

How to write a resume



Creating an effective resume is critical to your job search. A resume helps to introduce you to an organisation, presents your background and achievements and emphasises what you think is most important about you. A resume is a powerful tool that will sell you and your experience to a prospective employer.

The first page

Your strongest skills and qualifications should be listed at the top of the first page in a skills summary or in the first job description.

Your most recent work experience

Detail your last three to five positions or employment over the last ten years. Only include positions very early in your work history if they are very relevant to the job for which you are applying.

Presentation and layout

Your resume must be easy to read and scan. Make sure your resume has a clean and professional appearance. Do not cram too much information on one page or try too hard with fancy typesetting or paper stock.

Some additional hints and tips on presentation:

- A resume should always be typed.
- A resume should be printed on quality paper.
- Using colour, graphics and artwork is not recommended unless it is considered appropriate for the industry.
- Do not include clip-art or photographs.
- Your resume should not be bound.
- The ideal length for a resume is no longer than three pages.
- Avoid long sentences or paragraphs.

Sell benefits, not features

Don't just describe the responsibilities of previous jobs but include your achievements in that job. Your achievements are your unique contributions during the time you held the job, and imply that there may be greater benefits in hiring you.

Wherever possible, try to express your achievements in quantitative form – i.e. dollars in sales, savings to the company, years of experience, etc.

Use action words to describe your achievements

Some examples include: analysed, conducted, designed, examined, initiated, managed, operated, proposed and supervised.

Check your resume carefully

Avoid misspellings, typographical errors and poor grammar. Make sure you have at least two different people edit it before you send it to an employer.

Components of the resume

The following is a possible guide for layout:

I. Name and contact details

Display your name, address, telephone number(s) and email address at the top of the page. Do not include other personal details on the first page as these can cause unnecessary clutter. Make sure your email address sounds professional.

John Smith	After hours: (02) 9641 5000
123 ABC Street	Business hours: (02) 9641 5000
Sydney NSW 2000	John.smith@missionaustralia.com.au



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2. Profile

It is recommended that you include a personal profile on the first page. Your profile sets out a succinct description, in four or five lines, of your qualifications, experience, abilities and personal attributes. Alternatively, the profile can be a summary of your key strengths shown in bullet-point format. The writing of the profile can be left until the rest of the resume has been completed and should highlight the important areas of the resume itself.

- An experienced customer service professional who is passionate about delivering friendly warm and attentive service.
- Excellent communication skills with the ability to listen and build relationships with customers.
- Enthusiastic and self motivated with a mature and reliable work ethic.

3. The career summary

The career summary is designed to grab the reader's attention during the scanning phase of the assessment. It should give a brief overview of the companies, positions held (with dates showing month and year), in reverse chronological order.

4. Work/business experience

Prospective employers are more interested in your recent work history than they are in your early work history. It is best to list your work experience in date order, starting from your most recent position. Your company name should be listed, together with the overall period you worked for the company.

ABC Bank

Customer Service Officer Mar 2003 – Feb 2006
Office Assistant Feb 2002 – Feb 2003

5. Responsibilities

Your responsibilities should then be listed briefly. This should be no more than two or three lines, and should be a responsibility overview.

6. Your achievements

Your achievements in each position should then be listed. Your achievements should be shown giving each bullet point with an active doing word, e.g. coordinated, directed, improved, operated. A well written achievement statement often has three parts: what you actually accomplished; how you did it; and the resulting benefit to the company.

7. Education and qualifications

If you have completed any form of tertiary training, trade certificate, degree or diploma, this should be mentioned. If completed, there is no need to add any information about secondary schooling results, as these are not considered relevant once a tertiary program has been completed.

If you are a member of any relevant associations, hold any licences or certificates, or if you are fluent in any foreign languages, these should be listed here under an appropriate heading.

ABC Bank: 2002 – 2006

In this position, I was responsible for responding to all customer enquiries on a range of retail banking products.

Achievements:

- Consistently achieved the highest call volume rate in my team, while maintaining excellent customer service levels.
- Selected as the team member of the month on three separate occasions.
- Assisted with the customer satisfaction program, which led to a 3% increase in customer satisfaction across all areas.

8. Personal information

The inclusion of some types of personal information is optional and a matter for individual consideration. Including details such as your date of birth and marital status is not necessary and should be avoided.

It is also customary to include three or four interests in your resume. Your choice on which interests to include should be based on whether the interests will enhance your image to the employer. It is advisable to have interests that show a good balance of activity.

9. Your resume checklist

Once you have completed a draft of your resume, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is my resume error free?
- Have I expressed my achievements in quantitative terms? (i.e. dollars in sales)
- Have I placed more focus on achievements over skills and duties?
- Is the language clear and concise?
- Is irrelevant personal information left out?
- Does it highlight my benefits?
- Will the reader want to read it?
- Does the layout invite attention?
- Is the industry/product lines of past employers clear?
- Do sentences begin with action words?
- Do strong points stand out?
- Does your experience match the skills presented to do the job?
- Is it well printed on good, professional-looking stock?



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