RESUMES

Developed by the Center for Global Communication and Design
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A resume is a brief summary of your abilities, education, experience, and skills. Its main task is to convince prospective employers to contact you. **A resume has one purpose: to get you a job interview**.

Resumes must do their work quickly. Employers or personnel officers may look through **hundreds** of applications and may spend only a few seconds reviewing your resume. To get someone to look at it longer, your resume must quickly convey that you are capable and competent enough to be worth interviewing. The more thoroughly you prepare your resume now, the more likely someone is to read it later.

This guide, "Preparing a Resume," will be useful if you're writing your first resume or want to analyze the effectiveness of your current one. Comm+D can also help you draft your resume and cover letters, and can give you sample resumes and related handouts. Simply drop by; no appointment is necessary.

Gather and Check All Necessary Information

Write down headings such as *EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE, HONORS, SKILLS, ACTIVITIES.* Beneath each heading, jot down the following information:

EDUCATION usually means post-secondary and can include special seminars, summer school, or night school as well as college and university. If you are just starting college, you can include high school as well. List degrees and month/year obtained or expected; names and locations of schools; major and minor, if any; grade point average. A brief summary of important courses you've taken might also be helpful.

EXPERIENCE includes full-time paid jobs, academic research projects, internships or co-op positions, part-time jobs, or volunteer work. List the month/years you worked, position, name and location of employer or place, and responsibilities you had. As you describe your experiences, ask yourself questions like these:

- Have I invented, discovered, coordinated, organized, or directed anything professionally or for my community?
- Do I meet deadlines consistently?
- Am I a good communicator?
- Do I enjoy teamwork?

Even if you're new to a field, you aren't necessarily starting from scratch.

HONORS. List any academic awards (scholarships, fellowships, honors list), professional awards or recognition, or community awards (i.e. for athletic skills).

SKILLS. List computer languages and software, research, laboratory, teaching or tutoring, communication, leadership, or athletic, among others.

ACTIVITIES. List academic, professional, or community organizations in which you hold office or are currently a member; list professional and community activities, including volunteer work. Listing extra-curricular activities or hobbies is optional.

After you have all this information down, check it for accuracy. You'll need full names, in some cases full addresses, correct and consistent dates, and correct spellings.

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Match Your Skills and Experience with an Employer's Needs

POSITION: What kind of position do you want for this job-search? *Make notes.* Now match your wishes up with positions that are actually available. You can get this information through postings, ads, personal contacts, or your own research.

Also, the Rensselaer Center for Career and Professional Development (CCPD) can help you with job-search techniques. The CCPD offers workshops, materials, personal assistance, and on-campus recruiting. It also coordinates a "Focus Program" to help freshmen, sophomores, and juniors find out about their field from Rensselaer alumni.

EMPLOYER: For a certain position, what aspects of your education, experience, or skills will be most attractive to that employer? *List* SPECIFIC coursework, areas of specialty, specific skills, or knowledge that you think would interest the employer.

Highlight Details That Demonstrate Your Capabilities

Look over what you've written and try to *select* details of your education, experience, honors, skills, and activities that match an employer's needs in a few important areas.

Organize the Resume Effectively

PERSONAL INFORMATION: *Top center of first page.* Name (no title); addresses; phone numbers; e-mail and/or fax addresses (optional); citizenship if applicable.
>   *NOTE: A potential employer has **no legal right** to request information about age, sex, race, religion, marital status, health, physical appearance, or personal habits. Don't include such information on your resume.*

EDUCATION: Often comes first in student resumes, especially if it is a strong asset.

EXPERIENCE: Here, you can use one of *two formats*:
>   *Functional:* To emphasize **skills and talents**, cluster your experience under headings that highlight these skills: for ex.: leadership, research, computers, etc. This format can be helpful if you have little relevant job experience.
>   *Chronological:* To emphasize **work experience**, list jobs beginning with the most recent.

>   *Some hints:*
>   - Write all job descriptions in parallel phrases, using ACTION verbs
>   - List the most important responsibilities or successes first
>   - List similar tasks together
>   - Emphasize collaborative or group-related tasks

AWARDS/HONORS: Use reverse chronological order; include titles, places, dates.

ACTIVITIES: Generally, list hobbies, travel, or languages only if they relate to your job interests. In some cases, you may wish to emphasize your willingness to travel or relocate.

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REFERENCES: You need not put these on your resume. Instead, you can prepare a *separate list* of references, with complete name, title, company name, address, and telephone numbers for each individual. Usually, you give this list to prospective employers after your interview.

