



Office of Career Services

Resume Basics

The purpose of a resume is to grab the employer's interest so that they will ask you for an interview. Therefore, it is paramount that your resume be absolutely the best that it can be. Like it or not, most resumes will only get a quick 30-second scan by a potential employer before they are sorted into "yes" or "maybe" stacks for later consideration. During that first quick scan, employers will look for reasons to quickly screen out candidates. Applicants who best communicate how their experience, education, and skills are related to the available position are more likely to get an interview. Resumes with errors, typos, and unclear or ineffective descriptions will subject their owners to the "no thanks" category.

To prepare an effective resume, job seekers must thoroughly analyze their background and experiences, and communicate information in an articulate and concise manner. Begin by listing information related to your education, work and internship experiences, campus activities, volunteerism, leadership experience, and special interests. List your duties, accomplishments or tasks for each experience and consider the following questions to begin shaping the written detail:

- What did you learn at that job that you could do for the next employer?
- What did you accomplish?
- Can you quantify the results of your work? (i.e. number of customers served, percentage increase in sales, etc.)
- Did you utilize or develop any technical skills?
- Did you make specific decisions or recommendations?
- Did you operate any equipment?
- Did you communicate with customers, co-workers, etc.? If so, how -- in writing, telephone, by e-mail and so on?
- Were you a part of a team to complete certain tasks?
- Did you supervise or train other workers?

Three Basic Types of Resumes

For most new college graduates, a chronological resume style is recommended. This is the easiest resume to develop and is organized in reverse

chronological order with the most recent experience first.

Another type of resume is the functional resume centered on a listing of skills related to desired experience. This type of resume is only used by non-traditional candidates and can be unpopular with employers because employment dates are inconspicuous or omitted.

The combination resume allows use of the reverse chronological structure of the chronological resume with detailed functional descriptions and is widely used in today's job market.

Resume Heading Information

Personal Data: Your name should be the largest text on the page. Be sure to include accurate contact information including address, phone number and e-mail address. You may include both a current college address and permanent address with respective phone numbers.

Objective: This statement should be as specific as possible and customized to each employer that you contact. If you are looking for summer employment or an internship, include that information in your statement.

Examples:

Objective: An accounting internship with XYZ Company for Summer 2008

Objective: Software Engineer position with ComCo, Incorporated

Objective: Elementary Education Teaching Position

Education: Begin with the most recent degree including your major, followed by the name of the institution and its city and state. The month and year of graduation should also be listed. If your major or overall GPA is 3.0 or above (on a 4.0 scale), you may wish to include this information. GPA information is usually only shown for the first job search after college and is generally dropped from the resume after that.

You may wish to include relevant coursework, senior research projects, independent studies, study abroad, publications or honors in the

education section. Additionally you may include some reference to your contribution to college expenses through part time or summer employment and scholarships.

Employment/Work Experience/Experience:

Listing your most recent experience first, you may include both paid and non-paid significant experiences. Include the job title, employer, location and dates of employment followed by a powerful description of your accomplishments and responsibilities. Keep your format consistent with each individual experience throughout the section. Use strong effective action verbs to describe your skills and accomplishments (see the Action Verbs list in this guide) and numbers or percentages when possible, for things such as size of budget, number of people supervised, etc.

Internships

Internship experience can be a powerful addition to your resume. It may appear in the Experience section, the Education section, or in a separate "Internship Experience" section. Just as with other work experience, descriptions should use effective action verbs and focus on your skills and accomplishments. Internship experience related to one's current career objective should be shown near the top of the page.

Computer Skills and other Special Skills

We recommend that all current students and recent Northwest grads indicate their experience with computers on their resume. Typically, this may be just a listing of the various software programs to which you are accustomed. Don't forget special programs related to your major, and e-mail and Internet browsers. Candidates from some areas such as computer science and journalism will generally develop this section further detailing their knowledge of software, hardware, operating systems, computer languages, and related peripherals.

