

Writing a Resume

With so many different employment experiences possible, there is no single resume template that works for everyone. There are, however, generally accepted ways to arrange the information on your resume to present it in the best light.

The two styles that are discussed most often are the chronological format and the functional format. Both have their own advantages and disadvantages when it comes to presenting your information. A third style, the Combination, is a compromise between the two and has become more popular in recent years.

Chronological Format

This format is the most common resume style, and the one that employers prefer. In the chronological format, the emphasis is placed on employment experience. The applicant's job history is presented in reverse chronological order, with the most recent jobs placed at the top of the list.

The chronological resume is good if your recent job experience is relevant to the job you are applying for, and you want to stay on a similar career path. Potential employers can easily see what you have done, and how you have progressed and gotten experience. Your education is more important and should be placed before your job history. This is true if your education is current and reflects skills needed by a potential employer.

Despite its popularity, there are some reasons why the chronological format may not be right for you. If you are just entering the workforce from school, a resume like this may actually highlight your lack of experience. You may have held jobs recently that have no relevance to the position you're applying for. If you are re-entering the workforce after a substantial absence, this resume will highlight your recent inactivity. Any large gaps in your recent employment history will be evident, and you may be asked about them.

Likewise, a job history full of briefly held jobs might lead a potential employer to question your ability to remain employed. A long employment history at a single company will reveal your age to some extent, something you may not feel comfortable doing.

Furthermore, companies are not as loyal to their employees as in the past and, likewise, employees are not as loyal to companies. With this in mind, many individuals may

have changed jobs several times in 2 to 3 years. With many temporary agencies being used, this can also show flexibility. Working temporary jobs should not be viewed as a bad thing. For example, this is a great way to get into a company and gain valuable experience, as well as getting to know the company. One should take advantage of this time period in that it can be viewed as an interviewing process.

Chronological Resume Format

Name

Address

City, State Zip

Telephone number

Email address

Professional Summary Briefly state your relevant work experience and skills. Think of it as a short version of an elevator pitch.

Work Experience Begin with most recent first. List dates, job title, name of organization, and description of duties. Include action verbs that are transferable to the work you are seeking.

Education List most recent first. State the name of the university attended, degree received, major field of study, minor, certificate awarded.

**Memberships/
Activities** Give name of the organization or activity and any position you held.

A sample chronological resume follows on the next page.

Evelyn Fischer
210 Lakeview Drive
Edina, Minnesota 55444
952-555-4545
efischer@yahoo.com

Summary

Professional with over 10 years of work experience as a Research Assistant with knowledge in lab procedures. Responsibilities have included establishing lab procedures and training new staff.

Work Experience

Research Assistant, Walnut Creek Mining, Inc.

Walnut Creek, CA, June 1996 – present

Located numerous abandoned gold mines

Updated and confirmed shaft locations and processing sites

Interpreted local geology, mineralogy, and structure

Worked extensively with gold-processing techniques

Buyer and Seller, New River Lapidary

Sacramento, CA, August 1990-May 1996

Consistently maintained sales of fine mineral specimens

Planned and performed buying and selling abroad

Organized and controlled entire stock of specimens

Fully responsible for maintaining all accounts

Lab Technician, Smithtown Laboratories

Sacramento, CA, August 1985-May 1996

Researched and analyzed environmental specimens

Established lab testing procedures and compiled training manual

Accurately performed routine lab testing on samples

Education

Bachelor of Science, Geological Sciences, March 1985

California State University, Northridge, CA

Memberships/ Activities

Geology Club President, California State University

Northridge, CA, September 1983-May 1985

Functional Format

In this non-linear format, your skills and achievements are emphasized. Your employment history is summarized or avoided all together. Your skills and previous relevant experience (including educational experience) are presented at the beginning of your resume. They are organized so the employer can see how your skills relate to the job position you are applying for. (In a chronological resume, employers may simply be looking at the jobs you have held previously to see if you have the experience they are looking for.) It may take more effort to write a functional resume, but you are free to highlight your talents instead of your recent job experience.

The functional resume can be particularly effective if you've held a number of similar positions; it will allow you to highlight your skills rather than itemize what might be a redundant looking job history. On the other hand, the functional resume may also raise concerns in some employers' minds as to whether you are withholding information. This doesn't mean that functional resumes are ignored or that they can't be effective. But an employer looking for a clear job history may be put off by the functional format, especially if you've used a functional resume to hide your inexperience or a long gap in your employment history. If you don't have any problems with the reverse chronological format, use it instead. If you still like the idea of the functional format, you may want to make it more acceptable by combining it with the chronological format and creating a combination resume.

Functional Resume Format

Name

Address

City, State Zip Code

Telephone number

Email address

Professional Summary Briefly state your relevant work experience and skills. Think of it as a short version of an elevator pitch.

Summary of Qualifications State briefly your achievements, the range of your experience, and the environments in which you have worked.

Relevant Skills List any specific skills and abilities that are relevant to the job for which you are applying. Group together by related areas.

Employment List job title, employer, location, dates of employment

Education List most recent first. State name of educational institution attended, degree received, major field of study, minor, or certificate awarded.

An example of a functional resume follows on the next page.

Margo Keller
3915 Derby Street
Berkeley, California 94705
(415) 390-6554
margok@hotmail.com

Professional Summary: Typing and editing specialist with experience in technical writing, advising, teaching, and running a business.

