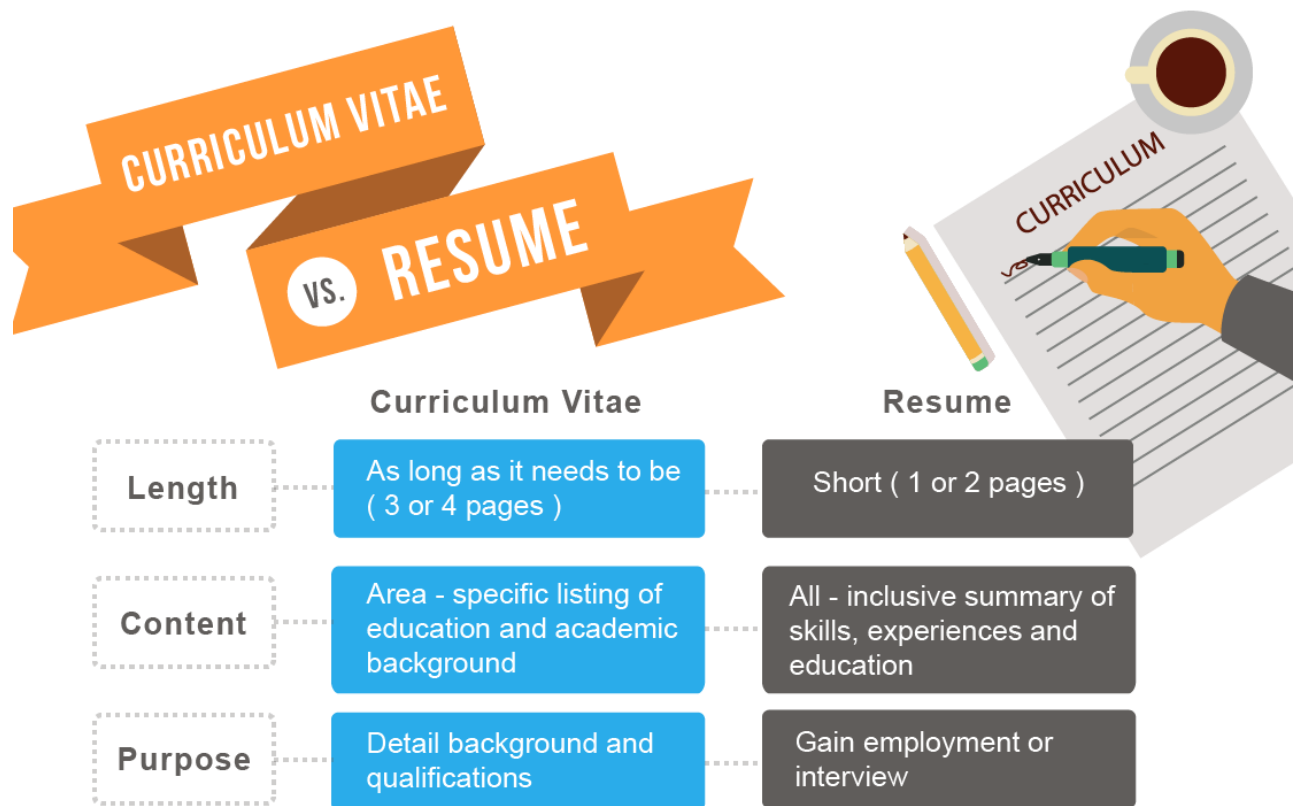# Resume Writing Guide

What is a Resume?

A resume is the representation of your professional self. It is a concise compilation of your educational and professional experience, as well as the skills that make you desirable for the workforce. It is what you use to sell your merit and skills to potential employers.

Your resume is the single most important part of the application process. It is meant to be an overview of your very best skills, experience, and capabilities. A well-organized, relevant resume will set you up to get an interview, while a poor resume will get completely lost in the sea of applicants. We'll use fake job-seeker, Sarah Smith, as an example throughout The Resume Writing Guide to help make things more clear.

What is the Difference Between a Resume and a CV?

Some companies will indicate that they want you to submit a CV rather than a resume. A CV and a resume are not the same. CV stands for "curriculum vitae" and is meant to be an expansion of your resume. It is much longer than a resume, often three pages or more, and focuses mainly on your academic and professional accomplishments, with a particular focus on education.

