Step-by-Step Resume Guide

Your resume is a marketing piece that will help employers determine if your skills and experiences meet the requirements to perform a specific job within their organization. Its purpose is to get you an interview at an organization at which you would like to work. This guide will help you create a resume that clearly and concisely describes pertinent information about your skills, experiences, and accomplishments.

A resume is made up of sections that help employers learn about a candidate; some sections are essential, while others are considered optional. Throughout the resume writing process, you will receive feedback from other people and ideas from sample resumes, but *you* must decide which information best communicates who you are and is most relevant to a potential employer and their hiring goals.

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BASIC CONCEPTS

This section of the Resume Guide will review a few basic resume concepts related to formatting and writing bullet points.

Formatting

Font & Margins: Use one, easy to read font for the body of the resume. The size of the font should be 10-12, your name may be larger. Use formatting, such as bold, underline and italics for emphasis. Margins should be no smaller than 0.5" and should be consistent throughout the document.

Dates: Headings/sections should be listed in order of importance/relevance. Within each heading, experiences should be listed in reverse chronological order (i.e. most recent to least recent).

Locations: Include City, State when describing locations within the United Sates. Spell out the city and abbreviate state with capital letters (Pittsburgh, PA). If including a location outside of the United States, include City, Country (Beijing, China). If the work was completed remotely or virtually, you can list the office's location with the word Remote (Pittsburgh, PA | Remote).

Length: Students with less than 10 years of experience should have a one-page resume.

Bullet Points

Employers assess the resume to determine if the candidate has the appropriate skills and experience for their organization/position. List your key achievements and add details which show your demonstrated results.

Begin sentences with action verbs (past tense unless it's a current activity/project) and be specific when detailing your results and the value you added to each experience. Use consistent punctuation for bullets (bullet points do not require periods). Try to write one phrase per line when possible, but no more than two lines per bullet point. Use bullets to indicate new lines. Review the Action Verbs List (enclosed) for assistance in selecting a variety of strong verbs for your resume.

Use this formula: Action Verb + Context (tell the what) + Result (Metrics, Outcome, and/or Impact)

Examples:
- Combined circuits to create a mini programmable robot that successfully completed a test course with zero failures or errors
- Collaborated with a team of five to design a carry-on suitcase that can increase storage capacity by 133% to reduce the need for checked luggage
- Implemented a convolutional neural network from scratch to classify handwritten digits from MNIST dataset, achieved 97% accuracy
- Testing and prototyping a conversational user interface for autonomous vehicles to mitigate pedestrian perceptions of safety concerns

When constructing bullet points, the resume should focus on the most relevant experience from undergraduate work to present day. The more relevant/recent an experience, the more detail you should provide.

THE SECTIONS OF A RESUME

Aside from your contact information, the resume should be divided into sections with headings that accurately describe their content. This section of the guide will review the basic headings that you may include in your initial resume.

Required Sections: Contact Information, Education, Experience and/or Projects, Skills
Optional Sections: Activities, Honors, Publications, Conferences, Objective

You must evaluate your background to determine the most appropriate order for sections in your resume, but the most important/relevant content should be listed first. Your Career Consultant can assist you in this process, and also help you with the titles of your sections if needed.

Contact Information

The top of the resume should highlight name, email and phone number. Unlike the remainder of the resume, no heading is required for contact information. Make sure that the phone number listed will be answered by YOU and has a professional outgoing voicemail message. List an email address (preferably CMU email or an account that is regularly monitored) and LinkedIn URL. This section can also include links to a personal website, portfolio or GitHub.

Do NOT Include:
- Personal information: birth date, marital status, height, weight, personal identity information (social security number, passport info), etc.
- Photo

Example:

Firstname M. Lastname
xxx1234@andrew.cmu.edu ♦ (412) 555-5555 ♦ www.linkedin.com/firstlast

Education

Education should appear as the first section of a graduate resume. Start with the most recent educational experience (Carnegie Mellon University). Bold university names and spell them out completely. List the name of the Degree Program as it would appear on an official transcript and graduation date.

Required Information:
- Name of Institution and location
- Degree awarded or to be awarded and field of study
- Month & Year of graduation OR anticipated graduation date

Optional Information:
- QPA
- Foreign study and exchange programs
- Selected coursework
- Thesis topic (if applicable)

Example:

EDUCATION
Carnegie Mellon University – School of Computer Science   Pittsburgh, PA
Master of Science in Machine Learning | QPA: 3.77/4.33   May 2020

Indian Institute of Technology   Mumbai, India
Bachelor of Science in Electrical and Computer Engineering | GPA: 9.0/10.0   May 2017

Coursework

Listing relevant coursework is a great way to highlight familiarity with key concepts. Do not list every course that you have taken. Focus on highlighting the courses that are most relevant to the positions/field that you plan to pursue.

Coursework can be listed in its own section using a "Coursework" heading. Or, it can be listed as a subheading titled "Relevant Coursework" or "Selected Coursework" within the "Education" section. The location of the "Coursework" section varies depending upon the contents of your other sections. Contact your Career Consultant for advice.

