

Résumés

Over time I've heard much about the proper way to write a résumé: when I was 16, my dad told me that his way was how you were supposed to do it; while I was in college, my professional writing teachers claimed that their way was the way; while I was a member of a dot.com, we had a specific resume format to entice clients; and now that I'm in the academic world, I've been given a specific format as well (also, the academic world calls the résumé format a curriculum vita—CV). So who is right? They all are. The perfect résumé is one that adheres to the audience's expectations, which enhances your chance to land a job; a wonderful résumé for the wrong audience is about as good as not having a résumé at all.

Since there aren't any rules set in stone for résumés, use the suggestions from your textbook, the class website, and our class discussions. Also, consider the following areas and order for your résumés:

- Heading—name, address, phone number, e-mail
- Objective
- Education—past and current
- Job Experience—employers, addresses, descriptions of duties, dates of employment
- Computer Skills/Other Skills—make sure you have the skills you claim to have
- Honors/Awards—list only major ones
- Activities

Thinking Critically about What Goes Where

Instead of adhering uncritically to rules for **Chronological**, **Functional**, and **Combination** résumés—often referred to as *the way résumés are supposed to be*—I want you to ask yourself some questions about which order to use. The first thing you need to ask yourself is “why am I writing a resume in the above order (or any order)?” To help you explore that, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the above format good for beginning job seekers?
- What should I do if I have 3-5 years of experience?
- Should I adjust my résumé according to the size of the applicant pool?
- Am I still working in my major/minor discipline or area?

Before you think that résumé formats are universal, I want to let you know that your specific situation may vary from the general guidelines I'm giving you. The above order is a good start for beginners because it allows the prospective employer a chance to glance at your résumé and see a snapshot of you. Some experts say you should put your

job experience first if you want to highlight that or your education first if you wish to highlight that instead.

Eventually, you will gain more experience and your résumé will expand to more than one page; if your education has moved to a second page, the reader will have to go to that page in order to see your major and college. Because you put your job experience down on a résumé in reverse chronological order, your most recent job (which we can assume is the most important) will be first. Keeping your education on the first page allows the reader to see that “snapshot” of you. You may not be working in your major/area after college, so your education may not be as important.

Finally, adjust your résumé content according to the applicant size. Entry-level positions often have lots more applicants than jobs requiring five or more years of experience. The bigger the applicant pool, the more crucial it becomes to sell yourself quickly. Consider having a one-page résumé unless a) you have more than five years of experience in the particular job field to which you are applying or b) you know that the employer expects a longer résumé.

Cover Letters

Unless you’re dropping your résumé off at a career fair and the company you wish to be hired by says not to include a cover letter, **ALWAYS INCLUDE A COVER LETTER WITH ANY RÉSUMÉ.** Below are some areas to consider for a cover letter:

- Block or modified block style
- Address the letter to a specific person
- Consider four separate paragraphs:
 - Paragraph 1: Intro and education (or work experience) statement
 - Paragraph 2: Current status, relevant course work, and duties
 - Paragraph 3: What have you gained from your educational experience and allude to something in your résumé; for instance, “as my résumé shows, I’m an excellent circus clown and have the ability to train seals...”
 - Paragraph 4: “I appreciate any consideration you give to me. I have enclosed/attached my résumé for your review. {If asked} [I am looking for a salary of \$XXXX.XX]. I would like to discuss my application further in an interview with your company. Please contact me at the number or e-mail above if I can answer any questions you may have.”
 - You should end all business letters with a statement on how the reader may get in contact with you.
- Try to keep all cover letters to one page.