

# Creating your Resume

Never had a resume, or can't remember because it's been so long?

## What is a resume?

A resume is a summary of your skills, abilities, experience and education. Its purpose is to get you an interview.

## What makes a resume effective?

- A resume should highlight the positives in your work experience and skills. You want to use action verbs to show what you can do for an employer.
- A resume should be concise. You want to feature your qualifications in a page or two at most.
- A resume needs to target a specific job.
- A resume needs to be relevant to your employer and the position for which you are applying. Include activities besides prior employment that have given you experience pertinent to the position.

## What are the steps to preparing a resume?

- Gather your personal information (work history, transcripts, references, etc.)
- Select the format that suits your needs (look at the three main types below.)
- Choose your words carefully.
- Make your final resume look professional.
- Ask people for input.
- Evaluate your resume as if you were the employer.

## What are the kinds of resumes?

There are several basic formats for a resume. All of them provide a snapshot of you, your goals, your knowledge, and your qualifications. There are three basic formats that we address: chronological, skills based, and a combination of the two.

*Chronological* - If you have an employment history in one field with no gaps, a chronological resume might work best. It draws attention to your longevity in a career path and your movement up the career ladder.

- Starting with your present or most recent position, work backward, highlighting your most recent responsibilities that demonstrate your ability to do the targeted job.
- List four or five positions or your employment for at least ten years to show your progression.
- Keep your target in mind. Emphasize accomplishments that are most related to your targeted job.

*Skills based or Functional* - If you are a recent graduate, short on employment history, or in the midst of a career change, a skills based resume may work best for you. This type of resume places an emphasis on your skills and talents. You can use it to draw attention to specific accomplishments and away from job titles, employer names and dates.

- List several headings to highlight different areas of expertise in the order of importance to your targeted job. Focus on key skills or talents related to the position.
- Emphasize measurable results of your abilities (eg. increased efficiency by 50%)
- Don't identify the specific employer or situation in which the accomplishment was reached.

*Combination* - If you have limited experience, are changing careers, or returning to the workforce after an absence, a combination resume might serve you best. This format allows you to demonstrate your strong work history while still emphasizing special skills you have obtained over the years.

- List your qualifications for the job you are targeting at the top.
- Emphasize major accomplishments and responsibilities that demonstrate to the employer what you could bring to the organization.
- List actual experience at the bottom, providing dates, employer and job title.

### **Putting it all together...**

Once you've chosen a format, it's time to build your resume. You will always want to highlight what you want the employers to see in the top 1/3 of the page, as they don't typically spend a lot of time reading the details if the headlines don't grab their attention.

### **Name and contact information**

- Draw attention to your name by making it bold and slightly larger in size than the type on the rest of your resume.
- Be sure to include your zip code in your address and abbreviate your state properly (two capital letters with no periods.)
- Be sure to include an area code with your phone number (and be sure that number is going to be working throughout your job search.)
- Include your email address if you have one—but be certain it is job search appropriate.

#### **Petra Zerhusen**

2251 NE Sycamore St.

Vancouver, WA 98663

360-332-1121

petradz@gmail.com

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State & Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Objective Statement**

After your name and contact information, make your objective statement. This is your guide for your resume and it should include the title of the position as well as a brief description of the knowledge or skills. Everything else you write after this point should support this objective.

Some examples are:

- Seeking a professional librarian position to utilize my reference and customer service skills.
- Desire a responsible management position in a retail environment.
- Seeking an office management position requiring organizational skills and the opportunity to work with others.

What's your objective?

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### **Resume Section Headings**

- Choose heading titles that best describe the skills you are highlighting to match the employer's requirements.

- Make the headings stand out from the surrounding text. (For example, you could try capitalizing, bolding, italicizing, or underlining.)
- Here are some sample headings: Computer Skills, Program Development, Supervision & Training, Technical Knowledge, or Customer Service Skills.

What are the section headings you will use?

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### **Qualification Summary** (only for skill-based or combination resumes)

This summary of qualifications introduces you to the employer and shows off all you have to offer at a glance. This is the hook to keep the employer reading. Here are some things to include in a qualification summary:

- Years of experience in work (volunteer or paid) relevant to the job objective.
- Education, training, or licenses relevant to the objective.
- One accomplishment that really demonstrates you are the best person for the job.
- One strength or characteristic that you are particularly proud of (that is relevant to the job objective!)
- Anything else the employer should know, for example a second or third accomplishment or skill you think is important.

### **Experience**

This is where you show off what you've done. It should illustrate what you can do for the employer. Here are some guidelines for writing the experience section:

- Describe each life experience, internship, volunteer position, or job that is relevant.
- Use action words and bullets to make it easy to scan through.
- Include your job title, description, employer's name, location, and dates.
- Format each entry identically.

### **Education**

This is where you document your education and training. This section usually follows experience, unless you don't have much experience and should include:

- Degree or diploma, major, institution, location and dates (optional)
- Only include the highest education level you've attained.
- Reflect how prepared you are for the job through your education.
- Consider not using locations or dates if they don't look flattering.
- Match the job requirements if possible.
- If you don't yet have the necessary degree or diploma, show how you are working on it.

### **References**

References do NOT belong on a resume. You can put them on a separate sheet of paper that matches and provide it when the employer asks. List three professional and three personal references. References are usually people who have supervised or observed your work, but not always. Be sure to choose references who will provide positive information to an employer.

Be sure to ask permission before using a person as a reference! It's a good idea to send a copy of your resume to your references as well.

## Appearance

Remember, your resume is the employer's introduction to you. How attractive and carefully crafted it is will influence their impression of you as a person and employee. Here are some helpful hints in designing a resume.

### Do this!

- Do use high quality paper (off white, gray or tan).
- Do use standard sized paper (8-1/2x11)
- Do type perfectly and proof read—don't rely upon spellchecker alone!
- Do use capital, underlining and italics sparingly. You want special formatting to highlight certain information.
- Do use a consistent layout and composition.
- Do use past tense for previous activities.

### Don't do this!

- Don't put your resume in a fancy binder or folder.
- Don't list sex, height, weight, religion, race, ethnic origin, political beliefs, or other personal details.
- Don't include salary information.
- Don't highlight problems.
- Don't use copies of copies, they look cheap.
- Don't use personal pronouns

## Resources to help you compose a resume:

- Attend the "Resume 1 and Cover Letters" workshop at WorkSource. Schedules can be found online at [www.go2worksource.com](http://www.go2worksource.com).  
Hint: Look for your local office first.
- Use the WinWay database to build your resume using language from the AutoWriter.
- Make use of a tutorial in the **LearningExpress** online resource in the library or from home at: <http://www.fvrl.org/findinfo/index.cfm#careers>.
- Visit <http://online.onetcenter.org/> to do some research on the occupation you're seeking.