



The resume is one of the most important documents you will write in your search for a job or internship. In most cases, it is the basis on which your candidacy for a particular position will be judged. And it is a document that you will need throughout your career as you apply for promotions, graduate or professional programs, or other opportunities. The purpose of a resume is not to 'get you a job.' The purpose is to get you an interview.

Resumes are different for candidates in different fields. Teachers may have a two page resume, while most business (especially Accounting) candidates should limit themselves to a one page resume. Fine arts candidates have more flexibility in terms of style and structure than candidates in other industries. This is why it's important to visit the CDO and work with a counselor to help you select the most appropriate style, structure, and length for your industry. You can also review the sample resume binder in the CDO Library.

## THE EMPLOYER'S PERSPECTIVE

Employers receive dozens if not hundreds of resumes for open positions, so many will spend only about 20 seconds with any single resume. From that applicant pool they need to choose just five or six (or fewer) candidates to interview. Most employers will be looking for the following when evaluating a resume:

- **Overall appearance:** at first glance, it looks professional and organized
- **Organization:** it is easy to find the most important information
- **Relevance:** detailed information applicable to the position is included
- **Qualifications:** demonstrate that you have the skills and knowledge required
- **Accomplishments:** present concrete examples of contributions, achievements, learning, and success

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

**The CDO recommends that candidates avoid using resume templates.** Using them will not make your resume unique – it will look just like the millions of other template resumes. Templates can also be very restrictive regarding formatting and spacing, and can be difficult to manipulate once you've entered your information. Avoid using text boxes as well, since they appear blank to applicant tracking systems!

Start with a plain document with 1" margins (no wider than .5") and 10, 11 or 12 point font. You should use a basic, easy-to-read font: Arial, Helvetica, Times Roman, Book Antiqua, and similar fonts are usually best. Adjust the margins and font size if needed.

With only about 20 seconds to impress an employer, try to use some of the following techniques to guide the reader's eye quickly down the page:

- **Phrases, not sentences** – When describing your experiences, use phrases beginning with "action words" (past or present tense verbs). Check out our *Action Verbs* handout for ideas.
- **Lists, not paragraphs** – For optimal skimming by the reader, phrases should be listed one to a line, using a bullet or other visual marker to indicate the beginning of each phrase.
- **Priority order** – Organize your information from most important to least important, putting your most important sections first. This also applies to your experience descriptions – start with your most significant or related work.
- **Use of blank space** – The way you use blank space (in your margins, between sections, and within each section) will affect what the reader sees as he/she skims the page. The more blank space that surrounds a word or group of words, the more visible it is. That is why section headings are often placed by themselves along the left margin.
- **Highlighting** – Judicious and consistent use of highlighting techniques, such as **boldfacing**, using all CAPITAL letters (or both), and *italics* can call the attention of the reader to key words or sections.
- **Consistent layout patterns** – Within each section, place the same type of information consistently in the same position. Not only does this look more professional, it also makes it easier for the reader to locate the information they seek. For example, always placing the job title first (or the name of the organization) in an experience section, placing the dates in the same location (after the job title or after the name of the organization, for instance) provides a logical pattern.
- **Perfection** – The resume must be mistake-free and represent your very best work. Anything less will hurt your chances of receiving an interview. Review your resume with a CDO counselor.

## Starting at the top....

### CONTACT INFORMATION

- Include your **name, address, telephone number and email address** at the top of the page. Optionally, you can include web addresses for your LinkedIn profile and/or a personal website or blog if appropriate.
- If you expect to be job searching from two addresses, use a date with one of them ("Address Until May 15, 20xx" and "Permanent Address," for example, or "Current Address" and "Address After May 15, 20xx").
- Other personal information such as health, weight, height, birth date and marital status should not be included. In fact, it is illegal for employers to use that information as part of the hiring decision. Resumes of candidates for performance positions, where appearance is legally considered a "bona fide occupational qualification," are an exception.

