



| Career Services

Resumé guide



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Your resumé isn't just a record of employment. It's a self-marketing tool; an advertisement meant to persuade employers to contact you for an interview. Creating an effective resumé requires that you have a specific goal in mind, a clear understanding of the employer's needs and a writing style that aims to influence rather than merely inform. This guide will help you understand the basic elements of a resumé and how to effectively communicate your value to employers.

1 Establish a focus

Remember, your resumé is an advertisement that sells you as the most suitable candidate for a specific position. Thus, you need to have a clear goal in mind so you can tailor your resumé for that particular job.

Establish a focus with keywords

Keywords are one of the best ways to demonstrate a focus for your resumé. They are words and phrases that are strongly associated with the job and industry you're targeting. These words are usually job-specific skills, relevant software applications, and position titles – any words a recruiter may use to search for qualified candidates.

TARGETED POSITION

Staff Accountant

RESUMÉ KEYWORDS

Accounts payable, audit, budgeting, financial reporting, income statement, balance sheet, cash flow statement, Excel, attention to detail, generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP)

Why are keywords important?

Most resúmes are screened by an applicant tracking system (ATS) – computer software that scans your resumé for keywords to determine how well you match the targeted position. Resúmes that lack keywords are highly unlikely to advance to the next level. You should even include keywords when naming your resumé file (e.g., YourName_JobTitle_Resumé).

How to find keywords

1. Use career databases like [O*NET](#) or the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) to research key responsibilities/skills for occupations you're targeting.
2. Perform a Google search for keyword resources available online, like this [résumé keyword list](#).
3. Study several job postings for the same type of position, analyzing them for common keywords. Once you find the most common keywords related to the job you're targeting, incorporate them throughout your résumé, placing them in context of your education and experience.

I List the keywords associated with the job you want.

Establish a focus by tailoring your résumé

Tailoring your résumé means demonstrating a clear match between your knowledge, skills and abilities and the job requirements. You do this by learning what employers expect from competitive candidates and then writing about elements of your background, education and experience that are most relevant to the role.

How to learn what employers want:

1. Use career databases like [O*NET](#) or the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) to research key responsibilities/skills for occupations you're targeting.
2. Study several job postings for the same type of position, analyzing them for key responsibilities, skills and credentials.
3. Talk to people in the field by conducting [informational interviews](#).

Reflect on your knowledge, skills and abilities

Once you learn what employers expect from you, reflect on your education and experience to determine how you meet the requirements. Here are some questions to consider:

- When have I performed the exact same tasks required for the job? (e.g., past job, internship, volunteer position)

Basic elements of a resumé

Although resúmes may contain a variety of sections, some basic elements are highly recommended, if not required;

SECTION	WHAT TO INCLUDE
Contact Information	Name, city/state/ZIP, phone, and a professional email
Qualifications Summary or Profile	Condensed "elevator pitch" promoting you for position
Experience	Work history with company, position title, location and dates; key responsibilities, achievements and results
Education	Correct name of degree, school and graduation date

Note that an Objective section is not listed. Objective statements are primarily used by students seeking internships, co-ops or practicums. Also, be aware that the titles of headings can vary, depending on the needs and preferences of the candidate. For example, IT professionals may include a Technical Skills section or a nursing student may include Clinical Rotations.

Examples

On the next two pages, you will find two examples of well-formatted resúmes.

- 1. Entry-level or career change:** The first example is appropriate for candidates with little to no experience in their desired career field, which is why the Education section is listed first with details about courses/course projects.
- 2. Experienced:** The second example is appropriate for candidates with experience in their desired career field, which is why a Career Highlights section is near the top of the resumé with a list of key career achievements and education is at the bottom of the resumé.

Your Name

City, State, ZIP | 000-000-0000 | you@email.com | linkedin.com/in/yourlinkedinaddress

Professional profile

Describe the expertise you can offer that is highly relevant to the types of jobs you are pursuing. This is a summary, so your statements should provide the “big picture” of who you are professionally, what you’re best known for and what you can do for the employer. Do not summarize your entire career; focus more specifically on the skills and value you bring to an organization that align with the targeted job.

Education

College or University, City, State
Exact Title of Degree

Relevant Coursework:

- Course Name 1, Course Name 2, Course Name 3, Course Name 4, Course Name 5, etc.

