



UNIVERSITY OF
CHARLESTON

CENTER FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT



GENERAL RESUMÉ GUIDE

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FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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*Resumes are relatively simple documents, but there are countless methods and approaches to writing them. It is hard to know what information to follow if you simply google "resume writing." Regardless of how they're constructed, resumes are primarily for the purpose of obtaining interviews¹. A resume will not get you the job. You will still have to interview with someone before getting an offer. Resumes are required by the vast majority of hiring managers. Occasionally, they may ask for an application in lieu of a resume, but the information you must provide in the application will be similar to what you would list on a resume. Most employers ask for a resume **and** application, and many require a cover letter and transcripts. More information about cover letters can be found in the Cover Letter Guide and cover letter videos on the portal.*

GETTING STARTED

There are thousands of resume templates available for download on the internet and MS Word, in addition to several resume-building software programs (both free and paid). Some of these templates are quite good, but there are plenty of bad ones out there, too. It can be difficult to discern the good from the bad, and all templates are notoriously difficult to edit. MS Word utilizes tables and preset column widths that may or may not suit your needs. You may need more or less sections than the resume templates offer, and it's very difficult to add new sections that match what is already on the template. All that said, it is just as easy to create a resume from scratch.

Here is how to get started:

1. Open a new MS Word document.
2. Click the style option called "No Spacing." MS Word defaults to "Normal," but the Normal style often adds spaces where you don't need spaces.
3. Begin typing! You can go back and format the resume later.

It's that easy to get started! Once you're finished, your made-from-scratch resume will look better than 95% of the templates out there. The next question is, what exactly should you include on your resume? We'll go over that next.

RESUME SECTIONS

There are a few sections that should be on all resumes, and several optional sections that you might want to include depending on your situation. Resumes should say what needs to be said but no more. In other words, be concise. Many resume experts will advise that you keep your resume to one page, but very few hiring managers will reject a two-page resume. Resumes longer than two pages, however, are a turn-off to some recruiters. Resumes are meant to showcase your best qualities, not all your qualities.

Note: There are exceptions to the rule about the length of resumes. Some employers specifically ask for resumes to be as comprehensive as possible regardless of length. This is the case with most US Government jobs. Some industries also prefer CVs (curriculum vitae) over resumes, such as higher education. CVs are like resumes but more comprehensive and usually include publications and presentations. See the guide on CVs for more information.

Required Sections:

1. HEADING

Your resume must have a heading with your name, phone number, address, and email address. You may include a link to your personal website or LinkedIn page if you have one, but that isn't absolutely necessary. Do not include multiple phone numbers, addresses, or emails. This only confuses the recruiters. Simply list your preferred number or email, and please use a professional email address. Humorous or overly informal email addresses will cause many recruiters to immediately disregard your resume.

2. PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Professional summaries are brief introductions that highlight your top skills and experience. They also serve to inform the reader what kind of job you're looking for. In the past, resumes contained brief "objective" statements, but summaries (or profiles as some people call them) have largely replaced objectives. See the guide on Writing Professional Summaries for more information.

3. EDUCATION

The education section is critical because nearly all jobs have a basic education requirement, even if only "high school degree or equivalent." In

¹ <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/564/01/>

3. EDUCATION (CONTINUED)

most cases, more education is better, but it is possible to be overqualified. For example, if you have a doctorate and are a college professor, but want to work at Macy's part-time in the summer for extra cash, you may not want to list your master degree or doctorate on the resume. You still may be required to disclose all your degrees on the formal application, but it is ok to leave off some of your educational information on your resume.

You should list your degrees in reverse chronological order (newest first) and include the name of the school, the official name of the degree, the school's location, and the date when you graduated or are scheduled to graduate. You only have to list your graduation month and year as opposed to the date when you started school and when you finished. Some recruiters may misinterpret a start and finish date next to your degree to mean that you did not finish. Unlike with employment, the length of time you were in school doesn't really matter. It only matters if you complete the degree.

You can also list your minor(s) if you have one and your GPA if it's high enough. If the GPA is under 3.0, don't list it. If it's 3.5 or above, list it. If it's between 3.0 and 3.5, you can probably list it, but keep in mind that 3.0-3.5 is average for many collegiate programs. In some graduate programs, grading is more generous than undergraduate programs and nearly everyone's GPA will be above 3.0. If your GPA is 3.1 but the average for your class is 3.5, don't list it. Remember to use your resume to bring out your very best qualifications.

If you were involved in extracurricular organizations, honor societies, or athletic teams in college, you can either list them in the education section or create a separate section in the resume for "Activities and Organizations." If your involvement was significant, you probably need a separate section. If you were only in one or two organizations and/or did not hold leadership roles, you can just list your experiences in bullet points under your school information.

Many people ask whether they should list their high school on the resume. You can list your high school if you're a freshman or sophomore in college and need material for your resume. Once you're a junior or senior, you can probably drop your high school. Some experts

3. EDUCATION (CONTINUED)

recommend leaving high school off completely once you reach college, but many college students struggle to find enough information to fill up a page. As long as you're an underclassman and need material to fill up a page, it is completely acceptable to list it.