Example 1:
COURSEWORK

Machine Learning	Distributed Systems
Computer Vision	Algorithms and Advanced Data Structures
Cloud Computing	Artificial Intelligence

Example 2:
EDUCATION
Carnegie Mellon University – School of Computer Science   Pittsburgh, PA
Master of Science in Machine Learning | QPA: 3.77/4.33   May 2020
Selected Coursework: Machine Learning Distributed Systems, Algorithms and Advanced Data Structures, Computer Vision, Artificial Intelligence

Experience

When developing this section of the resume, start with the general header of "Experience" then work with your Career Consultant to determine if it makes sense to separate the content into narrowly focused sections such as "Research Experience" or "Professional Experience," etc.

Be mindful that "Experience" as a standalone title implies employment. If the information is included in the "Experience" section is not in fact employment, then the section should be renamed to more accurately reflect the nature of the entry.

Required Information:
- Organization name
- Job/position title
- Location (city and state or equivalent)
- Dates

EXPERIENCE
Best Engineering Company Pittsburgh, PA
Software Engineering Intern May 2018 – Aug. 2018
- Collaborated with a team of 3 to develop Python modules and fabricate custom plates to calibrate depth sensors
- Implemented GPU kernels for camera correction that were deployed to production robots
- Developed target-finding algorithm using C++ and OpenCV for new customer applications

Projects

Include a select number of academic and/or research projects on the resume. This serves to further provide examples of experience and to illustrate practical applications of your skillset.

Example:
ACADEMIC PROJECTS
Intelligent Indoor Emergency Response System Carnegie Mellon University | April 2018
- Developed a priority-based A* algorithm for task allocation in a multi-agent environment, tasks were prioritized based on proximity to the emergency resulting in efficient evacuation

Skills

List any relevant skills specific to your field including programming languages, tools, frameworks, software, computing environments, etc. Sub-categorize skills whenever possible. List skills in order of proficiency (i.e. most to least proficient). Do not include soft skills such as "teamwork" or "leadership" in this section.

Example:
SKILLS
Programming Languages: Python, SQL, C++, Java
Software: Solidworks, MATLAB, OpenCV
Computing Environments: Windows, Linux, Arduino, Raspberry Pi

Activities

List memberships in campus and professional organizations or other activities that show involvement in your academic community or profession.

Example:
ACTIVITIES
Member, Women@SCS, Carnegie Mellon University 2017 - Present
Mentor, Girls of Steel Robotics Team, Carnegie Mellon University 2016 - Present
Member, FIRST Robotics 2012 – 2016

Honors

Honors, Scholarships, Fellowships, and Awards should be listed, if received. Depending on the type of honor, these honors may be embedded within other sections or experiences OR if robust/ varied enough, included as a standalone section. Select only those awards or honors that represent strengths and are timely (i.e. likely will not include high school honors).

Example:
HONORS

Academic Scholarship, Carnegie Mellon University	2017-Present
Dean's List, Indian Institute of Technology	2012-2016
Best Project Award, Carnegie Mellon University, Introduction to Machine Learning	2017

Publications

Publications can be listed in a separate section if numerous, or under the relevant research/work experience.

Conferences

Conference presentations can be listed in a separate section if numerous, or under the relevant research/work experience section to which they apply.

Objective

The use of an objective/summary is optional. If included, it should be towards the top of the resume, below contact information and ahead of Education.

Many students do not need to include an objective. Objectives can be helpful for students with a diverse or varied background, can help to focus the resume and provide clarity to an employer regarding career goals, related skills and the value you can add to the prospective organization.

Consider the following when writing an objective/summary:
- Focus on what skills, experiences and abilities that would bring value to the employer and position to which you intend to apply.
- Avoid broad/generalized statements such as, "To pursue employment in the software engineering field."
- Avoid listing several fields or positions.
- It is acceptable to have two resumes with two different objectives or summaries and to tailor resumes to different job searches.

Firstname M. Lastname

firstlast@andrew.cmu.edu ♦ (412)555-5555 ♦ www.linkedin.com/firstlastname

EDUCATION

University Name   Location (City, State)
Master of (Degree Program)   Graduation Date (Month Year)
GPA: XX
Selected Coursework: [Optional- list only the coursework that is most relevant to your job search 3-6 classes]

University Name   Location
Bachelor of (Degree Program)- Major   Graduation Date (Month
Year) [Optional- List high academic honors]
GPA: XX

SKILLS

Category 1: [List only skills in which you are proficient]
Category 2: [List only skills in which you are proficient]
Languages: [Optional- list spoken languages multiple proficiencies exist. i.e.: English (Fluent), Hindi (Native Speaker)]

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Company A   Location
Job Title   Duration (Month -Month
Year)
- Verb + Context + Result
- Verb + Context + Result
- Verb + Context + Result

Company B   Location
Job Title   Duration (Month -Month
Year)
- Verb + Context + Result
- Verb + Context + Result
- Verb + Context + Result

Company C   Location
Job Title   Duration (Month -Month
Year)
- Verb + Context + Result
- Verb + Context + Result
- Verb + Context + Result

