

Resume Writing Guide



Resume Writing Basics

Things to think about before writing your resume:

1. Research the organization and the position to find out what skills, values, and experiences are needed.
2. Brainstorm a list of primary jobs you have held, including any unpaid positions, that demonstrate you have the skills for the job. Also, list the skills you developed at each of these positions.
3. Make a list of three or four of your strongest skills or abilities that make you a good candidate for the job.
4. Think of several accomplishments from your past paid and unpaid experiences to illustrate each key skill.
5. Make a list of your training and education related to the job you want.

Resume Checklist

Heading

- Use a larger font for your name than the rest of the text.
- Include all contact information: full name, mailing address, phone, and email.
- Spell out all abbreviated words (e.g., Ave. = Avenue), with the exception of states.
- Include both a local and permanent address if moving during the application process.
- Use a professional sounding email address.

Objective

- Clearly define the type of job and organization, specifying skills as applicable.

Education

- Include all colleges attended for more than one year.
- Include the university name, degree, major, graduation date, and GPA (if above a 3.0).
- Spell out abbreviations, such as Bachelor of Arts.

Experience

- Document paid and unpaid experiences that relate directly to the job.
- Include organization name, position title, city and state, and dates of employment.
- Quantify experiences wherever possible.
- State your skills strongly with:
Action Verb + Details + Outcome/Result (see back page for details).
- List the most recent and relevant experience toward the top.
- Right-align dates.

Summary (optional section)

- Use three to five bullet points to highlight specific qualifications as defined in the job description.
- Provide concise, unique descriptions of your experiences.

Formatting

- Balance text and white space on the page.
- Ensure headings stand out from the rest of the text, making items easy to find.
- Adjust margins to make the text fit well on the page.
- Overall, ensure the resume is visually appealing.
- Avoid using a template.
- Keep the resume to one page, and fill the entire page.
- Ensure there are absolutely NO errors.
- Use 10 to 12 point font.

Additional Tips

- Proofread! Proofread! Proofread!
- Use high-quality resume paper with at least 25% cotton fiber in white, cream, gray, or light blue.
- Do not use personal pronouns such as "I" or "my."
- Use past tense to describe past jobs and present tense for current jobs.
- Consider leaving off "average" information, such as a not-so-great job experience or GPA of less than 3.0.
- Revise your resume frequently, preferably for every job to which you apply.
- Ensure your outgoing voice mail and cell phone messages sound professional.

Strategically Format Your Resume

The Three Types of Resumes

CHRONOLOGICAL

Describes your experience in reverse chronological order.

Pros

- + Emphasizes the position(s) you have held
- + Good to use if you:
 - ...have a steady work/volunteer history
 - ...want to stay in the same field
- + Can show progression of added responsibilities/promotions

Cons

- The reader's eye is most drawn to your position and then to your skills
- Does not work as much in your favor if you:
 - ...are making a career change
 - ...have gaps in your employment
 - ...have worked a variety of jobs

FUNCTIONAL

Describes skills, but does not include employment/volunteer/internship history.

NOTE: The functional resume format is not recommended for use by current students or recent graduates.

COMBINATION (Functional + Chronological)

Focuses on skills and provides a brief work/volunteer/internship history.

Pros

- + Highlights related skills and accounts for employment history
- + Provides the most flexibility
- + Good to use if you
 - ...are making a career shift
 - ...are transitioning from a student role to the professional world
 - ...have obtained skills through different jobs
 - ...have small gaps in your work history

Cons

- May be too long
- Not always a familiar format to employers

Other Commonly Used Resumes

ELECTRONIC/SCANNABLE

Many companies use electronic resumes to make their interview process more effective. A scannable resume can maximize your marketability and exposure, but you must know how to effectively format your resume and use keywords. Employers search scannable resumes by keywords. Keyword searches usually look for nouns, not action verbs. The company's job description explains what they're looking for and is a good source of the key words for you.

INTERNATIONAL

If you are searching for a job outside of the United States, you may have to change the format of your resume. Some countries require photos, handwritten cover letters, and a variety of formatting changes.