### OBJECTIVE

Most resumes begin with an objective statement, which tells the employer what specific job or type of position you are seeking. It should be simple and direct, listing a job title whenever possible and the organization's name. Therefore, it will change with every resume you send out:

- A position as a counselor at a summer music camp
- An internship in the field of Public Relations for summer 20\_\_
- An opportunity to shadow a law enforcement professional
- A Human Resources Assistant position with Citi

Some notes on objectives:

- Objectives are a good idea but are not necessary when you send a cover letter with the resume, since the cover letter explains your objective.
- Education majors do not need an objective statement – the Certification section (see below) takes its place.
- It is better to not list an objective at all than to provide something vague like "A position using my skills and abilities" or "An entry-level job."

### CERTIFICATION

Candidates for career fields that require special licensure or certification, such as education, medical technology, speech pathology or music therapy, need to make their certification or licensure status very clear. Create a separate section on the resume for this information. Because it may also tell the reader what type of position you are seeking, it is used instead of an objective for these candidates. Certifications should be placed in priority order based on the position you seek.

- Examples:
- CERTIFICATION** Candidate for New York State Initial Certificate, Childhood Education (Grades 1-6) with Mathematics (7-9) Extension  
Candidate for New York State Initial Certificate, Students with Disabilities (Grades 1-6)
  - CERTIFICATION** New York State Initial Certificate, English Language Arts (7-12)

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### And after that...

The order of information, how it is grouped, and how it is labeled (what each section is called) will depend on the individual and the relative importance of the information to his/her qualifications. For example, a current student will most likely place "Education" as the next section. An experienced candidate, however, will place the "Education" section in a less prominent position and place an experience section next. After you group your information and name each section, place the sections in priority order.

### EDUCATION

Essential information about your education includes the **name and location of the university**, the **name of your degree and anticipated date of completion**, your **major(s), minor(s)**, and **specialization(s) or concentrations(s)**. The proper name of this university is "State University of New York at Fredonia" the first time it is referred to in any document. Subsequent references can be abbreviated by using Fredonia. Because the location of this university is included in the name, it is not necessary to include the city and state. List your highest degree, usually the most recent or the degree you are currently pursuing, first. If you attended other institutions, list only those from which you earned a degree unless the non-degree work would add to your qualifications or if your resume includes activities from the other school(s).

Example:	<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>State University of New York at Fredonia</b> <b>Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, expected May 20__</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minor: Biology</li> <li>▪ GPA: 3.20 overall, 3.59 in major</li> </ul>
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Some other important but optional information you may include:

- **Grade Point Average:** If your GPA is 3.0 or above - in your major, overall, or both - it is appropriate to include.
- **Honors and Awards:** Dean's List, honor societies, scholarships, sports achievements, and graduation with honors are typically included, in list or column format as space permits.
- **Study Abroad:** If you studied at a university or language school in another country, you can list it as a separate institution or as part of your Fredonia experience.
- **Research/thesis title and description:** Include the title (and a brief description, if you have space) of a senior or capstone research project if it's particularly relevant to your objective.
- **List of courses related to your objective:** The courses section should be presented in lists of two or three columns and named by the type of courses ("Finance Courses," "Media Courses," "Writing Courses").

Example:	<b>MARKETING COURSES</b>	Marketing Management Sales Management Graphic Design I & II 2-D Design	Marketing Foundations Marketing Research Public Speaking Consumer Behavior
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Notice that courses have been included which are not required for the marketing degree but are relevant to certain types of positions in the marketing function.

## EXPERIENCES

There are many different kinds of experiences that you may choose to include on your resume:

- **Paid employment:** full-time, part-time, summer, seasonal. Also include businesses you started and operated yourself since they demonstrate **entrepreneurship**.
- **Internships/student teaching:** you should prominently showcase these experiences, as they are often the most critical and relevant experiences on your resume. For performing arts majors, a listing of your **performances** should be included.
- **Research:** include research projects related to your major, with a brief description if space allows.
- **University involvement:** clubs related to your academic or professional field, especially leadership roles, should be included and described. Be sure to include any on- or off-campus professional associations you may have joined.
- **Volunteer/service learning experiences:** community service you performed on your own, as part of a campus organization, or as a class project.
- **Athletics:** include collegiate varsity, club, or intramural sports