If you have other special knowledge such as American Sign Language, Spanish, French, or other language skills, be sure to include that information on your resume. Some candidates may have a special section for "Certifications" that might include such things as CPR, Teaching Licenses, Computer Software Certificates, Certified Nurses Aide, and many others.

Co-Curricular Activities

A listing of your activities during your college years shows an employer that you are a well-rounded person who is active in the community. If you held

an elected or appointed position you should include the title, description of responsibilities, accomplishments and dates. If the activity or experience is significant and relevant to your career goals, you may wish to list it under "Experience" or "Related Experience".

What about "References"?

References should be listed on a separate page from your resume. Include your name and contact information at the top of the page to duplicate the heading on your resume. Three to five references are generally sufficient. An example "Reference" page is included in this packet.

Additional Sample Resume Headings

Resume Headings should be customized to best convey the information about you, your background, and goals. The following list will provide additional options that may meet your needs.

Career Objective (optional):

Objective	Professional Objective
Career Objective	Job Objective

Education:

Education	Areas of Knowledge
Educational Background	Competency Areas
Relevant Coursework	Competencies and Skills
Professional Preparation	Formal Training
Technical Knowledge	Laboratory Skills
Research Experience	Special Skills

Work and Internship Experience:

Work History	Experience
Related Work Experience	Employment Contributions
Teaching Experiences	Employment Experience
Practicum/Internships	Volunteer Experience

Achievements or Accomplishments:

Accomplishments	Selected Accomplishments
Academic Awards	Professional Contributions
Honors	Honors and Awards
Achievements Highlights	Honors and Activities

Participation in Campus Activities:

Activities	College Activities
Campus Involvement	Campus Activities
Leadership	Memberships
Extra-Curricular Activities	Athletics
University and Community Activities	

Other Section Headings Might Include:

Military Training	Military Experience
Volunteer Work Experience	Computer Skills
Professional Memberships	Affiliations
Foreign Languages	Foreign Travel
Interests and Hobbies	

Layout and Printing

As you prepare the final draft of your resume, keep in mind that most new college graduate resumes do not extend beyond one page. Considerable full-time work experience or advanced degrees may warrant an additional page. If you are unsure about what and what not to include on your resume, see a Career Service staff person for advice.

Boldface type, underlining, and capitals can bring attention to important headings and information on your resume. However, be sure these features enhance your resume information without overwhelming the reader's eyes. Mixing too many typestyles, lines, and bullets can result in a cluttered appearance.

Choose a high-quality paper for your new resume. White, off-white, or light gray are appropriate in all cases. Additional colors and small tasteful graphic designs may be acceptable in such creative fields as advertising, art, and public relations. Use the same paper and heading for cover letters and matching envelopes for a totally professional package.

Resume Cautions

This section has been designed to help you avoid the most common resume errors.

Placement gives authority to your education. The most recent degree is listed, followed by previously earned degrees (Associates of Arts). List the full name of the degree before the institution name. The location of the school (city and state) should follow the name.

Incorrect:

Northwest Missouri State University
Bachelor of

Correct:

Bachelor of
Northwest Missouri State University

If a candidate is pursuing a double major, we recommend one of the following:

Examples:

Bachelor of Science, Double Major: Marketing & Management
Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO
Or

Bachelor of Science, Double Major in Psychology and Sociology
Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO

Vertically aligned bullets give equal

weight/value to all items. In the example below, the degree name and institution name are more *important than the other items.*

Incorrect:

- ❑ Northwest Missouri State University
- ❑ Bachelor of
- ❑ Major GPA
- ❑ Relevant coursework

Correct:

Bachelor of Science in
Northwest Missouri State University

- ❑ Major GPA
- ❑ Relevant Coursework

Choose and use one format consistently for representation of states, dates and other repeated information. When there are changes in these items throughout a resume, it may appear as an error.

MO, Mo., Missouri
08/07 – 09/09
August 2007 – September 2009

Graphics, shadowed boxes and lines can add uniqueness and individuality to your resume, but they should never look more predominant than the text. Give consideration to how well these items will photocopy within the potential employers company and how well they will communicate electronically to the reader's computer and software.