	Curriculum Vitae	Resume
Length	As long as it needs to be (3 or 4 pages)	Short (1 or 2 pages)
Content	Area - specific listing of education and academic background	All - inclusive summary of skills, experiences and education
Purpose	Detail background and qualifications	Gain employment or interview

In the United States, a CV is almost exclusively limited to professions in academia, science and medicine. For example, in the case of academia, the main focus of the CV should be to identify yourself as a scholar. The added length, compared to a resume, should be filled with proof of your skills as a teacher, scholar, and your knowledge of education. A CV should be thought of as a living document, and it will change frequently based on the updates in your education and career.

Resume writing is likely different than other types of writing you've done in the past. A resume is much shorter in length compared to a CV, usually limited to one page. It is meant to be a very brief synopsis of your career and education history. Resumes should focus on measurable accomplishments rather than soft skills. Like a CV, resumes need to be updated, but those updates will be less extensive and will pertain mostly to the specific job for which you are applying.

For example, let's say Sarah Smith has a couple of internships and two years work experience in marketing under her belt. If she is applying for another job in marketing, she should use a resume rather than a CV. If she hasn't updated her resume since her internships, she has a lot of new skills and experience to add that will make her a more desirable candidate.

What to Include in Your Resume

The number one tip in our Resume Writing Guide is to keep your resume as clear and concise as possible. While there is no length limit to your resume, it is meant to showcase only your relevant work experience. The key word here is relevant. For example, if an early part of your employment history does not pertain to the job for which you're applying, and you're running out of space, don't include that information. So what should you include in your resume?

Contact Information

This might seem obvious, but it is very important. Make sure your resume is updated with your most recent contact information. Recruiters and hiring managers often get thousands of resumes for one job position, so providing them with your email address, personal phone number, and home address will make contacting you for an interview much easier. When including your email address, be sure not to use addresses that are too casual. For example, sarahsmith123@gmail.com is much more appropriate than ilovebieber@gmail.com.

Also be sure to include your city, state and zip code in your contact info, since employers will sometimes search applicant tracking systems with these criteria.

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Work Experience

This section should include all relevant paid work experience, including internships. Volunteer or charity work should not be included in this section, or often at all (see below). Make the title of this section a reflection of your paid experience: "Work Experience", "Employment History", and "Work History" are all appropriate titles. This should be listed above "Education" unless you are a recent college graduate, since that information is most pertinent to employers.

Include measurable accomplishments such as "increased revenue by 25%" as well as responsibilities. It is easy to get carried away describing your work experience, but keeping it short is crucial. Once you get an interview, you can go into deeper detail.

For each internship or job, include the name of the organization where you were employed, the city and state, the title of the positions held, the employment period for each job (include both years and months), and a short description of your responsibilities and accomplishments listed in bullet points. You should also include information about promotions in this section. When listing your responsibilities, start with the most valuable experience first, since the employer will likely be skimming your resume top-down.

Work Experience

Human Resources and Payroll Manager
Consumer Products, (March 2006-Present), Brampton, Ohio
  Function as an HR Generalist, responsible for Payroll Administration, Benefits/Compensation, Training and Development, Recruitment and Employee Relations, reporting to the AGM/Controller
- Manage and process bi-weekly payroll for 200 salaried/hourly employees using Ceridian Insync
- Coach managers on the process of evaluating employees, setting goals, conducting objective performance reviews, and recognizing and awarding performance to improve productivity
- Handle employee terminations, grievance and other difficult situations in a sensitive, fair and respectful manner, working closely with legal counsel, supervisors and management

Accomplishments
- Established and maintained proper structures and processes to track time and attendance, vacations, STD/LTD and other activities resulting in efficiency gains of 33%
- Implemented Payroll and HR policies resulting in annual cost savings of $237,000
- Improved "employer branding" by working with the IT department to design, develop and launch the company's first career site

Manager of Administration and Accounting
AMPOAH Contacting Co., LTD., (2000-2005), Hamilton, Illinois
  Directed and efficiently managed the Human Resources, Accounting and Administration functions for the Manufacturing and Distribution divisions of the company, reported to the Vice-President
- Provided Human Resources services and support to manager and division heads, assisting them to achieve divisional goals and objectives through strategic people management
- Administered payroll for 1,710 employees, including benefits package and RRSP plans
- Established an open channel of communication enabling employees quick and easy access to information such as benefits, training and development and opportunities for career advancement

