

quick tips Resume Essentials

Step 1. Format Your Resume

Your resume is one of the best marketing tools you can use in finding a career, and often one of the first things a potential employer requests of you during the job or internship search process. Often, it is the employer's first impression of you as a candidate. Your resume should communicate information about your skills, abilities, fit within the company, and career goals. Because everyone has different skills, strengths, and experiences, there is no one exact way to write a resume. The checklist below will provide you with resume basics and best practices to get you started.

Keep it to one page

Your resume should only be one page in length. A good rule to follow is one page for every 8-10 years of experience. However, graduate students who have worked for several years may require more than one page.

Ensure the formatting is clear, concise, and consistent

Be sure your resume is easy to read with clean, simple lines and equal amounts of text and white space. Use a font that is readable, no smaller than 10 point or larger than 14 point. Be consistent with your formatting techniques and use boldfacing and italicizing sparingly.

Include items that are most relevant to the position for which you are applying

Your resume should include skills, experiences, coursework, projects, and activities that are the most relevant and significant to your career goals. You may need to take some time to brainstorm what experiences are most related to your goals. Be sure to include the most relevant information/sections toward the top of your resume.

Write action- and results-oriented bullet points

In order to communicate your major accomplishments to an employer, it is important to write impactful bullet points within your relevant experience section. You want to list the accomplishments that would be of interest to an employer and translate your experience into results, quantifying whenever possible. Sometimes this can be the most challenging part of writing a resume. Try to use this formula when writing your bullet points:

Accomplished [x] as measured by [y] by doing [z]

In other words, start with an action verb, measure what you accomplished, and describe what you did to achieve your goal. Avoid lengthy sentences or paragraphs and focus on concise, impactful statements.

quick tips Resume Essentials (cont.)

Step 2. Manage Resume Content

Add your contact information

The top section of your resume should include all of your contact information, including your name, phone number, email address, and LinkedIn profile URL. Personal webpages and/or online portfolios can be included if they are relevant. Be sure that your name is in a larger font to make it stand out.

Include an education section

This section includes the name and location of your college/university. You will also need to list the degree(s), major(s), and minor(s) you are pursuing as well as your graduation date (month/year). If your GPA is a 3.0 or above, it's a good idea to include it in this section. If you have attended more than one college/university, list the schools from most recent to least recent.

List your relevant coursework

This is an important section to include in your resume, especially when applying for internships. List your highest level of coursework taken in your major as well as any coursework related to your career goals. For some majors, honors include Dean's List, scholarships, publications, exhibits, grants, and special awards.

Emphasize your skills

A skills section is important to include, especially when applying for more technical positions. List specific and distinct skills. Avoid listing general or vague skills such as "leadership" or "collaborative." Skills can be organized in various categories including computer/technical, laboratory, spoken language, and machines. You may also list the degree of mastery so the reader understands your proficiency level (e.g., advanced, intermediate, basic, etc.).

List your relevant experience (1 of 2)

This section should include any relevant work, volunteer, or leadership experience. Your experience should be listed from most recent to least recent. You can also create more specific section titles, such as "Writing Experience," "Technical Experience," or "Work Experience," in order to highlight your most important and relevant experience first. (more on next page)

quick tips Resume Essentials (cont.)

Step 2. Manage Resume Content

List your relevant experience (2 of 2)

Each experience should be listed separately. Be sure to include your job title, the name of the company/organization, city/ state, and the dates you were employed (month/year – month/year). Under each experience, you want to list your major accomplishments as well as the value that you added within that position. This information should be formatted in concise, action-oriented bullet points.

Highlight class projects or research

A project or research section on your resume can emphasize your technical and teamwork skills. List the name of the project/lab as well as the semester in which it was completed. Your projects should be listed from most recent to least recent. Use action-oriented bullet points to describe the project including your role, the purpose of the project, and result of your work.

Include extracurricular activities

In the activities section of your resume, list any clubs or organizations which you are an active member of. Be sure to include the years that you participated as well as any leadership positions you held in the organization. Your activities should be listed from most recent to least recent. This is a great section to highlight your leadership skill as well as your outside passions and interests.

Showcase your honors and achievements

Listing honors and awards helps reinforce your strong academic abilities. These should be listed in reverse chronological order (most to least recent), including the month and year the award was received. Examples of honors include Dean's List, scholarships, publications, exhibits, grants, and special awards.



Additional Help

It is important to remember that everyone's resume is different. Visit cmu.edu/career to access sample resumes by college. Additionally, be sure to set up an appointment with your career consultant, who can help you tell your story and guide you through the resume writing process.