4. EXPERIENCE

You should list your recent and relevant job experience on your resume. Job seekers often ask if they should include jobs on the resume that have nothing to do with the job to which they're applying. The answer is, "it depends." You need to avoid significant employment gaps unless you were in school at the time. For example, let's say Tom is applying to be a chemical engineer and his three most recent jobs were as follows:

- a. Junior Chemical Engineer- June 2015 to Present
- b. Team Member at McDonalds- October 2014 to June 2015
- c. Research Analyst at a Chemical Plant- August 2012 to October 2014

Tom is probably going to have to list his experience at McDonald's. Otherwise, he will have an eight-month gap on his resume, which will raise some questions from recruiters. His stint at McDonald's may raise questions, but at least Tom was able to demonstrate a consistent work history. Maybe his previous company went bankrupt suddenly and he had to find a job quickly, or maybe he moved due to family reasons and McDonald's was just a way to earn money while he looked for a better opportunity.

Note: There are stay-at-home parents and others who have extenuating circumstances who must take several months or years off work. If that's the case for you, that's ok but be prepared to explain the gap in your work history. Most employers are understanding of special circumstances where you must be a caretaker. That said, if you know that you will need to take an extended leave of absence, try to find something to fill the gap on your resume. Maybe you can find a work-from-home opportunity or even start your own business.

For those with significant work histories, the rule of thumb is to go back approximately 10 years for the resume. If you had a relevant job that was more than 10 years ago, it's ok to list. If you've switched jobs several times in a short period, you may not want to list your entire work history. It is not

to your benefit if you have a laundry list of jobs that have only lasted a few months each. You need to be able to demonstrate stability with an employer.

If you do have a long list of short-lived jobs, you will need to use your best judgement. Consider the following example:

- a. Pharmacy Tech at CVS- January 2017 to Present
- b. Stocker at Walmart- October 2016 to December 2016
- c. Cashier at Rite Aid- December 2015 to October 2016
- d. Cashier at Burger King- October 2015 to November 2015
- e. Server at Outback- June 2014 to November 2015

In this example, the applicant can probably leave off Burger King and Walmart since the employment periods were so short and were sandwiched between jobs that lasted longer.

Once you determine which jobs to list, you need to include job duties and accomplishments. You can accomplish this with bullet points or a brief summary under each job. It doesn't matter which format you use, but be sure to use the same format for all entries.

Optional Sections:

1. VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

List previous and current volunteer experiences in much the same way as you list professional experiences. You do not need to provide as much detail, but a brief description is helpful. Almost any volunteer experience is positive, but it should be fairly recent to be included. If you baked two dozen cookies for a Lions Club fundraiser eight years ago, that's probably not recent or significant enough to include. If you served a one-year term on the Lions Club fundraising committee two years ago, include it.

Note: Although internships can resemble volunteer experience in some situations, they should be included under work experience. There is no need to create a separate section called "Internship Experience." Even though internships are usually short-lived and tied to educational programs, they still qualify as work experience. Most internships are structured like temporary job assignments, with relevant training and normal job duties. In contrast, volunteer experience should have its own section. Volunteers literally donate their time and resources for charities, religious causes, civic projects, and philanthropic activities.

2. SKILLS SUMMARY

Skills summaries are useful if you have special abilities that can make you stand out for a particular job. A skills summary is a simple bulleted list of competencies, software programs, tools, or other abilities that you want to highlight. Don't list generic skills like "communication," "teamwork," "work ethic," or "detail-oriented." These are basic skills that nearly everyone should possess. Better examples would be "statistical analysis," "business valuation," "estate planning," "Adobe Photoshop," "database management," "Python," "EMR management," or "3D printer operation." Individuals in fields like healthcare, computer networking, and engineering often have a need for a skills summary.

3. CERTIFICATIONS

If you possess industry-specific or professional certifications that do not otherwise qualify under the education section, list them in a separate certifications section. Degree programs should go under education. Common certifications include Lean Six Sigma Belts, Basic Life Support (CPR), Google Analytics, Certified Financial Planner (CFP), CPA, Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP), Microsoft Office Specialist, A+/Network+/Security+, Cisco Certification (CCNA/CCENT/CCNP), and Automotive Service Excellence (ASE), just to name a few. List the expiration date for your license if it has one. If it's an uncommon certification, it is ok to include a brief description.

4. ORGANIZATIONS

If you belong to one or more professional or service organizations, you may create an organizations section. Include the name of the organization, your role (member, VP, President, etc), and the length of time you've been involved. You can also include a brief list of projects or duties, particularly if the organization is not widely known.

5. CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Students in healthcare fields like nursing, PA, Pharmacy, and radiology, participate in clinicals while they're in school. Clinicals aren't exactly internships, but they aren't traditional classes, either. Clinicals are closely supervised hands-on experiences that are required by licensing boards for students to graduate. There is debate about whether to include clinicals on resumes since all students must complete the same clinical rotations. However, it can be advantageous to list your clinical locations,

5. CLINICAL EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)

particularly if you completed clinicals at the facility where you're applying for a job. When listing clinicals, you don't need to provide much detail. Simply list the name of the hospital/clinic and the type of clinical (med/surg, pediatrics, geriatrics, etc.). You may list the name of the doctor/professional that supervised you if you had consistent communication with that person. You can list the dates of your clinicals, but if they were all the same length, just list the duration of the clinicals in the heading (e.g., "Clinical Rotations- Four weeks each").

FORMAT

Resumes should be concise, well-organized, balanced, and easy to read. Resumes are meant to be scanned quickly, and as such, resumes and CVs utilize a technique called "gapping." Gapping is a writing technique using short, action oriented sentences and phrases². There is no need to include sentence subjects because it is assumed that the resume writer is the subject. Instead of saying "I designed an electronic record-keeping system that saved my company an estimated 1500 man hours in 2017," say "Designed an electronic record-keeping system that saved 1500 man hours in 2017."

To guide the reader down the page, make headings bold and increase the font size. The regular text in resumes should be between 10 and 12 size font. Headings should be size 14-16. Your name should be the most prominent text on the resume with a font size of 22-26. You can also use italics and underlining to create separation between entries, but don't go too crazy. You can make the name of the school or employer bold and put the location in italics, but don't add a special feature to every single line. No matter how you decide to format each section, use the same formatting in all sections. This is called parallelism and it makes the resume look neat and organized³.

You can add further organization to the resume by adding lines or boxes. If you do a quick search for "resume templates" online, you'll see lots of professional-looking templates with lines between each section, or one thick line between the heading and the rest of the resume. You can create

the same effect without a template by using the "Shape" button under the "Insert" tab. Check out the instructional video on creating resumes for more information.

As a general rule, do not use color on resumes. It's acceptable in some industries, but many hiring managers associate color with being too casual or unprofessional. In the same manner, stay clear of scripts and special font types. They can also be perceived as unprofessional. Fonts like Calibri, Arial, Times New Roman, and Georgia are usually safe. If it's plain and easy to read, it's probably appropriate.

DO NOT include photographs on resumes. This seems counterintuitive because you should include a professional photo on LinkedIn, but it's simply not an accepted practice in most industries to put a photo on resumes (at least in the US)⁴. Like all trends, this is subject to change, but it isn't worth the risk at this point.

DO use bullet points! When reading a document quickly, bullet points are simply easier to read than paragraphs of text. While you don't need to put everything in bullet point format, you should definitely include them for lists, like skills or job duties.

Last but not least, proofread your resume. Then, have someone else proofread your resume. One spelling error probably won't disqualify you unless the pool of candidates is really strong. Multiple spelling errors, however, will send your resume to the trash can. Formatting errors can be just as bad. If you accidentally hit the tab button and pushed over a line of text, it will stand out like a sore thumb.

A sample resume is included for your reference. Check out the Resume Center on the UC portal for more samples. Go to:
"Student Resources">"Center for Career Development">"Resume Center."

² <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/641/1/>

³ <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/641/1/>

⁴ <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/should-you-include-a-photo-on-your-resume-2063295>

John Doe

1234 Number Street
Charleston, WV 25304
(304) 403-3043
johnnydoe@yahoo.com

The name is the most prominent text on the page and there is only one address, one number, and one email.

Professional Profile

Motivated political science student with experience working in state and county governments. Skilled in database management, legal research, and public relations. Creative leader with budget management skills and successful history of member recruitment. Seeking a position as a Congressional Intern.

This line adds a nice touch and separates the heading from the rest of the resume. It was drawn using the shape tool in Word.

Education

University of Charleston

Charleston, WV
Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, GPA 3.8

May 2018

The formatting used for the college is repeated throughout the resume- the first line is bold, the second is normal, and the third is italicized.

Experience

West Virginia Legislature Internship

Charleston, WV
Senate Intern

February 2018-Present

- Assist senators with research and prepare summaries for new legislation
- Develop correspondence and press releases for senate subcommittees
- Gather requests, complaints, and suggestions from constituents for specific senators

Clay County Courthouse

Clay, WV
County Commission Administrative Assistant

April 2015 - January 2018

- Provided outstanding customer service to residents who would call or visit our office
- Developed an electronic record-keeping system that led to a 10% increase in project completion for commissioners over previous year
- Managed spreadsheets and developed cost-benefit analyses for various economic proposals

Bullet points are used to make the job duties easy-to-read.

Activities and Organizations

Generation Charleston

Charleston, WV

Create events and programs for young professionals in the Charleston area

September 2017-Present

All the dates are right-aligned to give the resume balance.

UC Association for Talent Development

Charleston, WV

Deliver seminars and training for leadership development and organizational growth

August 2016 - Present

- President, August 2017 - Present
- VP of Membership, August 2016 - August 2017

The activities section isn't as detailed as the experience section, but leadership positions are highlighted.



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