

Resume Guidelines

NOTE: For all suggestions listed below, there are exceptions. **Consult your U of U Career Services counselor (801-581-6186) for advice specific to your situation.** These tips are targeted at recent bachelor's degree graduates; highly experienced professionals and graduate students have unique needs and should seek specialized assistance. Resumes are an art, not a science. Nothing is set in stone!

GENERAL TIPS

Length – In general, if you are an undergraduate student or recent graduate with modest experience, limit your resume to one page. Make it visually attractive and easy to read.

Paper – Use plain paper (white, light cream, or very pale gray). Do not use paper with visible flecks in it.

Header – Utilize the same header on all documents (resume, list of references, and cover letter). Include your name and your complete contact information. Be certain your e-mail address sounds professional (e.g., not “HotLips@whatever”). Do not use your work e-mail address.

Font – Use a standard font (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Garamond). Text size should be 10-12 points. Your name and section headings can be a bit larger. Fully utilize design tools, including **bolding**, • bullets, *italics* and ALL CAPITALS.

Order – In English, we read from top to bottom and from left to right. Readers lose interest as they read down and across the page. Thus, within each resume section, prioritize information in order of importance, with the most important text up high and to the left where it is most likely to be read.

Format – Formulate a series of bulleted statements rather than paragraphs:

- Maintain uniformity, such as either using periods or not using them after *all* bulleted statements.
- Leave plenty of white space.
- Use capital letters in text only when necessary; uppercase letters distract the eye.
- Avoid use of the first person (e.g., “I,” “me,” “my,” “mine”). For example, “Organized holiday party” instead of “I organized the holiday party.”

Abbreviations – Minimize use of abbreviations. However, “GPA,” “B.S.,” “BA,” and abbreviations of other well-known degrees are okay.

Accuracy – Check spelling, grammar, information, software brand names, etc. very carefully! Make sure all information is accurate and truthful. Keep past and present tenses in their rightful places. Finally, proofread your resume out loud to pick up any hidden errors.

POSSIBLE CATEGORIES TO INCLUDE IN YOUR RESUME

Objective

- An objective is optional. Sometimes it's best to state it just in your cover letter.
- If you are going to include an objective, use “employer language” by briefly stating your desired field and function (e.g., “sales representative in pharmaceutical industry”). Such an objective may be more credible than the precise job title and name of the company to which you're applying. Avoid lengthy, life-goal statements.

Summary of Qualifications / Highlights

- Optional, but you can list three or four highlights that demonstrate that you are an invaluable employee.
- State measurable results you have achieved. Avoid unsupported claims (e.g., “I am detail oriented”). Let your accomplishments speak for themselves (e.g., “Awarded national recognition for top auditor intern in region”).

Education

- List university degrees in reverse chronological order (most recent first).
- Include a graduation date, even if it is in the future.
- List degree and major (e.g., “B.A., English” or “BS Psychology”).
- Do not list high school graduation or activities unless you’re early in your college career.
- A category like “Related Course Work” can help compensate for lack of specific work experience – but don’t just list class titles, instead pick an area of study or project from the course to describe.

Experience

- List work experience in reverse chronological order (current job first). Include your job title, organization name, location, duration of employment (e.g., “May 2003 – Sept. 2004”).
- Focus on describing accomplishments and skills used on the job – not just your duties or what you spent the most time doing. For example, feature the fact that you wrote a training manual – even if you spent much of your time just filing insurance claims.
- When possible, begin each statement with an action verb that will define your contribution to the organization (e.g., “spearheaded” or “originated,” instead of “responsibilities included ...”).

Relevant Skills

- List three or four vital skill sets in which you are proficient (e.g., “Analysis,” “Communication,” “Computation”). Such a skills section might be a substitute for the “Experience” section discussed above.
- Provide three or four brief examples that demonstrate each skill. Use bullets.
- Quantify wherever possible: “Increased enrollment by 30%,” “Raised \$2,000+ for United Way.”
- Use a variety of action verbs like “excelled,” “counseled,” “prioritized.”
- Proficiency in specific computer software packages can be listed individually, if relevant.
- You need not be perfectly bilingual to list a language. “Fluent,” “proficient,” “working knowledge,” and “rudimentary knowledge” are all examples of ways to truthfully describe levels of expertise.

Volunteer Experience

- Volunteer experiences need not be long term to be relevant. They can demonstrate leadership and teaching skills. Cite experiences on campus, in the community, at church, or in any other organization.
- When listing an experience with a religious organization, use lay terminology rather than “church” lingo (e.g., “*Volunteer Church Representative* – Selected to supervise 20 fellow representatives” rather than “*LDS Missionary – Zone Leader*”).

Miscellaneous Sections

- Include miscellaneous sections, such as “Hobbies and Interests,” only if they directly relate to the position for which you are applying. For instance, a manufacturer of sporting equipment may be interested in your lacrosse prowess. A mortgage company probably won’t care.
- Do not include information that is illegal for the employer to ask about and that may negatively affect the employer’s decision to interview you (e.g., religious affiliation, marital status, citizenship/visa status).

References

- These should be listed on a separate sheet; they do not belong on the resume. Particularly, do not say on your resume “References available upon request” – it is understood and a waste of valuable space. Your same name/contact information (in the same fonts) that you have at the top of your resume should also appear at the top of the list of references. Below that header, title the page “References.”
- List 3-4 references, including employers, professors, and supervisors from your volunteer experiences.
- Be sure all references know you and will speak of you positively. Ask their permission in advance.
- Include each reference’s name, job title and/or work relationship to you, organization, address, phone number, e-mail address, and any other relevant contact information.
- Check on accuracy of contact information periodically and update as necessary.
- Do not submit references until the employer requests them.

FINAL NOTE: *The primary purpose of your resume is to secure an interview. Use it as a marketing tool – put your best foot forward. To view resume samples and a list of powerful action verbs to enhance your resume, visit the Career Services website at <http://careers.utah.edu> or contact your counselor at (801) 581-6186.*