

Write a Résumé

AN EFFECTIVE RÉSUMÉ provides a good first impression to potential employers. It is an opportunity for you to highlight your skills, training, and education to set yourself apart from the crowd of other applicants. Submitting a résumé is usually the first step in the job application process, and a good résumé can help you secure an interview. In this unit, you will learn more about what elements you should include when creating your résumé.



Objectives:



1. Identify the necessary elements of an effective résumé.
2. Identify guidelines and resources for résumé writing.

Key Terms:



chronological résumé
functional résumé
objective
reference
résumé
work history

Elements of an Effective Résumé

A **résumé** is a one- or two-page document that summarizes a person's skills, education, experience, and achievements. When applying for a job, candidates submit a résumé to prospective employers to highlight their qualifications for a specific position. Employers use résumés to screen potential employees, especially when they are looking for candidates with a

particular educational background or specific experience. A good résumé creates a favorable impression of the applicant to a prospective employer to help secure a job interview.

FORMAT

Effective résumés follow the appropriate format.

Chronological Résumé

A **chronological résumé** is a résumé in which work history is listed in reverse chronological order, with the most recent jobs listed first. It is the most commonly used format and is appropriate for high school and college students with limited work experience.



FIGURE 1. If done well, a résumé can give an employer a favorable impression and can help an applicant secure an interview.

Functional Résumé

A **functional résumé** is a résumé that focuses on the listing of skills and experience rather than chronological work history. It is often used by people who have significant gaps in their work history. For example, a woman returning to the workforce after taking several years off to stay home with her children may use this format. A functional résumé also is useful for a person who is changing careers; it allows the applicant to highlight skills even if he or she does not have experience in that particular field.

Combination Format

A combination format combines chronological work history with a list of skills and a summary of qualifications. It is often used by job-seekers with diverse work experience.

STRUCTURE

Generally, résumés follow a standard structure.

Heading

Start your résumé with a heading at the top of the page. The heading should be in a larger and bolder font than the rest of the résumé. It should contain essential contact information, including your full name (not a nickname), permanent address, and phone number with area

code. It is optional to include a cell phone number or email address, but be sure the voice mail message and email address are business appropriate.

Objective

Next, you should include an **objective**, which is a one-sentence explanation of your goal or aim. It should indicate the position for which you are applying and should be as specific as possible.

Education

Highlight your education, listing schools in reverse chronological order. You do not need to list elementary or junior high schools. High school and college students should include their anticipated graduation date. You may choose to include information about your grade point average and special coursework (e.g., honors, advance placement, or career-related courses).

Work History

Work history is a listing of job experiences. Like education, jobs should be listed in reverse chronological order, starting with your current or most recent job. Include the company name and address, the dates of employment, and your job title. Use bullet points to list job duties or responsibilities. It is best to use action verbs when describing duties. For example, “answer telephone” and “assist customers” are preferable to “phone” and “front desk.” Individuals with limited or no work experience should consider including volunteer experience.

Honors/Awards

Applicants may wish to include optional information, including honors or awards they have received. Extracurricular activities in which they participate (e.g., clubs or athletic teams) may also be included. Job candidates also may list certificates (e.g., CPR or first aid) along with the name of the certifying agency and date of certification. In addition, résumés can include information on volunteer or community experience (e.g., church involvement or community service). Applicants should list any special skills (e.g., computer skills or additional languages spoken).



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Résumé Evaluation

If you have a completed résumé, take a few minutes to evaluate it. Did you include all of the necessary information? Visit the following Web site and use the provided checklist:

http://web.mit.edu/career/www/workshops/resumes/section3check_resume.htm

References

A **reference** is a person who can vouch for a person's character or recommend him or her for a job. List references in a separate document, not on the résumé itself. You should include a minimum of three references, such as an adult neighbor, a parent of a friend, a coach, a current or former teacher, or an employer. References should not be relatives, friends, or classmates. You should always receive permission before listing someone as a reference.

Guidelines and Resources

Every résumé should be accompanied by a cover letter and a clear objective customized for each potential job. Emphasize how your qualifications meet the employer's needs. However, do not include personal statistics (e.g., age, sex, or marital status).

LENGTH

Résumés should be limited to one page (if possible) and should use concise phrases. Avoid using unfamiliar abbreviations, jargon, or slang.

PROOFREAD

Because résumés help form the employer's first impression of job applicants, they should be honest and free of errors. Use spell-check and grammar-check functions on a word-processing program, and ask someone else to proofread your résumé.

CONSISTENT FONT

Avoid using different colors and fonts in your résumé. It is best to use a 12-point standard font, such as Arial, Times New Roman, or Courier. Keep margins at one inch, and print your résumé on high-quality paper.

RESOURCES

Many résumé resources are on the Internet. You could download

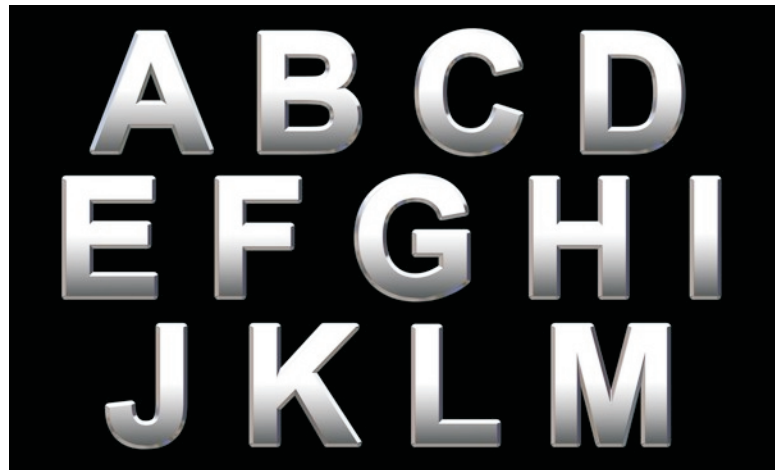


FIGURE 2. Arial is one of the recommended font styles to use when writing a résumé.

a résumé worksheet to use as a guide as you gather all your information to prepare your résumé. Consider using a computer program, such as Microsoft Word's Résumé Wizard.

Summary:



Submitting a résumé is the first step in the job-seeking process. Your résumé should highlight your education and work experience. You can include additional information, such as any special skills you may have, volunteer work you have done, or awards you have received. If done well, a résumé can give an employer a favorable impression and help secure an interview. Résumés should be short, honest, and free of errors.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. Why are résumés important?
2. What is a résumé objective?
3. How should work history be listed?
4. What is a reference?
5. What information should always be included in a résumé?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Interview an employer who routinely screens résumés. Ask for examples of mistakes that would immediately disqualify a candidate as well as suggestions for making a résumé stand out. You may want to show your own résumé to the employer and ask for constructive criticism.

Web Links:



Cover Letter Tips

http://www.how-to-write-a-resume.org/cover_letter_tips.htm

Résumé Writing

http://careerplanning.about.com/od/resumewriting/Resume_Writing.htm