Summary of Qualifications

- Proven ability to research, identify, and document valuable resources
- Skilled and creative writer, experience in developing training materials
- Able to initiate, organize and successfully follow through on projects

Relevant Skills & Experience

Networking & Resources

- Assembled library of materials and reports on cooperative living/working projects nation wide; used this to advise callers on how to make connections and find data
- Developed an improved filing system for extensive archives of design materials for LaRock Engineering

Advising & Teaching

- Advised hundreds of callers on how to conduct effective housing research and handle related issues, as primary local resource person in collective living field
- Taught classes in Beginning Typing and Office Practice. Designed and taught a six-session workshop, "Field Visits Bay Area Collective Homes."

Editing & Writing

- Initiated and produced 12-20 page monthly newsletter for 24 consecutive issues
- Edited 100-page book on women's self-led career groups, collaborating with author

Employment History

1988-present **Self-employed**, typing/editing service, Keller Business Service, Berkeley, CA

1985-1988 **Technical Writer**, LaRock Engineers, San Francisco, CA

1984-1985 **Travel and independent study**

Education: State University of New York at Albany, 1977-78, Sociology

Resume Writing Tips

Keep it concise

Employers have lots to do, so don't make the mistake of asking them to read through an unnecessarily long resume. A long, wordy resume will put off someone who is already short on time. **Resumes should be one page, if possible, and two if absolutely necessary to describe relevant work experience.** A two-page resume is no advantage if it's full of information that isn't reasonably applicable to the position you're applying for. Use the space only if you need it to fully disclose your accomplishments. According to Avivo's Business Partner Council most employers only want up to 10 years of previous experience unless it's relevant to the position then include additional years past that.

Make your words count

Your use of language is extremely important; you need to sell yourself to an employer quickly and efficiently. Address your potential employer's needs with a clearly written, compelling resume.

- Avoid large paragraphs (over six or seven lines). Resumes are often scanned by hiring managers. If you provide small, digestible pieces of information you stand a better chance of having your resume actually read.
- Use action verbs such as "developed," "managed," and "designed" to emphasize your accomplishments. When describing your prior job experience and duties, use active language. Instead of starting your sentence with a noun, start with an active, descriptive, impressive verb.
- For example: "Customer Service Representative. Assisted customers with product selection, trained and supervised 15 new employees, organized special promotional events."
- Don't use declarative sentences like "I developed the..." or "I assisted in..."; leave out the "I."

- Numbers. Always include numbers, percentages, and dollar amounts in your job descriptions to back up your achievements. How many people did you supervise? How much money did you raise? How many wild bears did you feed during your stint at the zoo? How much did party favor sales increase under your direction? This approach immediately highlights the kind of impact you've made. Only use the numbers if they are significant to the job. "Supervised 2 staff members" may not be worth mentioning.
- Avoid passive constructions, such as "was responsible for managing." It's not only more efficient to say "**Managed**," it's stronger and more active.

Make the most of your experience

Potential employers need to know what you have accomplished to have an idea of what you can do for them.

- Don't be vague. Describe things that can be measured objectively. Telling someone that you "improved warehouse efficiency" doesn't say much. Telling them that you "cut requisition costs by 20%, saving the company \$3800 for the fiscal year" does. Employers will feel more comfortable hiring you if they can verify your accomplishments.
- Be honest. There is a difference between making the most of your experience and exaggerating or falsifying it. **A falsified resume can be easily spotted by an employer** (if not immediately then during the interview process), and if it doesn't prevent you from getting the job, it can cost you the job later on.

Don't neglect appearance

Your resume is the first impression you'll make on a potential employer, and a successful resume depends on more than what you say; how you present it also makes a difference.

- Check your resume for proper grammar and correct spelling—evidence of good communication skills and attention to detail. Nothing can ruin your chances of getting a job faster than submitting a resume filled with (easily preventable) mistakes.

- Make your resume easy on the eyes.
 - Use normal margins (1" on the top and bottom, 1.25" on the sides)
 - Do not cram your text onto the page
 - Allow for some breathing room between the different sections.
 - Avoid unusual or exotic font styles
 - Use simple fonts with a professional look, whether you e-mail, fax, or mail your resume to prospective employers,
 - Keep font plain and easy to read.
- Use minimal and purposeful formatting. Simple bullets will best separate your duties and skills; use bolding and italics sparingly. Formatting should highlight your accomplishments, not draw attention away from them. Less, in this case, is definitely more.
- If you need to copy your resume, make sure your copies are clean and clear. Even the best looking resume can be ruined by a poor copier. Use only copiers maintained for professional copying.

Target – Target – Target

Emphasize what you can do for an employer. Be specific. **If you are going after more than one job opening, customize your resume accordingly.** It helps to tailor your resume for a specific position. Remember to only include the experience that is relevant to the job.

Eliminate superfluous details

Unnecessary details can take up a lot of valuable space on your resume.

- Do not mention personal characteristics such as age, height, and marital status. This is information that employers may not legally solicit from you, and they would probably be more comfortable if you don't volunteer it yourself.

- List your hobbies and interests only if you can relate them to the position you're applying for. If you need room to describe your work experience, avoid this altogether.
- In some resumes books, it is said to leave off the phrase, "References Available Upon Request"; however, some suggest that you include it, for it signifies the end of your resume. Most employers assume you have references they may contact, and will request them if there's a need to do so, usually at the job interview.
- Include a summary statement on your resume. Be specific. Vague statements, such as "Looking to utilize my marketing skills" or "seeking a rewarding position" add little and may in fact make you appear insincere. This should be reviewed and written to fit each particular position (or something along these lines). Most employers say an objective on your resume is unnecessary since they already know you want the job or saw it in your cover letter. The summary should be a brief version of your elevator speech, something to grab the attention of the reader and say something about the “person behind the paper”.