Accomplishments
- Worked directly with the President to redesign the company's HR strategy and payroll function to support 1,710 salaried and hourly employees
- Created a job costing model from a manual costing system by analyzing all functions of cost and developing a system to track, monitor and cost all stages of production, resulting in cost savings of $750,000 and recovery of $250,000 from a change back claims for product deficiencies
- Contributed to a work environment that promoted innovation and peak performance by integrating high-performance expectations into everyday business practices and using HR policies to support the organization's core values and competencies

Education

When providing your education on your resume, list degrees in reverse order. For example, if you have a master's degree, it should be listed before your bachelor's degree. Again, if a hiring manager or recruiter is skimming your resume, you want them to see your highest degree first. It is very important to include dates in this section. Furthermore, if you have a bachelor's degree, it is not necessary to include your high school education on your resume. It is assumed that you graduated high school if you've obtained a higher degree. Leaving out this information will give you space for more important information later on in your resume.

Only include your GPA if it is higher than 3.5 on a 4 point scale (no need to mention that 2.0 when you moved into the frat house sophomore year). There are a few exceptions to this rule, like if you're applying for a job in academia, engineering or if you are within five years of graduating. When you gain more work experience, it should take the place of your GPA.

You can also list honors or awards if you're a recent graduate. If you attended college, but did not finish your degree, list the number of credits obtained. For recent graduates, education is your main selling point. Feel free to amp up this section until you have more experience, but be careful not to embellish.

Skills

The skills section is important when your resume is being submitted to an ATS . ATS stands for "applicant tracking systems", software used by many companies to sort applicants. ATS sorts and ranks applicants using keywords specific to the job posting. Use this section as a hub for keywords specific to the job for which you're applying. Your resume should be tailored to each job you apply to, and the skills section is the most important part of the tailoring process.

Remember to include only hard skills. Hard skills are provable, experience-based skills. Examples include computer programing, Wordpress, Spanish fluency, heavy machinery operation and HTML. Also include a description of the skill.

Skills

JavaScript	Photoshop
HTML/CSS	Illustrator
C++	Microsoft Word
Python	Microsoft Excel
PHP	Microsoft PowerPoint

Awards and Accolades/Affiliations

Only include this section if it makes sense for the job for which you're applying. If you've received relevant awards or have affiliations that the recruiter or hiring manager would like to know about, feel free to list them. Steer clear of listing affiliations that are not relevant, such as political or religious affiliations.

Community Service

This is another one that is a judgment call. If you're applying for a leadership or management role, or a non-profit company, community service is worth listing. Always think of relevance before adding anything to your resume. For example, if you are applying for a job in marketing and have volunteer experience in social media, that's great information to add. If you are applying for that same job in marketing and volunteered in a food kitchen, there's no need to include it in your resume.

What to Skip

Objective Statement

The objective statement is somewhat antiquated since ATS have become popular. Unless you're sure that your resume is going directly into the hands of the hiring manager or recruiter, an objective statement is not necessary. If you like the idea of an objective statement, consider adding an executive summary statement