Right alignment will give a nice finished look to the right margin of the resume as opposed to the often seen ragged edge. Dates can be placed so that they end at the right margin.

Present Tense and Past Tense Verbs – This is probably one of the most common errors in resume writing. When describing jobs, internships, or other activities that you are involved in at the present time, use present tense verbs (coordinate, install, assist). As you describe experiences from your past, use past tense verbs (coordinated, installed, assisted).

Powerful descriptions of experience are crucial!!!! The heart of any resume is the text that describes background, abilities, skills, and experiences. Use complex phrases to relate the *quality* and *quantity* of experience in a meaningful way. Take a look at the following list of action verbs that can add impact to your message and insert key words that are associated with your profession or job function. Key words are generally nouns, acronyms, or short phrases that are the "buzz"

words for an industry or job. They communicate a message with just a few words. Consult a Thesaurus or dictionary; some of the resume books in Career Services' resource room, and the list below for additional "power" words.

ACTION VERBS

Analyzed:

Assessed... Clarified... Compared... Critiqued...
Determined... Evaluated... Examined... Identified...
Interviewed... Investigated... Maintained... Monitored ...
Observed... Reviewed...

Assisted:

Advised... Collaborated... Contributed... Consulted...
Cooperated... Facilitated... Participated...

Created/Developed:

Acted... Adapted... Authored... Built... Clarified...
Composed... Conceived... Corrected... Designed...
Devised... Established... Expanded... Formulated...
Generated... Improved... Initiated... Integrated...
Introduced... Modified... Originated... Performed...
Planned... Prioritized... Promoted... Proposed...
Reduced...

Improved/Increased:

Achieved... Acquired... Advanced... Assured... Bolstered...
Encouraged... Expanded... Motivated... Overcame...
Provided... Strengthened... Upgraded...

Counseling/Instructed/Learned:

Advised... Advocated... Aided... Applied... Assessed...
Charged... Coached... Communicated... Consulted...
Coordinated... Demonstrated... Educated... Enabled...
Encouraged... Established... Explained... Fostered...
Guided...

Organized:

Arranged... Assembled... Budgeted... Built... Clarified...
Compiled... Coordinated... Developed... Located...
Maintained... Obtained... Planned... Prepared...
Prioritized... Reorganized... Reviewed... Scheduled...
Updated

Supervised/Managed:

Administered... Allocated... Assigned... Authorized...
Coached... Consulted... Controlled... Coordinated...
Delegated... Directed... Distributed... Enforced...
Evaluated... Expedited... Facilitated... Implemented...
Led... Managed... Monitored... Motivated...

Key Words

Customer loyalty... Project management... Webcasting...
Crisis communications... Cost reduction... Client
communications... Community outreach... Leadership
training... Media relations... Special events management...
Public relations... Consumer credit... Customer
satisfaction... Order processing... Cash management...
Accounts payable... Organizational development... Total
quality management... Long-term care... Quality of care...
Wellness programs... Banquet operations... Guest
satisfaction... Menu planning, ADA – Americans with
Disabilities Act... College recruitment employee relations...
Safety training... Behavior management... Behavior
modification... Case work... Client advocacy... Human
services... Outpatient services... Program development...

Client/server architecture... Database administration...
Database design... End user support... Firewall... Help
desk... Technology needs assessment... Global
expansion... Automated manufacturing... Continuous
improvement... Cross-functional teams... Inventory
control... Just-in-Time... Physical inventory... Shipping and
receiving operation... Broadcast media... Creative
services... Event management... Procurement...
Purchasing... Warehousing... Grounds maintenance...
Preventive maintenance... In-store promotions... Retail
sales... Direct sales... Sales presentation... Classroom
management... Curriculum development... Course
design... Residential life... Student services...

The Electronic Resume

For many of today's jobs, at least some part of the job search will be completed through the Internet. As a result, it is important to prepare several versions of your resume.

The **Print Version** of your resume is typically handed to someone at a career event or mailed through the postal service. Job search experts recommend that you replicate this well-written, well-prepared resume into *three* other versions or formats and critique it for **keywords**. Employers use electronic databases to categorize and sort resumes according to these keywords.

