

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RESUME?

WHAT IS A RESUME?

A resume is a document that is used to outline your experiences (professional, academic, extracurricular) and the skills you have acquired as a result. Think of your resume as a kind of advertisement for yourself: a strong resume should make the reader want to meet and interview you. Your resume's impact originates from both the details you choose to include and the way you write about them. A person with limited experience but strong writing skills can put together a resume as compelling as a person who writes about their rich experiences in an ineffective way.

WHEN SHOULD I BEGIN WRITING MY RESUME?

Now! A resume is a work in progress, and students who start early have the benefit of improving and refining their resume over time. Students need to keep their resume regularly updated to reflect new experiences, ensuring that an up-to-date resume is available when needed. Students are encouraged to begin the process immediately. You never know when or where your resume will be needed!

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS A "PERFECT" RESUME?

No. There is no right and wrong when it comes to resume content and format. Each resume is as unique as the individual it represents. It is up to you to select the appropriate content that best highlights your skills for the employment you hope to acquire and then effectively communicate your qualifications in a format that is clear and easy to read.

SHOULD MY RESUME INCLUDE EVERYTHING I HAVE EVER DONE?

Not necessarily. Note that a potential employer typically spends around 20-30 seconds when initially reviewing a resume. Therefore, it is important to carefully select experiences that emphasize the skills most relevant to the desired position. Remember to stress quality over quantity.

HOW DO I DECIDE WHAT TO PUT ON MY RESUME?

First, focus on the skills and attributes you can bring to the organization. Make use of the job description, company's website, or the books in The Career Center's Resource Center. Next, reflect upon specific experiences from your college and employment history that demonstrate how you have gained and refined skills that will transfer to the job you desire. Finally, customize a resume for every specific job application. This gives potential employers the impression that you have indeed carefully selected the most relevant experiences that portray you as the best choice.

HOW CAN THE CAREER CENTER HELP ME WITH MY RESUME?

For many students, the first step in the resume writing process is attending a resume writing workshop during the academic year. The Career Center also offers drop-in resume evaluation services so students can speak individually with a trained reviewer. In addition, The Career Center maintains a Resource Center with printed materials on the resume writing process as well as examples.

HINTS OF PROFESSIONALISM

- Convey your overall competence through content and attention to detail. Proofread carefully to ensure correct spelling and grammar.
- Have your resume reviewed at The Career Center or by a professor or academic advisor in your college. Have it reviewed multiple times to attain varied insights and draw from multiple perspectives to create your best possible resume.
- Avoid the usage of first and third person pronouns such as “I”, “he,” or “she.”
- Keep the verb tenses consistent throughout the document. Use present tense for current activities and employment and past tense for activities and employment that occurred in the past.
- Refrain from using slang, jargon, overused expressions, and anything that might confuse the potential employer. It is important to spell out all acronyms the first they are used, followed by the acronym in parentheses. Thereafter, in the same document you may use the acronym alone.

APPROACHES TO APPEARANCE

- As you format your resume, distribute the content evenly on the page. Take advantage of white space, using it as a mechanism to appropriately convey emphasis and organization of your information and skills.
- Be consistent with alignment. For example, you may consider having all your dates of your education, employment, and activities flush to the right. Appropriately and consistently use left, center, or right alignment.
- Bold, underline, and italics can be used to emphasize the different aspects of your resume such as headings and titles. Remember to be consistent throughout.
- Depending on your academic major and goals for employment, one-page conventional resumes are typically most appropriate. Rather than being creative in the design and format of your resume, demonstrate your creativity in the content you choose.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR READER

- Use concise statements to clearly articulate your relevant experiences. This will capture the interest of your reader and motivate him or her to read your resume more carefully.
- Phrases, rather than complete sentences, are generally most effective to help the potential employer easily understand your experiences.
- Use a variety of action verbs to bring your skills and experiences to life. Avoid using each verb or adjective more than once. (See the “Action Words” handout).
- Do your homework! Investigate each potential employer and consider any preferences for length, format, and content. Be sure to follow special instructions for supplemental application materials. For example, you should only send a reference sheet if it is requested.
- Customize your resume for each application. Consider the specific responsibilities of the individual position and make changes to your resume accordingly.