instead. While an objective statement explains what you hope to accomplish, a summary statement explains who you are and what you have already accomplished.
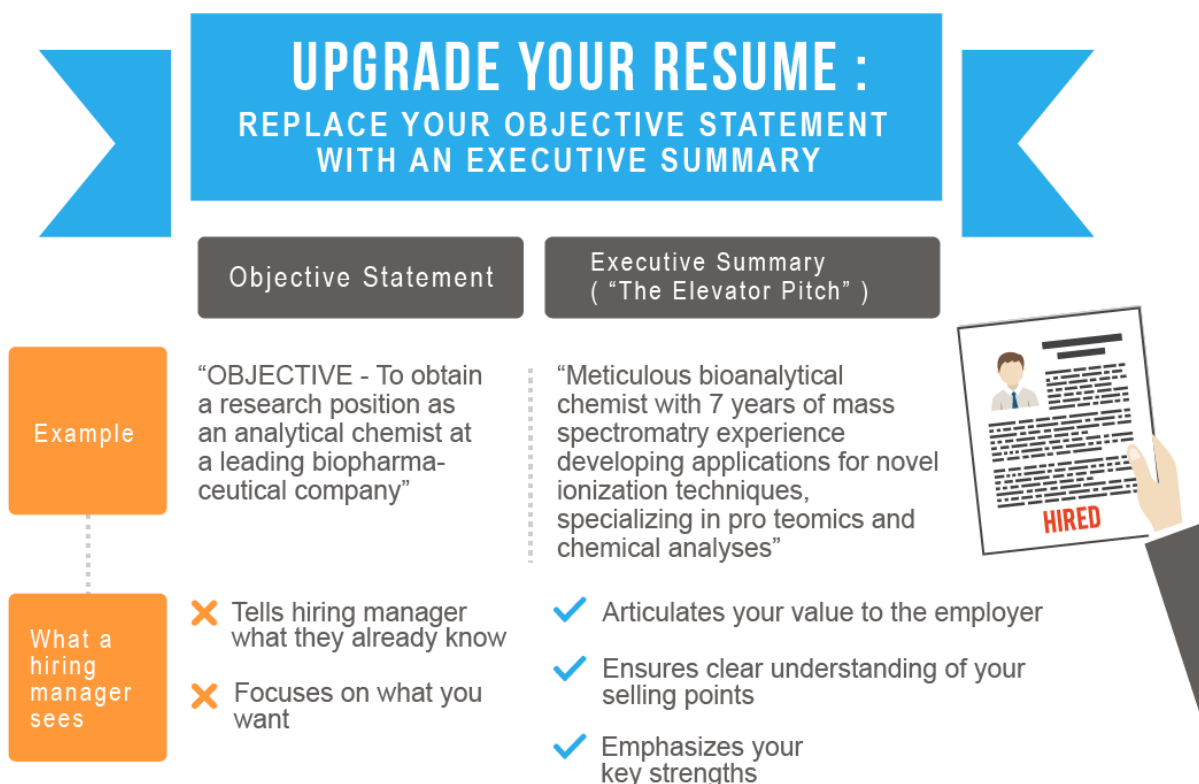
References

It is assumed that you have references if you have previous employment history. It is not even necessary to include "references available upon request". Potential employers will ask you for your references later on in the interview process.

Soft Skills

Soft skills are any skills that are not provable or quantifiable. If Sarah Smith says she is "hardworking", "problem solving", has a "strong work ethic", and "positive attitude", the recruiter has no way of knowing whether or not that is true. Use hard skills only and prove the soft skills by listing your accomplishments and promotions on your resume.

GPA

As mentioned above, your GPA is only necessary if you are a recent college graduate and do not have work experience to back you up. There are a few jobs that require a GPA, however, including engineering and finance.

How to Format a Resume

There are a few different ways to format your resume. Choosing the best format for you will only make the resume writing process easier. When choosing a format, you should consider the job for which you are applying. Chronological, functional, and hybrid formatting styles each have specific purposes for the applicant.
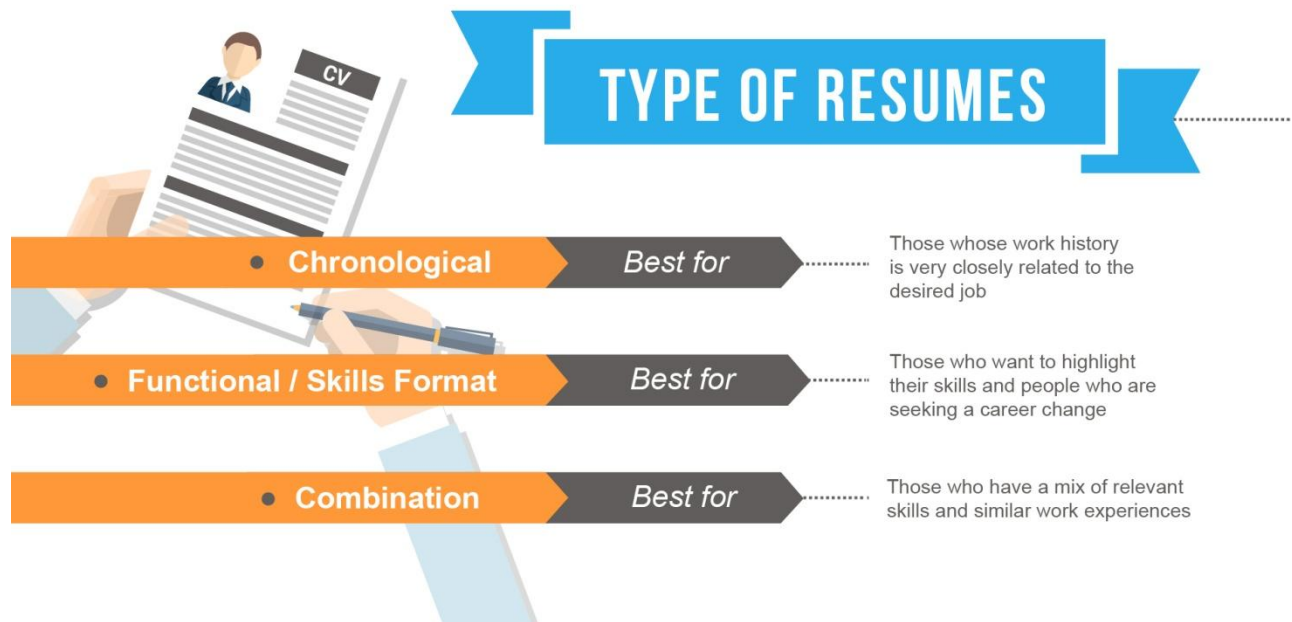
Use Keywords to Tailor Your Resume