For each experience, include the name of the organization and its city and state (if it's not a campus organization), a position title or role, dates/length of time, and descriptive phrases. Education candidates should include grade level. The number of phrases in your description will vary, depending upon how relevant the experience is to your objective and how recent the experience is. For example, some employment that is unrelated, especially if the job title is self-explanatory, may have no description. But you might have a lengthier description of your involvement and leadership in a related student organization because it demonstrates your related skills or accomplishments, or of a volunteer experience because it was relevant to your academic major. Your most related experiences should be the ones with the most comprehensive descriptions, no matter what kind of experience they are.

Information about these experiences may be grouped in several sections, depending on what you are applying for. You may have one section with experiences directly related to your objective and titled something like "Teaching Experience," "Performance," "Leadership," or "Social Service Involvement." You may even have more than one section with a specific type of experience. You may have an additional section with experiences that are somewhat but not directly related to your objective and titled "Related Experience." Employment that is not at all related but needs to be included can be in a section titled "Employment" or "Other Employment." If you are writing two different resumes, each with a different objective, the names of the sections and what is included in them would usually change. Within each section, experience entries are most often in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent and going backwards.

## DESCRIBING YOUR EXPERIENCES

As you begin to write descriptions of your experiences and qualifications, it is helpful to spend some time thinking about the knowledge and skills you developed and can demonstrate, the tasks you performed, how these tasks and skills are related to your objective, and how you can describe them in a way that communicates what you are capable of doing. Select and emphasize those aspects of each experience that most closely relate to the responsibilities of the positions you're applying for. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What were the primary tasks that you carried out in this experience?
- What secondary tasks did you do that are directly related to your objective?
- Can you quantify to demonstrate level of responsibility or experience in a variety of situations?  
(size of budget, number of people supervised, students in class, hours per week)
- Did you supervise others?
- Did you write reports, letters, manuals, or brochures?
- Did you plan events, activities, or lessons/units?
- Did you conduct research? About what topic? What methods were used? What tools or equipment were used, and how were the outcomes presented?
- Did you conduct or make presentations to groups?
- What special tools, equipment, and methods did you use in carrying out your tasks?
- What kinds of decisions or recommendations did you make, and were they implemented?
- Did you work independently or as part of a group? What did you contribute?
- Were you promoted or given increased responsibilities?
- What is there about this particular experience that might be of interest to an employer in your field?
- Did you design or perform? What specific kind of information do you need to communicate?
- If most candidates for the positions you are applying for have had a similar type of experience (student teaching, or an accounting internship, for example), how can you describe it to make it uniquely yours?
- Were you in a leadership role? Were you elected, selected, invited, or chosen?
- What were your specific accomplishments or achievements?

## SKILLS

Consider what special expertise (or skill) you have that you wish to call to the attention of the reader by placing that information in a separate section titled according to the type of skill(s) you are describing. The skills may be **technical skills** specifically required by the field you are applying to, or they may be more **general skills** that can be applied to several different fields. Examples are laboratory skills, such as testing procedures or equipment, computer skills, or languages. They can be listed either in column format (2 or 3 columns) or as a list of descriptive phrases.

## REFERENCES

Most resumes end with this section, although if there is no space it is fine to omit it altogether. There are several ways you can handle this section. One is to state that references are "Available upon Request" which can refer to letters of recommendation, or a listing of the contact information of your references. You *can* list the names, titles, telephone numbers and email addresses of your references directly on the page, but there is often not enough space to do this on a one-page (or even a two-page) resume. If you wish to include names and contact information, it is most appropriate to prepare a separate "References" document. A final option is to omit the information entirely and mention it in your letter. It is most common for an interested employer to contact you when he/she needs references.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

- While most resumes are submitted online or emailed, if you do print your resume use a good quality printer and resume paper.
- This document will influence the employer's first impression of you. It is critical that you do a thorough job so that it represents your very best work, and that it shows your most related experiences and accomplishments.

***Schedule an appointment with a CDO counselor to review your resume. The CDO also has resume samples from different career fields that demonstrate various formats.***