Sample Job Description

Children's Creative Learning Museum

POSITION: Manager of Exhibits and Production

REPORTS TO: Director of Exhibits

DATE AVAILABLE: Immediately

CLASSIFICATION: Full-time; exempt

DESCRIPTION: This position is responsible for assuring the best possible visitor experience by managing exhibit department work plans, budgets, communications, and by managing processes leading to production and/or installation of permanent exhibits, special exhibits and special projects. The Manager of Exhibits and Production is responsible for planning, organizing and managing details related to maintaining and improving permanent and traveling exhibits. The Manager maintains financial and budget summaries for exhibit maintenance and production budgets. The Manager oversees production of projects keeping them on schedule and within funding limits.

This position directly supervises the Museum's exhibit design and production staff, including 2 designers, one Exhibits Props Specialist and 3 to 5 Exhibit Fabricators and Technicians. On occasion this position also directly supervises the work of contractors and temporary help.

REQUIREMENTS: Bachelor's or Associate degree or equivalent training in the area of exhibit design, production, architecture, engineering or other related field. Minimum of 4 years experience supervisory experience. Demonstrated ability to work in a team-based environment in a cross-disciplinary manner. Strong verbal, written and graphic communication skills. Strong project management skills.

APPLICATIONS: Please send resume and cover letter to:

Human Resources
Children's Creative Learning Museum
1234 Discovery Rd.
Imagineville, MN 55555

No calls please.

Sample Chronological Resume

6542 THORNBERRY DRIVE • HASTINGS, MN 55423 • 651-807-5564 • MILL5932@UMN.EDU

MADELINE MILLER

OBJECTIVE

To obtain the position of Manager of Exhibits and Production at the Minnesota Children's Museum, which will utilize my degree in art history and previous experience working in a museum.

SUMMARY

- Experience in exhibit design
- Strong leadership and communication skills
- Ability to manage multiple large-scale projects at one time

EDUCATION

University of Minnesota
Bachelor of Arts, Art History
Minor in Monetary Economics
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Anticipated graduation date of May 2006

Dean's List Spring 2003, Spring 2004
GPA 3.63

MOVE THOSE DATES TO THE RIGHT!

Items on the top and left-hand sides stand out the most to employers.

Architecture, Sculpture, & Painting in Florence & Tuscany
Study abroad program focusing on art during the Renaissance
May 2005 – June 2005

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Curatorial Intern
Minneapolis Institute of Arts
Minneapolis, Minnesota
July 2005 – Present

- Organize and catalog 8 to 10 new acquisitions each week for curatorial committee review
- Correspond with artists regarding proposals by mail, phone, and email ensuring accuracy of details
- Design layout of new exhibits focusing on visually appealing, yet practical presentations

America Reads Volunteer Coordinator
YMCA – University of Minnesota Chapter
Minneapolis, Minnesota
September 2002 – Present

- Supervise 30 volunteers, ensuring active participation with designated elementary school
- Develop external communications marketing plan to inform community of outreach program
- Establish workshops for further development of volunteer members, making them more effective in the community; received consistently high ratings from participants

OTHER EXPERIENCE

Mentor Program Assistant
University of Minnesota, Career and Community Learning Center
Minneapolis, Minnesota
September 2003 – May 2005

- Scheduled and facilitated 6 Mentor Program orientations for groups of 25 students
- Coordinated registration process; assisted with mentor-student matching process for approximately 150 students
- Planned social events for program, including program Kickoff Dinner for 80 mentors and students

Wait Staff
The Spotted Cow Café
Hastings, Minnesota
May 1999 – December 2004

- Managed 6 to 8 tables at a time in restaurant while ensuring customer satisfaction
- Performed multiple tasks in stressful environment to meet needs of customers and other employees
- Served as primary trainer for new bussers and food runners; helped train 12 new servers

ACTIVITIES

Phi Beta Lambda, Chapter President
College of Liberal Arts Student Board
YMCA – America Reads Volunteer
September 2002 – Present
October 2003 – Present
November 2000 – Present

Sample Combination Resume

6542 Thornberry Drive
Hastings, MN 55423
651-807-5564
mill5932@umn.edu

MADELINE MILLER

OBJECTIVE

To obtain the position of Manager of Exhibits and Production at the Minnesota Children's Museum which will utilize my degree in art history and previous experience working in a museum.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Experience in exhibit design
- Strong leadership and communication skills
- Ability to manage multiple large-scale projects at one time

KEEP THE MOST RELEVANT INFORMATION AT THE TOP!

Be sure at least the first 2/3 of your resume contains information relevant to the position.