One of the biggest mistakes you can make when applying to jobs is sending the same generic resume out for each one. Sure, you can apply to more jobs if you don't take the time to personalize your resume each time, but chances are you won't get interviews from any of them. If you take the time to tailor your resume, even though you'll be applying for fewer jobs, you'll get more interviews.

Applicant Tracking Systems use keywords to search through thousands of resumes. Think of ATS as a search engine. You want to optimize your resume so it shows up at the top of the search. Hiring managers and recruiters can type in a keyword and get a ranking of the top applicants. Reading the job posting carefully and using relevant keywords is crucial to getting through ATS.

Covering Gaps in Employment

If you have major gaps in employment, there are a few ways to make them less noticeable. It is important to be honest about gaps in your resume and not try to cover them up, but to make them seem productive and intentional.

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Dedicated civil engineer with experience in structural and transportation design and proven leadership abilities

Core Competencies

- Structural investigation and design
- Computer aided design (CAD)
- Conceptual design & development
- Traffic engineering
- Land development
- Construction drawings

- Hydraulics and hydrology
- Soils and earthwork
- Budgeting and scheduling
- Impact studies and specifications
- Groundwater monitoring
- Floodplain management

Education

Bachelor of Science: Civil Engineering, emphasis in Structures   **May 2003**
Northern State University, Uptown, NY

Relevant Projects

Urban Lake and Park Development for City of Centerville, NY
  Scope of design included storm water runoff, earthwork, structural analysis of retaining wall, and parking/sidewalk design
- Designated project manager of a four person team
- Retained quality control over project scope to preserve manageable size and avoid State violations
- Initiated communications with city engineers and Fish & Game personnel on project-related issues and guidance
- Maintained project schedule and completed on time, received an 'A' grade

Highway Design for State of Massachusetts
  The project scope included design of one-mile stretch of highway through private and public lands. Design challenges included steep terrain, storm weather runoff, super-elevation for curves, and negotiating homes, businesses and cemetery
- Design included horizontal and vertical design based on minimal earthwork and minimal disturbance to local businesses, home and public land
- Maintained projected schedule and completed on time, received an 'A' grade

Selected Achievements

- Earned statues of Engine Boss and Incident Commander Type 4 and oversaw wildfire control, including methods of attack, personnel and equipment requirements, and strategic planning; maintained personnel and public safety
- Supervised up to 150 personnel and all equipment needs including air intakes, engines, helicopters, and water tenders
- Used sound judgment and decision-making skills to preserve safety of crew and implement strategic plans of attack against wildfires
- Developed strong leadership and communication skills as demonstrated by high-level of performance by crewmembers

Employment History

Delivery/Yard Crew: Big Tree Lumber Co., City, MT

Forestry Technician: Tonto National Forest, City, CA

Type 2, 3 and 6 Crewmember: Rural Metro Fire Department, City, CA

Technical & Related Skills

MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Project/AutoCAD/HED-HMS/Haestad Methods- WaterCAD, SewerCAD, Flowmaster
Familiar codes and methods: NEPA, UBC, ASD, NDS, LRFD

Example of a functional resume format

Using a functional resume format is beneficial when you have gaps in employment. The functional resume highlights honors and achievements more than work experience. It lists your skills and other attributes that make you a good employee at the top of the resume.

It is important to fill the gaps in employment with experiences that helped you grow. Volunteer work, continuing education, and other projects you worked on during that time are all great options. Be sure to use a positive tone while describing the gaps in employment and be confident about them when interviewing later.