



Writing winning resumes



What is a resume?

A resume (also known as a curriculum vitae) is a marketing tool to promote yourself as the right person for the job. It is a summary of who you are and what you have achieved and contains the information you need to give potential employers so that they will consider you for a position. You can also use your resume when you are applying for courses, and for networking purposes.

A resume is **not your life story** but a summary of key information about you. It is a dynamic document that should be updated whenever you start or finish a course or job, or whenever you learn a new skill. It should also be tailored to suit each job or course you apply for.

Two versions of your resume

Everybody, regardless of the stage of their career, needs a current resume, to allow them to quickly respond if an opportunity arises. Your resume is a vital part of your job search toolbox. You don't need to have had work experience to be able to write a resume.

Master copy

Your master resume (the one you keep) is where you put ALL your information. You use this information to create a targeted resume to suit a particular audience.

Targeted resume

Your targeted resume is the one you send out with information selected to suit the audience (i.e. for the job, course etc. for which you are applying).

Resume content

There are many resources to help you in constructing your resume. Have a look through some of them to get ideas.

- The Facts section of the *myfuture* www.myfuture.edu.au
- The Looking for work – Your resume section of the *Job Guide*
<http://www.jobguide.dest.gov.au>
- Applying for jobs – sample resumes section of *Youth Central* website
<http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/jobs-careers/applying-for-jobs/sample-resumes-and-cover-letters#>

Your resume may be an employer's first contact with you. A resume should answer the employer's question: 'How will I benefit from employing this person?'

Often employers are looking at hundreds of resumes and only briefly review each one to decide whether to look more closely. The appearance is the first thing they notice, that is, is it neat and well set out and does it meet their requirements. There are many styles of resume, which you can find samples of on the websites. As long as it is neat and well set out, use a style that best suits your audience and yourself. Even though the layout can vary, ensure you are consistent with format and style of writing within your resume. Use easy-to-read fonts such as Arial, and have the font size between 10 and 14.



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Below is a list of the key information you should include.



Personal details

Name and contact details – at the top of the first page

Postal address

Telephone contact number – If you use a home number and live in a shared household, make sure your flatmates know you may be receiving calls from prospective employers.

Email address – only if it is private and you can check for incoming messages regularly. If it is a Yahoo or Hotmail address, ensure the address name is appropriate.

It is no longer usual to include details such as gender, age, marital status, religion, ethnicity or health. It can make your resume look dated and this personal information is not relevant to your ability to do the job. If any of the factors are relevant and an employer has an exemption to discriminate on these grounds, mention the appropriate information in your cover letter.

Education and training

Begin with the highest level of education achieved, where and when you studied. You may wish to include subjects you have studied and their results, or focus on those subjects you have done well in or are particularly relevant to your application. Emphasise your accomplishments.

Work history

The best resumes are brief and informative, so every word in this section must work hard for you. As a general rule, include the most detail about your current job and list it first. Include job title, employer's name and location, dates of employment, a description of your responsibilities and duties, and a description of your achievements in each position. These achievements should demonstrate how you contributed to your employer's business.

If you have not had much paid employment, include any work experience or volunteer work you have done here.

Skills

Skills can be included under the following headings. Choose the heading/s which demonstrates your skills best and meets the needs of the employer.

Employability skills

When these are included, it is very important to provide evidence of these skills.

Other skills

Give details of any other skills that you possess that are relevant to your application, such as speaking another language, typing speed and accuracy, driving and equipment operating licences, or computing and mathematical skills.

Activities and interests

Consider what the activities and interests you include say about you and your values. Think about whether these will be important for your potential employer. Include things like community activities, sports you participate in and other relevant hobbies.



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Career objective

Differences of opinion exist about including a career objective. Some experts dislike them, viewing them as an Americanism, clichéd or adding no value. If you do use one, state it clearly and ensure it will fit with your potential employer. Expect to rewrite it to match each job you apply for.

Referees

Usually list three referees, who can give details of your experience and comment on your personal qualities. Include their name, title, organisation, work phone number and email address, and briefly explain how they know you. Be sure to ask their permission to list them and make sure they are comfortable with recommending you. Give your referees a copy of your resume. The better informed they are, the better prepared they will be when employers call them. Make sure their contact details are kept up to date.

Tailoring your resume – dos and don'ts

Tailor your resume for each application you submit. Every job is unique and requires a different mix of skills and experience.

Don't focus your resume on what you want, but consider the needs and problems facing the employer and what they will want out of an employee.

Do your research on the organisation to work out what problems and challenges the company faces. If you are responding to an advertised vacancy, read the ad closely to identify what issues or problems the successful candidate needs to solve.

Do be selective when looking through your work history, and retrieve the skills and experience most relevant to this employer and position.

Do summarise or leave out those parts of your work history which won't help you get the job

Don't lie

Do select a tone for your application which suits the audience, e.g. aggressively selling yourself may suit a high-powered sales role, but an artistic job might suit a more creative resume.

