

Create a Great Resume

This guide to writing resumes includes tips and hints, contents, headings, and layout ideas to think about while crafting your resume. There are no absolute requirements in the preparation of your resume, but there are generally accepted guidelines to follow. This information will get you started, but ultimately, your resume will be unique to you and reflect your unique background, experiences, and career goals. More resume information can be found on the Piper Center website.

Formatting and Style

- **LENGTH:** A one-page resume is considered ideal for college students and recent graduates and is typically the expectation of recruiters. There are only a few cases where a two-page resume is necessary—check with a Piper Center coach to find out if two pages are right for you.
- **FONT/LAYOUT:** Consistency is key overall, particularly with regards to font and layout. Times, Garamond and Helvetica are compact fonts and allow for more information to be presented on one page. Don't use a font size smaller than 10. Margins should not be less than .5
- **STYLE:** Use bold, bullets, italics, and underlines to make information easier to read and highlight key items but beware of looking cluttered or busy. Highlights and stylizations should be used consistently and sparingly.
- **PROOFREAD:** Your resume should be totally error free - no spelling, syntax, grammar, punctuation, or formatting errors. Keep in mind that the resume is an example of your writing and communication skills. One of the top reasons recruiters cite for removing a candidate from consideration is a resume with errors.
- **PDF:** Before submitting your resume, always convert the document to a PDF. You should review the PDF again to ensure formatting is correct before sending. Include your name in the file name.

Content

Your resume needs to convey what you are capable of doing in the future by summarizing what you have done in the past. You can show your target audience what you can do by strategically selecting **strong action verbs** and words that show **transferable skills**, as well as choosing eye-catching **headings** for various sections of your resume. As a unique individual with a distinct history all your own, you must:

- **CURATE:** Carefully select and refine the information that you will present to allow the reader to quickly and efficiently discern your fit for the organization and role in question. This may mean leaving items off – more is not always better.
- **ORGANIZE:** Be strategic with how you organize and arrange your information to allow for maximum focus and attention on your special competencies and qualities, as well as your “fitness” for the position.
- **BULLETS:** Begin bullet points/descriptions with strong action verbs. Do not use personal pronouns or periods at the end of bullets. Bullets should not just be a copy of the job description but should be results-oriented and based on your experience.
- **AVOID:** Avoid starting your resume descriptions with “helped”, “worked”, “responsible for” or “duties included”.
- **ACTIVE TENSE:** Write in the active, rather than passive, tense. This helps convey to the reader your active role in the work.
- **BE HONEST:** You should be truthful in how you present yourself. A good test is to assume an employer will ask you about each experience in an interview. If you would have to “walk back” what you have put on your resume, then you are probably not being honest.

Headings

Contact information is at the top followed by headings. There are many options for headings; listed below are some of the more common choices. Select what makes sense for you. While you are a current student, ‘Education’ is the first section after your contact information. After your first job, ‘Education’ will typically be the last heading.

- Education
- Off-Campus Study Programs
- Work and Internship Experience
- Volunteer and Community Activities
- Awards, Honors, and Distinctions
- Relevant Skills & Certifications
- Professional Affiliations and Activities

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Resume Type

There are three traditional types used in resume writing: the *chronological*, *functional*, and *combination*. Each style is described below. Choose the type that will best highlight your background. Chronological is the most common and typically the best choice.

- **Chronological:** Usually, the best choice for students. The chronological resume lists experiences under each heading in reverse chronological order, listing the most recent first. This is the style one typically thinks of when contemplating a resume. The chronological format works well if the majority of your past experiences directly relate to the type of position/program you are seeking.
- **Functional:** A functional resume is designed to emphasize transferable skills and related accomplishments while de-emphasizing the specific positions you've held. It is most useful for those who lack experience directly related to their job objective yet have related transferable skills. It also works well for those seeking a career change.
- **Combination/Hybrid:** This format combines elements of both the chronological and functional formats. It stresses your skills and abilities while including a chronological listing of your experiences. The combination resumes allows the most flexibility in highlighting your background.

Layout

There are two basic options when laying out your resume: the “*two-column layout*” (good when you have limited content) and the “*tuck-under layout*” (best to maximize space on the page). Choose one layout and use it consistently throughout your resume. Both choices are professionally recognized and allow you to highlight your capabilities utilizing any one of the three formats listed above.

Two-Column Layout:

EDUCATION St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN Graduation: May of 2012
Bachelor of Arts, Majors: History and Philosophy GPA: 3.4

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE *Actuarial Intern*, American Memorial Life Insurance Company, St. Paul, MN June-August 2018

- Researched individual policies and determined incorrect cash values.
- Recalculated correct cash values for various policies.
- Daily use of Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, and proprietary programs.

Tuck-Under Layout:

EDUCATION
St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN Graduation: May of 2012
Bachelor of Arts, Major: Mathematics | Concentration: Management Studies GPA: 3.55

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE
Actuarial Intern, American Memorial Life Insurance Company, St. Paul, MN June-August 2018

- Researched individual policies and determined incorrect cash values.
- Recalculated correct cash values for various policies.
- Daily use of Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, and proprietary programs.

Remember, developing a resume takes many drafts. Drop in to the Piper Center to see a Peer Advisor to get started, help plot out your structure, and review your initial drafts. Coaches are available to assist and generally are a great resource for final drafts.