) group your skills under 3-5 basic skills categories that relate to the job you are seeking and use these as skill headings;
- 4) list your skills with significant details under the appropriate major heading.
- 5) Now arrange your skills for their best presentation:
 - a) arrange headings in order of importance;
 - b) arrange skills under each heading in order of importance.
- 6) Make sure that you relate all headings and skills to the job you want.

Examples:

Management - led committee to prepare and establish new Student Government Association Handbook - evaluated employees' work progress for monthly reports

Communication - wrote weekly editorial for *The Morning Advocate* - conducted monthly club meetings for 25 members of Students United - represented 13 salespeople in negotiations with grocery management

Programming - analyzed and designed a program to record and average student grades - designed program to record and update items of fraternity's \$85,000 annual budget

College Activities and Honors/Activities/Memberships

This section points out your leadership, sociability and energy level as shown in your different activities. You should:

- 1) list organizations in order of importance;
- 2) add any official position you have had;
- 3) choose activities that support your job objective,
- 4) include any awards, honors (e.g. Dean's list) or honors societies (e.g. Tau Beta Pi)

References

List these on a separate sheet of paper that matches your resume. You will include the name, address, and, if available, phone number of each reference; then add a sentence that tells your connection with that person. You are not required to include references with your resume, so you may simply add the statement: "References: available upon request." This sentence allows you to be selective as to who gets your list of references. BEFORE putting some one down as a reference, you should always get his or her permission.

Putting It All Together

Structure: Left, right, top and bottom margins should be at least 1 inch wide.

Sections: Move sections around to emphasize your important facts. Use "white space" to make your resume look good. Ask yourself:

- Is your work experience more important than your education?
- Are your college activities more important than your past jobs?

Headings: Highlight headings. Use different kinds of type, underlining, **bold text**, all capital letters and indentation to show your organizing ability.

Length: Many companies prefer one-page resumes; however, this may vary according to your field and career objective. Find out from contacts in the industry or the LRC. At most, your resume should be a maximum of two pages.

Paper: Paper choice is also important. Avoid using colorful or patterned papers. Choose a high quality, high cotton content paper, white or maybe off-white. Paper specifically intended for resumes is widely available, along with matching envelopes. Some experts also recommend mailing resumes in large, heavy stock envelopes, large enough to accommodate your resume without folding it.

Resume Styles

Now is the time to decide the organizational style you want to use for your resume. Depending on the source the number of styles may vary, but generally all list the two basic styles: functional and chronological. The style you choose depends upon what you want to highlight. This handout will cover these two.

Functional

- **DO** Use this kind of resume when (a) you have paid or unpaid experience that relates to the job you want, (b) you have changed jobs frequently, (c) you are applying for your first job, (d) you have been away from the job market for some time, or (e) you are changing career goals. It will highlight your job titles.
- **DO NOT** use this kind of resume if (a) you have performed a limited number of functions, (b) your most recent employers are well-known and prestigious, (c) you are applying to a traditional organization, or (d) you want to emphasize your career progress.
- To use this style:
 - 1) begin each entry with your job title highlighted by underlining or boldface print.
 - 1) skip any jobs that do not apply, and jobs need not be in chronological sequence
 - 2) list the most important or impressive job first, and work downward in importance
 - 3) make special note of increasing responsibilities, either through job titles, or through descriptive details.

Example:

Roy P. Covington
32320 North Corbin Avenue
Walker, LA 70785
(225) 675-8266

Employment Objective
A summer position that would utilize my experience in program development and human relations

Education
Southeastern University, Hammond, LA
Bachelor of Science in General Management, May 1985
Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, December 1997
GPA (4.0 scale): Management - 2.8 Philosophy – 3.0
Overall – 2.9

Experience
President, Southeastern Green Acres Foundation, May 1993-May 1994
- Coordinated work and activities for 175 students
- Set up and managed \$3,000,000 budget
- Oversaw planning of 15 major events involving over 17,000 students and 6,000 non-students
- Designed statewide publicity program
- Raised over \$50,000 for individual and general scholarships

Assistant Chair, Southeastern Green Acres Foundation, June 1992-May 1993
- Secured over \$2,000 in donations
- Developed method for collection and distribution of funds

Chair, Southeastern Crazy Janes Association, May-October 1993
- Organized fraternity carnivals to raise money for charity
- Raised over \$2,700 for Boys' Club and United Way Fund

Additional Activities
FSBIT Advisory Board
Student Alumni Coalition
President's Council

Chronological

- **DO** use this kind of resume if (a) your last employer is well-known (i.e., IBM), (b) your job history shows progression and increasingly responsible positions, (c) you are applying to a traditional organization, or (d) you plan to continue along your established career path.
- **DO NOT** use this kind of resume if (a) you are changing careers, (b) you are entering the job market for the first time or are reentering after an absence, (c) you have held a variety of unrelated jobs, (d) you want to emphasize capabilities not used in recent jobs, or (e) your past progressions has been disappointing.
- To use this style::
 - 2) begin each entry with the employer's name and your dates of employment;
 - 3) use borders of special pictures you create yourself.

Example:

<p style="text-align: center;">Caroline Allen Gremillion</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Home Address: Work Address: 4650 South Lemoine Boulevard; 1221 Melrose Place Lafayette, LA 74906; New Orleans, LA 74601 (225) 655-4589; (225) 645-7526</p> <p>Career Objective A career in teaching with emphasis on composition and tutorial center development</p> <p>Education Northwestern State University Bachelor of English Composition, May 1994 Grade Point Average 3.46 on 4.00 scale</p> <p>Work Experience Louisiana State University, May 1993 - August 1993 - Organized monthly meetings of English honors society - Taught 5 courses per semester of English 1001 and 1002 (freshman composition) - Created and taught two new literature courses The Writing Center, Southeastern Louisiana University, May 1992 - August 1992 - Conducted over 1,000 student tutorials - Developed and gave seminars on various writing problems - Supervised 10 student workers Labauch Literacy, Inc., May 1991 - August 1991 - Created tutorial instructional handouts for ESL students - Worked with other employees to develop instruction manuals for tutors TGZ Interiors, Summer 1990, 1989, 1988 - Waited on clients - Received and priced inventory</p> <p>Honors and Activities Sigma Tau Delta – English Language and Literature Honorary Society Phi Kappa Phi Honors Society Member Dean's List - Fall 1991, Fall 1992, Spring 1993</p> <p>References and Portfolio Available Upon Request</p>