Student Project Highlights:

- Describe a specific project/assignment that showcases skills and concepts learned in class (see examples below)
- Generated financial report in QuickBooks, including balance sheet, income statement, and cash-flow statement to analyze year-end financial standing for virtual organization with \$1.2M gross revenue
- Prepared journal entries for investments using fair value and equity method
- Conducted an in-depth analysis of ACME Inc. and prepared a comprehensive audit plan, including company, industry, and engagement risk analyses

Experience

Company Name, City, State
Job Title

Dates

- Use first bullet to describe context of your work environment or the purpose/scope of your role
- Describe a key responsibility/notable achievement/positive result you contributed to
- Describe a key responsibility/notable achievement/positive result you contributed to
- A formula for writing bullet statements is action verb + description of task + result or purpose (see examples below)

XYZ Medical Center, Somewhere, AZ
Medical Secretary

Dates

- Provided secretarial support to three health services directors within the patient services department of this 220-bed, acute care hospital
- Collected and recorded patient information, including health insurance eligibility and patient demographic information
- Earned “Employee of the Month” twice in one year for commitment to patient service and exemplary work ethic

Your Name

City, State, ZIP | 000-000-0000 | youremail@email.com | linkedin.com/in/yourlinkedinaddress

Professional profile

Describe the expertise you can offer that is highly relevant to the types of jobs you are pursuing. This is a summary, so your statements should provide the “big picture” of who you are professionally, what you’re best known for and what you can do for the employer. Do not summarize your entire career; focus more specifically on the skills and value you bring to an organization that align with the targeted job.

Career highlights

- Key career achievement (**see examples below**)
- Spearheaded marketing campaign that increased revenues by \$20M within the first year
- Repeatedly built teams from the ground up through interviewing, hiring and training staff; over 10 employees have been promoted to assistant manager roles with three becoming store managers within one year

Experience

Company Name, City, State **Dates**
Job Title

Use a brief introductory paragraph to highlight your core responsibilities and context of your work environment, which may include the size of your team, scope of responsibility and structure of the organization/department as it relates to your major job functions. (See examples below)

- Describe a key responsibility/notable achievement/positive result you contributed to
- Describe a key responsibility/notable achievement/positive result you contributed to
- A formula for achievement statements is result + description of task + how you achieved it (see example below)

Acme Software Inc., Somewhere, AZ **Dates**
Regional Sales Manager

Spearheaded new business development of cloud-based (SaaS) email marketing technology in the northeastern United States for this multimillion-dollar software firm. Collaborated with executive leadership to develop new business and marketing strategies and led a sales team of 12 account managers in consistently overachieving quarterly sales goals.

- Repeatedly ranked among the top three regional sales teams out of 10 for overall highest revenues achieved company-wide, generating over \$2.4 million in new sales since hire date
- Surpassed sales quota three years in a row by training and developing staff into top performers capable of prospecting and developing untouched new territory, including Fortune 100 and Fortune 500 companies
- Awarded “Performance Excellence Award” within first year of hire for exceeding quarterly sales quotas

Education

College or University, City, State **Graduation or Expected Graduation Date**
Exact Title of Degree

3

Write Your Resumé Content

Contact information

It is important to include your name, city/state/ZIP, phone number, email address and LinkedIn profile address. Make sure the employer can reach you or leave a message easily. Email addresses that have inappropriate connotations (sexygal, egghead, fratboy, etc.) can make you seem unprofessional. Instead, use an email address with your name in it (SueSmith@) to help the employer remember you. When listing your phone number, be sure to include the area code and have a professional voicemail greeting.

Summary of qualifications

The purpose of a summary is to help the reader understand what types of positions you are pursuing. But instead of a static objective statement, a summary builds a dynamic case for why you are a good fit for that role. It also coaches the reader to focus on what you have emphasized in your document, which is especially helpful for two-page resumé. A summary should be well targeted for the job description.

