

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RESUME?

common issues and helpful advice

What is a resume?

A resume is a document that is used to outline your experiences—professional, academic, extracurricular—and the skills you have acquired as a result. Think of your resume as a kind of advertisement for yourself: a strong resume should make the reader want to meet and interview you, just like a well-made commercial should make the viewer want to try the product advertised. Your resume's impact originates from both the details you choose to include and the way you write about them. A person with limited experience but strong writing skills can put together a resume as compelling as a person who writes about their rich experiences in an ineffective way.

Is it time to write my résumé?

Yes! A resume is a work in progress, and students who start early have the benefit of improving and refining the document over time. Students need to keep their resume regularly updated to reflect new experiences, ensuring that an up-to-date resume is available when needed. Students are encouraged to begin the process immediately. You never know when and where your resume will be needed!

Is there such a thing as a "correct" resume?

No. There is no right and wrong when it comes to resume content and format. Each resume is as unique as the individual it represents. It is up to you to select the appropriate content that best highlights your skills for the employment you hope to acquire, and then effectively communicate your qualifications in a format that is clear and easy to read.

Should my resume include everything I have ever done?

Not necessarily. Note that a potential employer typically spends around 30 seconds when initially reviewing a resume. Therefore, it is important to carefully select experiences that emphasize the skills most relevant to the desired position. As you make your choices, remember to stress quality over quantity.

If I have to pick and choose what goes on my resume, how do I make those decisions?

First, focus on the skills and attributes you can bring to the organization. Consider the perspective of the potential employer, and what he or she would desire in the ideal candidate for the position. To assist you, make use of the position announcement, company's website, or the books in The Career Center's Resource Center. Next, reflect upon specific experiences from your college and employment history that demonstrate how you have gained and refined skills that will transfer to the job you desire. Finally, customize a resume for every job application. This gives potential employers the impression that you have indeed carefully selected the most relevant experiences that portray you as the best choice.

How can The Career Center help me with my resume?

The Career Center has helped thousands of students draft and refine their resumes. For many students, the first step in the resume writing process is attending a resume writing workshop during the academic year. The Career Center also offers a free resume critique service so students can speak individually with a trained reviewer. In addition, The Career Center maintains a Career Resource Center with printed materials on the resume writing process, as well as examples.



The Career Center

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HINTS OF PROFESSIONALISM

- Convey your overall competence through content, as well as attention to detail. Proofread carefully to ensure correct spelling and grammar.
- Have your resume reviewed at The Career Center, or by a professor or academic advisor in your college. Have it reviewed multiple times to attain varied insights and draw from multiple perspectives, to create your best possible resume.
- Avoid the usage of first and third person pronouns such as “I,” “he,” or “she.”
- Keep verb tenses consistent throughout the document. Use present tense for current activities and employment, and past tense for activities and employment not presently held.
- Refrain from using slang, jargon, overused expressions, and anything that might confuse the potential employer. It is important to spell out all acronyms the first time they are used, followed by the acronym in parentheses. Thereafter, in the same document you may use the acronym alone.
- Print your resume on paper of good quality. While it is not necessary to purchase special paper, if you choose to do so use appropriate colors such as white or cream. Print your resume and cover letter on the same type of paper.

APPROACHES TO APPEARANCE

- As you format your resume, distribute the content evenly on the page. Take advantage of white space, using it as a mechanism to appropriately convey emphasis and organization to your information and skills.
- Be consistent with alignment. For example, you may consider having all of the dates of your education, employment, and activities flush to the right. Appropriately use left, center, and right alignment.
- Bold, underline, and italics can be used to emphasize the different aspects of your resume such as headings and titles. Remember to use consistency throughout.
- Depending upon your academic major and goals for employment, typically one-page conventional resumes are most appropriate. Rather than being creative in the design and format of your resume, demonstrate your creativity in the content you choose.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR READER

- Use concise statements to clearly articulate your relevant experiences. This will capture the interest of your reader and motivate him or her to read your resume more carefully.
- Phrases, rather than complete sentences, are generally most effective to help the potential employer easily understand your experiences.
- Use a variety of action verbs to bring your skills and experiences to life. Avoid using each verb or adjective more than once. The Career Center provides a handout on action verbs in our Resource Center.
- Do your homework! Investigate each potential employer and consider any preferences for length, format, and content. Be sure to follow special instructions for supplemental application materials. For example, you should only send a reference sheet if it is requested.
- Customize your resume for each application. Consider the specific responsibilities of the individual position and make changes to your resume accordingly.
- Research shows that employers initially scan a resume in 30 seconds before deciding if they want to learn more about you. An effective resume will help you secure interviews, and will provide employers with the information they desire to assess your qualifications.
- A well-written cover letter should be included with each resume you send, unless otherwise stated. The cover letter is your mechanism to introduce yourself to the potential employer as well as further display your written communication skills.

**Majors, careers and
everything in between!**