EDUCATION

University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Anticipated graduation date of May 2006

Bachelor of Arts, Art History
Minor in Monetary Economics

Dean's List Spring 2003, Spring 2004
GPA 3.63

Architecture, Sculpture, & Painting in Florence & Tuscany
Study abroad program focusing on art during the Renaissance
May 2005 – June 2005

RELEVANT SKILLS

Communication

- Prepared presentations for curatorial committee regarding proposed purchases, new acquisitions, and permanent art works
- Fact-checked and corresponded with artists regarding proposals by mail, phone, and email
- Cataloged and detailed permanent works of art in an Access database
- Developed community outreach brochures on local literacy program
- Designed layout of new art exhibits focusing on visually appealing yet practical, presentations

Supervisory Experience

- Supervised 30 volunteers for the YMCA "America Reads" program, ensuring their active participation with elementary schools
- Established "America Reads" volunteer-development workshops that provided valuable training and team-building skills; received consistently high ratings from participants
- Scheduled and facilitated 6 Mentor Program orientations for groups of 25 students
- Served as primary trainer for new bussers and food runners at café; helped train 12 servers

ACTIVITIES

Phi Beta Lambda, Chapter President
College of Liberal Arts Student Board
YMCA – America Reads Volunteer
September 2002 – Present
October 2003 – Present
November 2000 – Present

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Curatorial Intern
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN
July 2005 – Present

America Reads Volunteer Coordinator
YMCA – University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN
September 2002 – Present

Mentor Program Assistant
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN
September 2003 – May 2005

Wait Staff
The Spotted Cow Café, Hastings, MN
May 1999 – December 2004

Develop a One-in-a-Million Resume

Write strong skills statements to:

- Effectively communicate your experience.
- Demonstrate that you have what it takes to succeed.
- Make yourself stand out from other applicants.

Strong Skills Statement = Action Verb + Details + Outcome/Result

Action Word

- Identify what the employer's needs are. Look at the job description and organization research you have done. Identify skills you think would be necessary to be successful in this position.
- Use action words that address those needs (e.g., "developed", "coordinated", "analyzed").
- Choose words that demonstrate responsibility (e.g., instead of "made up," use "created" or "designed").
- Avoid paragraphs. Use bullet points to make it easier for someone to read and see the great qualities you have.
- Vary the words you choose. This helps make your abilities sound more diverse and adds some depth.

Details

- Ask yourself the following questions: Who/For Whom? What? Where? Why? How?
- Use numbers to quantify your skills and experience whenever possible (when it is to your benefit).
- Find the balance between too short and too long. Make the majority of bullet point statements one line.

Outcome/Results

- Expand your concept of "results" beyond a quantifiable figure. Numbers are not your only achievements.
- Ask... As a result of your action, what happened to... you? ...to your client? ...to others involved?

Examples

Before: Responsible for supervising employees

After: Organized the training and supervision of 10 employees, in addition to conducting annual reviews of employees to guarantee quality service.

Before: Answered phones

After: Responded to an average of 200 service inquiry phone calls per day in a helpful, professional, and courteous manner.

Before: Customer Relations

After: Interacted with a diverse group of customers, tailoring services to fit their needs.

Before: Waited on tables

After: Managed and maintained 8 tables, utilizing interpersonal skills to ensure customer satisfaction through prompt, cordial service.

Books about Specialized Resumes

- Acting:
Actors' Resumes, by Richard Devin
- Government Positions:
Federal Resume Guidebook, by Kathryn Kraemer Troutman
Ten Steps to a Federal Job, by Kathryn Kraemer Troutman
- International:
The Global Resume and CV Guide, by Mary Anne Thompson
- Scannable/Electronic:
Electronic Resumes, by Rebecca Smith
e Resumes, by Susan Britton Whitcomb and Pat Kendall

Additional Handouts Available at the Career and Community Learning Center (CCLC)

- Action Verbs for Resumes
- Computer Formatting Tips for Resumes
- References
- Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Scannable and Electronic Resumes
- International Resumes
- Cover Letter Writing
- Thank You Letter Guide

CCLC regularly offers a Resume and Cover Letter Workshop. Visit www.cclc.umn.edu/workshops today to register!
The CCLC Resource Room (135 Johnston Hall) also has a number of books on resume and cover letter writing.