A **Plain Text Version** can be posted online in resume databases or copied and pasted into an online form on an employer's Web site. This version should be an ASCII copy of the original.

An **E-mail version**, also an ASCII copy or plain text type, is specifically formatted for the length of line restrictions of today's e-mail.

The third electronic resume is a **Scannable Version**. Some employers use scanning technology to store resumes in a database. The employers can then search the database for qualified candidates by scanning for words that match their positions. However, scanning technology can make mistakes! The Optical Character Recognition software can make mistakes in translating the characters within your resume. As a result, it is not used extensively unless an employer has to deal with a massive amount of paper resumes. **If possible, send an e-mail resume instead.** When you must send a scannable paper resume, use common and clear fonts in sizes from 10 to 14. Do not use italics, underlining, or bolding and keep your formatting simple without borders, bullets, shaded bars, boxes or lines. Be sure to use plain white paper for the most accurate scanning.

Why bother with these – why not just type information into the boxes on their Web site or send a Word attachment? Consider this advice:

1. Most online database or proprietary systems do not let you spell-check. Preparing your resume in advance using your own word processing program lets you double check all spelling and revise your resume as needed.
2. These online systems force you to use their format, which could be to your disadvantage.
3. They don't allow you to save your work and use the same text over again which means that you have to repeat the entire process for every company that you investigate during your job search.

Preparing these other types of resumes at the beginning of your job search will save you a great deal of time later.

What about HTML resumes?

This version can be highly useable, but start with a basic HTML version of your resume. Too many graphics, audio files and extra effects can slow down load time. The recipient may tire of waiting. If you decide to add an HTML version to your job search, post it in a location separate from your personal web site.

What about PDF resumes?

PDF resumes are actually a digital image or photograph of your resume. It can be posted on the Web, e-mailed, viewed, or searched, but it is readable only if the recipient has the PDF viewer (Acrobat Reader). Although the viewing software is free and widely distributed, not all computer users are familiar with it. Current search functions of a PDF file are limited to looking at only one keyword at a time which is a disadvantage to database users. Finally, it requires the reader to take an additional step to open and view the resume.

For more details and step-by-step procedures on electronic resumes, refer to the following Web sites:

Riley Guide:

<http://www.rileyguide.com/eresume.html>

Tips for Electronic Resumes:

[http://www.jobweb.com/resources/library/Interviews
Resumes/Tips_for_Electronic_145_01.htm](http://www.jobweb.com/resources/library/Interviews_Resumes/Tips_for_Electronic_145_01.htm)

Learn by Example

Take a look at the following examples to get more ideas for the organization and format of your resume.

Once you have typed a rough draft, the Career Services staff is available to provide feedback and further assistance through our free resume critique service.

Advice from Employers

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Job Outlook 2007 survey asked employers, "How can a candidate gain an advantage over others?" Employers replied: 1) research employers before you apply 2) bring internship experience to the table and 3) be prepared for interviews. They recommend that candidates "do their homework", practice interview skills, have an error-free resume that clearly articulates your skills, and take advantage of the resources provided on campus by your career services office.

Employers rate the importance of candidate qualities/skills

(5-point scale, where 5=extremely important and 1=not important)

Communication skills (verbal & written)	4.7
Honesty/integrity	4.7
Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)	4.5
Motivation/initiative	4.5
Strong work ethic	4.5
Teamwork skills (works well with others)	4.5
Computer skills	4.4
Analytical skills	4.3
Flexibility/adaptability	4.3
Detail-oriented	4.2
Organizational skills	4.0
Leadership skills	4.0
Self-confidence	4.0
Friendly/outgoing personality	3.8
Tactfulness	3.8
Well mannered/polite	3.8
Creativity	3.6
GPA (3.0 or better)	3.6
Entrepreneurial skills/risk-taker	3.2
Sense of humor	3.2
Bilingual skills	2.3

Source: Job Outlook 2007, NACE