

Polishing Your Resume

Do you need to revise your resume? Perhaps make it more concise?

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.

Review what you've written

Since you already have a resume, review what you've got with a critical eye. Think like an employer. You always want to highlight what you want employers to see in the top 1/3 of the page. If your current resume doesn't do this, choose a different format that will allow you to move things around. They are:

- Chronological, which emphasizes your experience with the most recent at the top;
- Skills-based or Functional, which draws attention to your skills and abilities while de-emphasizing dates and employer names;
- Combination, which allows you to combine the other two styles into a format that allows you to show your stuff in the first 1/3 of the page

Be sure you're including all of the following:

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.
- Always 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.

Objective Statement

After your name and contact information, you likely have an 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've written after this point should support this objective.

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. In a chronological resume, you'll lead with this right after your objective statement. 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 (when appropriate).
- 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.
- If you don't yet have the necessary degree or diploma, show how you are working to get 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. 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 suggestions:

Do this!

- Do use high quality paper (off white, gray or tan).
- Do be concise.
- 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.
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.