

RESUME TIPS

COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON CAREER CENTER | CAREERCENTER@COFC.EDU

A resume is a concise, organized summary of your skills, accomplishments, experiences, and education, which is designed to capture the interest of a potential employer.

Before you can write an effective resume, you must first be able to identify your skills, abilities, and interests and be able to relate them to the job/industry/career field in which you are seeking employment.

If you are unsure about the types of jobs, industries, organizations, or careers you are targeting, make an appointment with the Career Center to help you in developing a focus. Employers cannot decide what career is best for you; you must be able to communicate what skills and abilities you have that fit the specific job or jobs they are trying to fill.

Keep these tips in mind:

- **Tailor your resume** to the specific job to which you are applying. Tweak your resume to highlight skills that relate to each job. Incorporate keywords from the job description into your experience section when applicable. This means you may write more than one resume if applying for different types of jobs.
- **Communicate your abilities** as well as your personal qualities that pertain to the job. These abilities may have come from activities, education, volunteer work, or from work experience.
- **Focus on the employer's needs**, not on your own needs. Rather than focusing on what you hope to gain from the experience, focus on what you hope to bring to the organization.
- **Be specific, yet concise.** An employer must be able to read over your resume quickly (30 – 60 seconds), so provide detailed descriptions of your experience in a concise manner.
- **The purpose of a resume** is to secure an interview. Be strategic with your experience descriptions, highlighting tasks and skills that most relate to the job while knowing that you can elaborate or speak about other responsibilities in the interview.
- **Eliminate the first person pronoun "I" from your resume.** For example, "I am seeking a position in human services..." should read, "Seeking a position in human services..."
- **Quantify your experience** wherever possible. For example, "Supervised others" can be made clearer by stating, "Supervised three cash register attendants".
- **Use action verbs** in describing your skills and experience. Instead of "Responsible for assisting with preparation of sales tax reports each month" write "Assisted in preparation of monthly sales tax reports." Instead of "Was in charge of organizing and taking care of spring rush activities" write "Organized and directed spring rush activities for over 50 new sorority pledges."
- **Write a draft of your resume**, then refine and polish it. Writing an effective resume takes time and effort.
- **Check your grammar and spelling!** Have at least one other person proofread your resume before submitting it to an employer.
- **Keep the resume to one page.** A resume should only be two pages if you have a great deal of related experience, activities, or training.
- **Be consistent.** The order of information, spacing, format, punctuation, or highlighting should be consistent throughout your resume. For instance, either use a period at the end of every bullet point or do not add a period for any bullet point.
- **Avoid using resume templates.** Don't try to make your resume look like everyone else's. Creating your own document demonstrates your computer skills and initiative. Also, templates can be difficult to edit, download, and format. There are also different ways of constructing an effective resume, depending on the type of skills, work experiences, accomplishments, activities, and so forth that you want to emphasize as being related to your career/job preferences.

RESUME ELEMENTS

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CONTACT INFORMATION

- Your first and last name (in all capital letters and/or bolded)
- Complete address (list permanent and present addresses if in college)
- Home and/or mobile phone numbers
- E-mail address (Make sure your email address does not sound unprofessional.)

OBJECTIVE OR SUMMARY STATEMENT

This statement tells the reader the type of job/career you are targeting, and describes skills or ways you can contribute to the specific job, industry or career. An objective statement is a concise, position centered statement describing the value you can add and the needs you can fulfill. An objective may include a brief statement of skills and qualifications that you will bring to the position. A professional summary or skills summary is longer and provides more detail than an objective statement. Summaries identify the type of position you are seeking and provide lengthier descriptions of skills and qualifications.

Objective examples: "Seeking a statistical research position utilizing experience with survey development and evaluating sales data." "To obtain an internship in the Human Resources field, with particular interests in recruitment and training."

Summary example: "Recent graduate with Bachelor's degree in Business Administration seeking a Marketing Associate position. Offer solid understanding of marketing strategies illustrated through academic projects and an internet venture that continues to develop and test theoretical marketing strategies and business management."

EDUCATION

This section may contain the following: names and locations of schools or programs; graduation date (or expected date); degrees, certificates, or licenses; major; grade point average if 3.5 or above* (can vary by application requirements); coursework related to the job you want; academic honors, awards, or scholarships; and/or study abroad experiences. These may also be separate sections in your resume.

EXPERIENCE

Be sure that you cover full-time, part-time, internships, volunteer work, military service, and self-employment. However, it is not necessary to list every job you've ever had. If you have had a lot of work experience, limit the jobs you list to the three or four you consider the most important as learning experiences. Include your job title; employer name (company/organization); City/State; dates of employment; and bulleted, active descriptions of your responsibilities and major accomplishments.

ACTIVITIES AND/OR SKILLS

You may want to include activities and areas of involvement that demonstrate job-related skills (leadership, organization, etc.); special abilities, such as knowledge of computers or a foreign language; and/or honors or awards earned. If you include a separate skills section, focus on hard skills, such as languages or programming, rather than soft skills, such as time management or attention to detail.

REFERENCES

Many individuals question if references need to be included on their resume. Do not include a reference section on your resume. Instead, references may be included on a separate document, but it is not necessary to provide this until requested by the employer. See the "References" handout.

RESUME FORMATTING

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MODERN RESUMES

Use caution when creating resumes that involve graphic elements. Many modern resume templates suggest using bold design elements, but this can distract employers. Instead, focus more on developing strong content. If you decide to incorporate a more modern look, consider these guidelines:

- Do not include a photo. Employers should evaluate your qualifications based on your experience, skills, and education.
- Avoid distracting graphics, and consider incorporating mild colors rather than bold colors for dividers and headers. Avoid the use of graphs on your resume.
- Avoid layouts that do not have a clear compositional flow. In other words, the layout should make it clear to the employer which section they should read first, second, and last.
- Although your name may be larger than the rest of the text, ensure that it is not oversized.

CHRONOLOGICAL

- Use if your education and/or experience closely relates to your career goals
- Lists education and work experience in reverse chronological order (most recent information in each section first)
- Most commonly used resume format

FUNCTIONAL

- Puts greater emphasis on skills and less on work history or educational background
- Effective when work experience does not show a direct relationship to the career goal (i.e. making a career change to a different industry) or when there are significant gaps in experience

COMBINATION

- Typically shows a short skills summary, while retaining the reverse chronological order on education and experience sections

INTERNATIONAL RESUMES

- Each country has its own rules and standards for writing resumes
- Please visit the Career Center online resources when writing an international resume

CURRICULUM VITAE

- More detailed account of one's background, and is usually much longer than a resume
- Required for teaching/research positions in higher education (see additional CV handout)

Regardless of which resume style you choose, follow these formatting guidelines:

- Use conservative font styles (Times New Roman, Arial, Arial Narrow, or similar styles). Font size may range from 10-12.
- Set page margins between 0.5 and 1.0 inches (top, bottom, left and right).
- Print your resume using a laser printer; white or off white bond paper is preferred.
- Keep your resume up to date, with correct addresses and phone numbers.
- It's always a good idea to include a cover letter when applying for positions even if it is not required. Always include a cover letter if mailing your resume to an employer.
- Don't make handwritten corrections.
- Don't include age, marital status, height/weight, birth date, personal interests or a photograph.
- Don't abbreviate (other than for the states - SC). Don't use acronyms unless widely understood in the industry.
- Don't exaggerate or lie on your resume. It will catch up with you.