Do proofread your resume carefully to check and double-check for spelling, grammar and typing errors. Ask someone else to check your résumé as well

Do access your allies. Get somebody whom you trust to read your resume. An objective opinion can help improve your resume, but keep in mind that there are many different ideas about the ideal presentation. Weigh advice carefully.



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Scannable resumes



Scannable resumes are being used more often and this is likely to increase. A scannable resume is one that a company assesses by running through a computer program, which checks the resume by looking for key words or phrases.

In the following situations you will need to have an electronic resume or one that can be scanned, for example:

- large companies or employment agencies who have to handle large numbers of resumes;
- resume banks that use electronic resumes to match qualifications with the employer's requirements using keyword searches.

There are issues you need to be aware of when preparing a resume that will be scanner friendly:

- **Don't use** graphics, fancy borders, decorative lines or shading. The text is what is important for scanning.
- **Do use** plain text. Don't use *italics*, **bolding**, or underlining as this can make the letters run together when scanned. This makes your resume difficult to read.
- **Do choose** a popular font, such as Times New Roman, Arial, Tahoma, Helvetica, Century Gothic or Bookman. The font size you use should be no smaller than 10 and no bigger than 14.
- **Do use** job specific key words. Word searches in a database will be looking for industry terms, hard skills and commonly used trade terms. You can also include words relevant to the target job like job titles, key functions, relevant personality traits, computer software, academic degrees, fields of study, and foreign languages spoken.
- **Do use** a high-resolution laser printer to print your resume, and send an original, not a photocopy.

If you already have a resume, you can make it scanner friendly by applying the first three suggestions, then simply adding a keywords section. Separate keywords and phrases with a comma or full stop.



Comparing resumes

There are three main ways to organise your resume: the chronological, functional or combination/hybrid model. Each format is best suited to different circumstances.

	Reverse chronological	Functional	Combination/Hybrid
Characteristics	Focuses on work history, which is listed with the most recent first. Offers a concise picture of where you've been and what you've done. Lists your most recent jobs first.	Focuses on what you have done, not where and when you did it. Work experience and skills are listed by skill and strength areas important to employers.	Combines the features of both reverse chronological and functional resumes. Focuses on your skills and accomplishments and your work history. Usually begins with a profile or key skills section, followed by work history.
Advantages	Easy to write. Highlights a steady employment history. Employers are accustomed to seeing this format.	Brief and well-structured. Calls attention to accomplishments. Rather than repeat things done in similar jobs, you can group them together. De-emphasises an unstable work history. Can use headings featured in the job description.	Highlights relevant skills which are supported by a strong employment record. Emphasises transferable skills. Calls immediate attention to your accomplishments.
Disadvantages	Emphasises gaps in employment and job hopping. Doesn't effectively reveal skills.	Doesn't provide a context for your skills, as no work history. Can't emphasise loyalty, continuity or recency of experience.	Can be lengthier than the other formats. Work history is usually on 2nd page and some recruiters won't read that far.
Use	When continuing in the same career. To show career progression. When a previous employer's name may be significant.	When entering work for the first time or after a long absence. When work history has been varied or unrelated. When changing fields. To emphasise skills you have, but not drawn on in recent work experience. For older workers as it minimises dates.	When each position you had involved a different job description. When a shorter skills format would lack depth.
Don't use if you ...	Have employment gaps. Have changed jobs a lot. Are entering the job market for the first time or after a long absence. Want to change careers and your work history has no relationship to the job for which you are applying.	Want to highlight career progression. Have recent jobs which had limited responsibilities and functions.	Have limited experience Have large gaps in employment.

From www.myfuture.edu.au



The best resume for the job

Issue	Best Resume type
The most relevant work experience was not the most recent	combination/hybrid It orders according to skills and experience but still has the dates.
Changing industries	combination/hybrid It can highlight the transferable skills that are relevant to the position.
Changing companies within the same industry	chronological It shows a career path clearly and shows that the person is career minded
Moving into a related industry e.g. photography into multimedia.	chronological It shows how a career has developed over the years and shows that the career change is a logical step.
Returning to a previous role e.g. a hands on person who entered administration but wants to go back to being hands on	combination/hybrid It stresses the job the person would prefer to continue rather than the most recent job.
Had several positions in the same organisation and would now like to focus on one area	combination/hybrid The person can focus on the functional area that was preferred even if it wasn't the most recent.
Re-entering the workforce	combination/hybrid It draws on and emphasises the skills and experience the person may have picked up while not working or before leaving the workforce.
Been in the same job for years and concerned that this will be viewed as being unambitious or unmotivated	combination/hybrid It focuses on the skills learnt, rather than the jobs over a time period.
Wants to move around a lot between jobs	combination/hybrid Will 'package' the transferable skills of this person.
A graduate with little experience	combination/hybrid Draws on and emphasises the skills and experience the graduate may have picked up while studying, doing internships or part-time jobs. Also emphasises training and education over non-related work experience.