Creating your Draft

- *Look at other resumes* written for positions within your field.
- TYPE each entry in a format close to the one you want to use for your resume.
- LENGTH: for many resumes, *two pages* is the maximum length (NOTE: an academic resume or "curriculum vita" is often at least five pages long).

If you are considering listing your participation in a MOOC (Massive Online Open Course), you could add that experience to your resume or CV in a section for 'Employment Related Activities' or 'Professional Development'. Not everything needs to be on a two-page resume, but there may be reasons to list items like this if you have room for them. For more, see http://www.onlinecollegecourses.com/2013/03/07/putting-a-mooc-on-the-resume/

Consider Word Choice Carefully

In a resume, you need to sound positive and confident: neither too aggressive, nor overly modest. The following words and phrases are intended as suggestions for thinking about your experience and abilities. Whatever your final word choices are, they should accurately describe **you**–your skills, talents, and experience.

Choose ACTIVE VERBS that describe your skills, abilities, and accomplishments.

Examples: I can contribute, enjoy creating, have experience in organizing. . . While at X Company, I administered, coordinated, directed, participated in….
A (non-exhaustive) list of such verbs:
accomplish; achieve; analyze; adapt; balance; collaborate; coordinate; communicate; compile; conduct; contribute; complete; create; delegate direct; establish; expand; improve; implement; invent; increase; initiate; instruct; lead; organize; participate; perform; present; propose; reorganize; research; set up; supervise; support; train; travel; work (effectively, with others)

NOTE: You can change the *forms* of any of these verbs to stress different aspects of your abilities and experience: organize ==> organized, organizing, organization.

Choose ADJECTIVES and NOUNS that describe yourself positively and accurately: *able to; administrative; analytical; (fluently) bilingual; broad scope; capable; communication skills; collaboration; collaborative; consistent; competent; complete; creative; dedicated; diversified; effective; experienced; efficient; extensive; exceptional; flexible; global; handle stress; imaginative; intensive; in-depth; innovative; integrated; able to listen; motivated; multilingual; multi-disciplinary; a negotiator; other cultures; reliable; responsible; a supervisor; teamwork; well- traveled; work well with….*

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Ask Other People to Comment on Your Resume

WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND that you have an advisor, potential employer, or someone in your field critique your resume. For more help, ask:

- The Center for Global Communication and Design staff
- The Center for Career and Professional Development Center
- Family and friends

    NOTE: People may offer many different opinions. Use your own judgment and be open-minded about constructive criticism.

Make the Final Product Presentable

Print on *a high-quality* (preferably laser) printer. If you use color in your resume, make sure to print on a *high-quality color* printer. If you're not sure where the higher quality printers are on campus, click on this link for the List of Printers by Location.

Evaluate Your Resume

Hold your resume at arm's length and see how it looks. Is the page too busy with different type styles, sizes, lines, or boxes? Is the information spaced well, not crowded on the page? Is there too much "white space"? Is important information quick and easy to find?

    CONTENT
- Name is at the top of the page: highlighted by slightly larger typesize, bolding, and/or underlining
- Address and phone number(s) are complete and correct, with zip and area codes, and are well-placed in relation to name
- All entries highlight a capability or accomplishment
- Descriptions use active verbs, and verb tense is consistent; current job is in present tense; past jobs are in past tense
- Repetition of words or phrases is kept to a minimum
- Capitalization, punctuation, and date formats are consistent
- *There are NO typos or spelling errors*

    ORGANIZATION
- Your best assets, whether education, experience, or skills, are listed first
- The page can be easily reviewed: categories are clear, text is indented
- The dates of employment are easy to find and consistently formatted
- Your name is printed at the top of *each* page

FORMAT/DESIGN

- No more than two typestyles appear; typestyles are conservative; color (if used) is used as highlight
- Bolding, italics, and capitalization are used consistently and in support of the information structure
- Margins and line spacing keep the page from looking too crowded
- Printing is on one side of the sheet only, on high-quality bond–white or off-white (i.e. beige or ivory)
- The reproduction is good, with no blurring, stray marks, or faint letters
- The *right* side of the page is in "ragged" format, **not** right-justified. Right justification creates awkward white spaces

Now you're done!

Just one more suggestion: If you are sending your resume to a prospective employer, you'll probably also have to include a separate *cover* letter. This is usually one page long. The letter indicates your interest in a particular company or position, summarizes the most important aspects of your education and experience, and lets the employer know where and when you can be contacted for an interview. There is a more information available from both the Center for Global Communication and Design website and the Center for Career and Professional Development. Both services offer opportunities to get feedback on your resumes and cover letters.

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