

Rules of resumes

There are very few rules in resume writing. They are:

- Include only relevant info
- Do not have any spelling errors or other typos
- Be 100% truthful

The rest is personal preference with the help of career advisors, professors, mentors, and other people who know a lot about resumes or your field. Ultimately, it needs to come down to what you want. All we can give you is suggestions based on our experience, such as:

- Use active verbs to begin your descriptive lines
- Do not use personal pronouns (I, me, my)
- Do not use unnecessary punctuation (i.e. periods at the end of descriptive lines, colons at the end of headings, parentheses around dates, underlining text)
- Use bullet points (instead of a paragraph) for your descriptive lines to make them easier to read (see how nice it looks?)
- Make sure your format (the way your resume is organized) is consistent and flawless as this will make it easy to read
- Do not include high school stuff (of course there are exceptions for really relevant experience, or if you are a freshman, sophomore, or maybe junior in college)
- If you choose to include a “Relevant Coursework” section, make sure to only list courses that will show breadth (not obvious from the name of your major) or depth (specialized study in one area)
- Make it one page long - unless, you have extensive work experience, you have a post-bachelors degree (Masters, PhD), or can otherwise “prove” that you need it. If you do have a second page, make sure it is a full page and have just your name and the page number at the top right (not all of your contact info repeated again)
- Take care when including experience in areas that may be controversial to some people, such as religion, politics, sexual orientation, etc. You can include it, disguise it, or omit it. Just promise us you will think about it first. Please see a career advisor to talk about this if you are concerned about how to describe this kind of experience
- Use caution with templates. We actually recommend that you don't use them at all. Templates tend to be pretty inflexible if you want to change anything later – which you will!! Also, there are not many templates to choose from and employers get sick of looking at the same thing over and over. Besides, we want your resume to stand out, not look like all the rest!
- Note that these are all suggestions relevant to resume formats for jobs in the United States! For information on resume standards in other countries, see a career advisor to get access to the GoInGlobal software or other resources

Nevers

These are some categories that shouldn't be included on a resume (in the United States, for most job fields)

- Height, weight, age, date of birth, place of birth, marital status, sex, race, health, and social security number (can be included on some International Resumes – check standards by country first!)
- Reasons for leaving previous job(s), salaries at previous jobs
- Picture of yourself – or a picture of any kind, for that matter!
- Salary Information (This can go in a cover letter if, and only if, the employer asks for this information)
- References (These go on a separate page)
- The title “Resume”

A word about appearance

Appearance is critical. Go to a copy shop or use a high-quality laser printer to duplicate your resume. Use a good quality bond paper in a neutral color (such as white, off-white, or ivory). Avoid blue, gray, textured or speckled paper since they do not fax or scan or copy well. Lastly, remember to purchase matching blank sheets for your accompanying cover letter and reference list. If you want to be super fancy, mail these materials in an envelope large enough so you don't have to fold them.

Targeting your resume

Make sure you are carefully reviewing your resume each time you give it away. Update your objective, add information the employer specifically asked for, take out irrelevant information, and organize your sections so the most important information for that job is at the top (or right under Education). This will not take long and can have a lot of impact!

The resume, section by section

Your name and contact information

This section includes your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address. It is preferable to list only one set of contact information. If this is not possible, consider adding the dates you are at each address and make sure you identify Present or Permanent. You should still have only one e-mail address and phone number listed. Make sure you also go ahead and check that voicemail message to make sure it is employer-ready! Same for e-mail address – nothing silly or cute.

Career Objective

It is optional to include a Career Objective on your resume. See a career advisor for pros and cons and what may work best for your situation! Your Career Objective should be contained in one or two concise phrases, and should be as targeted as possible.

Your career objective informs the potential employer of:

- the Position that you would like to apply for
- the Industry that you would like to work in *and/or*
- the Skills which you would have to offer or would like them to focus on

Furthermore, a typical career objective can also cover: Functional area of interest and/or specific job title (sales, research, copy writing...), Type of organization (social service agency, financial institution...)

Samples:

- Interested in a career in media or market research with a large agency. Particular focus on corporate communications
- Seeking position as a programmer or systems analyst with an interest in marketing and finance applications
- Pursuing a personnel assistant post in a public service organization, utilizing communication and leadership skills

Education section

- Start with your university, then degree (ex. Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science) and when receiving degree, and then major, certificates, GPA, etc...
- If your GPA is 3.0 or above, you probably will want to include it. Make sure you include "/4.0" so they know the scale. You can list just Cumulative or Cumulative and Major if your major GPA is higher
- You do not need to list your high school in this section (or anywhere on your resume)
- You can also list relevant coursework, honors and academic awards, and study abroad in this section

Experience sections

- To make your resume really stand out, consider grouping similar experiences under specific section headings. Consider something like "Media-Related Experience" and "Leadership and Service Experience" instead of "Work Experience" and "Volunteer Experience". You can also combine paid and unpaid positions. For that matter, you can combine jobs, internships, student organizations, major class projects, volunteer opportunities...
- Experience should be listed in reverse chronological order within each section (most recent listed first)
- For each experience list: your position title, name of group or organization, the location (City, ST or City, Country), dates of employment (Month and Year started and ended) and use a consistent order for all on your resume
- You can then go on to write descriptive lines. These are the bulleted statements that describe what you did and what skills you used, learned, or developed
- These descriptive lines can answer the questions: How did you do X? Why did you do X? What resulted?