Example: Job description – Marketing manager

Job Duties:

- Provide marketing insights to sales teams
- Analyze marketing metrics
- Deliver presentations to management on competitive landscape
- Design web advertising

Required Qualifications:

- Three to five years of marketing experience
- Industry experience in consumer packaged goods and retail
- Ability to manage outside vendors
- Ability to design marketing initiatives and work across multiple departments

Example: Summary aligned to job description

Summary of Qualifications

Marketing manager with over seven years of experience in consumer packaged goods and retail marketing environments. Proven ability to size up competitor companies and provide marketing insight to sales teams and management. Skilled presenter and engaging public speaker who is confident and poised across all levels of professionals, ranging from mid-level managers to C-level executives. Analytical-minded professional who makes decisions based on sound data.

Summary of add-ons

A variety of sections can be added after a paragraph-style summary to add value to the summary. A Relevant Skills section allows you to add the skills required for the position without taking up space in the summary. A Career Highlights section provides the space to highlight three major career accomplishments that help support the summary. A Technical Skills section allows IT and science professionals the opportunity to provide a brief but holistic account of their technical background in a category and list format. **Examples:**

Relevant Skills:

- Search Engine Optimization
- Marketing Campaign Management
- Vendor Management
- Graphic Design
- Website Design
- Contract Negotiations

Career Highlights:

- Spearheaded marketing campaign for new line of home and garden products, increasing revenue \$2M within first year
- Hired and trained a marketing staff of eight members; coached one to promotion as marketing manager
- Secured partnership with Lowe's to place five new products from a new line in over 4,000 stores across the United States.

Technical Skills:

- **Systems:** Linux, Windows (7/8/10), macOS (Sierra/High Sierra)
- **Software:** Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft 365, G Suite, SAP
- **Languages:** C, C++, .NET, Visual Basic, Java, HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Python (beginner)
- **Databases:** SQL Server, MySQL, MongoDB, Oracle

Experience

This section can encompass paid and unpaid experience (e.g., internship, volunteer, job shadow). It is sometimes titled Experience, Professional Experience, or Work History. Under this heading you will need to include your job titles, places and dates of employment, and accomplishments in bulleted statements. List your experience with the most recent first (reverse chronological order). Do not use introductory statements such as “Duties included” or “Responsibilities included.” Instead, begin with an action verb and quantify your accomplishments whenever possible.

How to write effective bullet statements

Bullet statements are brief descriptions of key responsibilities and accomplishments. A formula for writing effective bullet statements is: **action verb + description of task + result or purpose**

ACTION VERB	DESCRIPTON OF TASK	RESULT OR PURPOSE
Trained	10 sales associates on CRM system	to improve speed to proficiency
Managed	front office, including scheduling, data entry, and payment collection	resulting in efficient patient flow
Reduced	time to complete month-end close	from one week to three days
Greeted	customers and assisted with product selection	to create a positive shopping experience

Education

List your education with the most recent education first (reverse chronological order). Make sure you list the correct degree (Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science, for example) and the correct major. You might consider placing your education before your work experience, especially if your recent education qualifies you for the job. If you haven't graduated yet, list your expected date of graduation. If you graduated more than five years ago, you don't need to include the years you attended or obtained your degree.

Examples

- Bachelor of Science in Accounting – University of Phoenix | Phoenix, AZ **February 2020**
- **University of Phoenix | Phoenix, AZ**
- Master of Business Administration **May 2017**
- Bachelor of Science in Business with a Concentration in Marketing **January 2015**

Additional Sections:

You may wish to include additional information related to your ability to do the job.

Such areas may include:

- Community Involvement or Volunteer Experience
- Leadership Experience
- Professional Associations
- Certifications/Publications/Licensure
- Military Experience
- Internships
- Presentations/Publications
- Professional Development
- Honors/Awards

Common resumé mistakes

MISTAKE	REASON
Resumé lacks a clear focus	Employers want a specific candidate for a specific job
Emphasizes duties versus accomplishments	Employers want candidates who go beyond basic job duties
Includes irrelevant information	Shows you don't understand the employer's needs
Resumé lacks keywords	Employers search for candidates by keywords; ensure they can find you
Spelling, grammar, punctuation errors	Your resumé will likely be tossed out
Using personal pronouns and full sentences	Write in a telegraphic style for brevity
Listing references	Employers assume you have references and will provide them if asked
Acronyms, abbreviations and contractions	Can be confusing and contractions are too informal
Very poor appearance to the resumé	Unprofessional and indicates lack of motivation