ACADEMIC PROJECTS

Project Name   Location
University Name   Semester/Date
- Verb + Context + Result
- Verb + Context + Result
- Verb + Context + Result

Project Name   Location
University Name   Semester/Date
- Verb + Context + Result
- Verb + Context + Result
- Verb + Context + Result

HONORS

Title, Organization Name- Location   Duration

Strong Verbs List

accomplished	computed	evaluated	maintained	represented
achieved	conceptualized	examined	managed	researched
adapted	concluded	exceeded	marketed	resolved
addressed	conducted	excelled	mastered	responded
administered	confronted	executed	measured	restored
administrated	consolidated	expanded	mediated	retrieved
advised	constructed	expedited	mentored	revamped
aided	consulted	explained	minimized	reviewed
allocated	contacted	extended	modeled	revolutionized
altered	contributed	extracted	moderated	salvaged
analyzed	converted	fabricated	modernized	saved
applied	convinced	facilitated	monitored	schedule
appraised	cooperated	finalized	motivated	screened
approved	coordinated	forecasted	negotiated	searched
approximated	counseled	formalized	operated	secured
arbitrated	created	formed	orchestrated	selected
arranged	critiqued	formulated	organized	served
ascertained	customized	fostered	overhauled	shaped
assembled	debugged	founded	oversaw	sold
assessed	deciphered	fulfilled	performed	solicited
assigned	decreased	gained	persuaded	solved
assisted	delegated	gathered	pioneered	spearheaded
attained	delivered	generated	planned	specified
attended	demonstrated	grew	prepared	spoke
audited	designed	guided	presented	sponsored
augmented	determined	helped	prioritized	started
authored	developed	identified	processed	stimulated
automated	devised	illustrated	procured	strengthened
balanced	diagnosed	implemented	produced	suggested
boosted	directed	increased	programmed	summarized
briefed	disassembled	inferred	projected	supervised
broadened	discovered	influenced	promoted	supplemented
budgeted	dissuaded	informed	provided	supported
built	distributed	initiated	publicized	surveyed
calculated	documented	innovated	published	synthesized
captured	drafted	inspected	purchased	systematized
catalogued	educated	inspired	rated	taught
centralized	elaborated	installed instilled	reconciled	tested
chaired	elevated	instituted	recorded	traced
charted	eliminated	instructed	recommended	trained
clarified	empathized	integrated	recruited	transformed
classified	empowered	interpreted	reduced	translated
coached	enabled	interviewed	referred	troubleshot
collaborated	encouraged	introduced	refined	tutored
collected	enforced	invented	reflected	uncovered
communicated	engineered	investigated	reformed	updated
compared	enhanced	justified	remedied	upgraded
compiled	enlisted	launched	remodeled	utilized
completed	ensured	lectured	reorganized	validated
composed	established	led	repaired	verified
compromised	estimated	listened	reported	wrote

Resume Self-Review

General Formatting

☐ Margins are the same for the top, bottom, and sides and between 0.5 - 1 inch

☐ Font size is between 10pt and 12pt font for the body of the resume, the same font is used throughout the resume, only your name is larger

☐ Bullet points and sections are aligned uniformly throughout the resume

☐ Dates are written consistently

☐ Bullet point punctuation is consistent

☐ A consistent format is used throughout the entire document and within each section

☐ Sections/headings are listed in order of relevance/importance

☐ Information within each heading/experience is listed in reverse chronological order

Contact Information

☐ Full name (First and Last), cell phone number and professional email address (CMU or professionally named private email) are located at the top of your resume

Education and Coursework

☐ College/university names are spelled out (i.e. Carnegie Mellon University not CMU)

☐ The official name of each degree and program is listed

☐ You have listed only the month and year you earned your degree(s) and/or expect to earn it/them (no date ranges)

☐ GPA is listed (where applicable) and GPA scale is included (i.e. 3.75/4.0)

☐ Coursework list is limited to the courses most relevant to your job search and does not include future coursework

Work, Project and Research Experience

☐ Organization/Company name and location are clearly listed (city, state in United States; city, country if international; if you worked virtually- city, state (for the location to which you reported) followed by remote or virtual, ex: City, State- Virtual)

☐ Job title is clearly displayed (when applicable)

☐ Course name and/or project name listed (when applicable)

☐ Dates of experiences are listed for each position, company and /or project

☐ Dates and location are on the right side of the page, organizations and titles are on the left side of the page

☐ Each phrase starts with an action verb in the appropriate tense (present for current, past for completed experiences)

☐ Bullet points include accomplishments, results, metrics, outcomes, etc. whenever possible

Skills

☐ Relevant skills are listed (Programming Languages, Software, Lab Instrumentation, Foreign Languages, etc.).

☐ Skills are subcategorized, specific skills are listed in each subcategory (i.e. Programming Languages: C, Java, C++)

☐ Skills are labeled with proficiency levels IF you have a range of proficiencies within the skills listed

Activities/Honors/Leadership (Optional)

☐ Activities, honors/awards, and/or leadership experiences are relevant and timely if included