Additional sections

Special Skills sections can highlight your strengths not readily obvious from other areas of your resume. These might include language(s) and/or computer skills. Computer Skills can be a section by itself if you are proficient with a number of applications. It is usually helpful to include your computer skills somewhere in the resume (if more than just Word and Excel). Other section headings might include: Leadership Activities; Community Service; Memberships (student clubs or organizations); Professional Affiliations (student chapters of professional organizations or societies); and Interests (hobbies and leisure activities).

References

Your reference list belongs on a separate sheet of paper. Only include references with your resume and cover letter at the employer's request. When you have a job interview be sure you bring your list of references with you.

Chris Badger

1234 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53706, 608-555-1234, ccbadger@uwalumni.com

Objective

Seeking full-time position in a non-profit organization where I can use my excellent communication and organization skills

Education

University of Wisconsin – Madison

Bachelor of Arts, May 2008

Double Major: Psychology and Spanish

Certificate: Business

GPA: 3.2/4.0, Psychology GPA: 3.4/4.0, Spanish GPA: 3.5/4.0

Relevant Coursework:

Marketing

Human Resources

Public Speaking

Communication and Mass Media

Honors:

Dean's List (2 semesters)

Chancellor's Scholar

Leadership and Communication Experience

Badger Herald

Communications Intern

Reporter

University of Wisconsin - Madison

September 2007-Present

September 2005-Present

- Gained valuable media knowledge while honing writing and interviewing skills, writing 2 feature stories per week
- Interacted effectively with fellow staff members and community members, gaining access to exclusive stories

Letters & Science Career Services

Advising Intern

University of Wisconsin - Madison

September-December 2006

- Effectively worked with professional staff to create new resources for the office, including information on negotiating job offers, different styles of interviewing, and guides for choosing graduate school programs
- Met one-on-one with students to discuss and review their resumes

Noodles & Company

Assistant Manager

Madison, WI

May 2005-December 2006

- Arranged scheduling for staff of 35 involving great attention to detail and mediation of conflicting requests
- Entrusted with interviewing, hiring, training, and evaluation of staff, requiring excellent interpersonal communication skills

Cross-Cultural Experience

Atwood Community Center, Volunteer, Madison, WI

August-December 2006, May 2007-Present

- Coordinated events for local children on celebrating cultures and led workshops on learning about their own culture

Freelance Spanish Tutor, Madison, WI

May-August 2006, 2007

- Worked with 4 high school students to prepare them for international study trips

University Study Abroad, Selected Participant, Oaxaca, Mexico

January-May 2007

Skills

Computer: Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint (proficient), Microsoft Access, Page Maker (familiar)

Languages: Spanish (proficient), French (conversational)

Ways to save space

If you need to save space to fit your resume onto one (or two) pages, consider looking at the following:

- Margins (they can be as small as .6 or so without looking silly)
- Font size (use the same font style throughout the resume with varying sizes for headings, descriptive lines. A 10 or 11-point font is appropriate for descriptive lines, but do not go smaller than 10 or it will be too hard to read)
- Only include most relevant information – spend the most space on the most relevant and less space on the least relevant
- Eliminate redundant lines. If you managed a database in one position, you don't have to repeat it for another position unless it is significantly different and relevant

Helpful hints

As you create, write and revise your resume detailing the experiences you've had, be sure not to overlook unique and individual strengths, accomplishments, skills, knowledge utilized and the results of these efforts. Ask yourself the following questions:

What do you uniquely contribute to any project/class/job?

If your supervisors were going to give you a recommendation what would they say? When you leave a job, what will they miss about you? What projects/tasks were often given to you because you were so good at them? What sets you apart from every other candidate? The employer may know what a waiter/waitress usually does, what did you do above and beyond? Why hire you?

- Commended for creative ideas and ability to follow through
- Nominated for employee of the month based on exceptional customer relations

Did you initiate, develop or create anything new, and did it result in an improvement?

An effective way to frame your accomplishments is to state the situation, describe your action, and list the results. Employers can easily see how your skills transformed and improved the work environment:

- Initiated redesign of office management systems promoting easier access to information
- Reorganized the tool department in local lawn and garden store which improved overall sales by 15 %

Did you include results and quantify when possible?

Express the scope of your accomplishments in terms of numbers whenever possible, as this gives numerical proof of the strengths you've developed. Consider using strong adverbs: "Effectively campaigned..." "Successfully fundraised..."

- Visited eight local schools as invited lecturer raising awareness about environmental issues
- Raised over \$10,000 at annual fundraiser, increasing attendance and media coverage from previous years

What knowledge or expertise was required to do your task well?

It's not simply that you "worked in a law office" when you... Handled and disseminated sensitive information requiring confidentiality. "Answering the phone in your senator's office" might have been the task, but you skillfully... Responded to constituents requiring knowledge of senator's economic and social policies.

One last thing...

Schedule an appointment with a career advisor for an individual meeting to discuss your resume or other issues related to your career and future. Stop by our office on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 1-3pm for drop-in advising – no appointment necessary! You can also use our 48-hour written review service. Drop a resume (or cover letter) off at our office and an advisor will review it.

To find handouts on the following specific topics, please visit our website or come to our office!

Action Verbs	Descriptive lines	Section headings
More sample resumes	References page	Cover Letters