

HOW TO WRITE A RESUME

What Is A Resume?

A **Marketing Tool** in which:

- You highlight your most relevant skills, qualifications, experience, accomplishments and knowledge to prospective employers.
- You demonstrate your fit with a position by tailoring your content to the needs, concerns and expectations of your prospective employer. *There is no such thing as an “all-purpose” resume*; there is only the most suitable resume for the job at hand.

A **screening device** that allows companies to pare down the field of applicants for any position to the few they invite to interview.

Employers generally decide within *10-20 seconds* whether your resume will go into the “YES,” “NO,” or “MAYBE” pile.

A **document that gets you invited to an interview**. It seems counterintuitive, but it's *not* all about you! It's about showing prospective employers how well you can meet their needs so that they invite you to interview for a job. Resumes exist to generate interviews.

A Few Simple Principles

Resume styles – There are three basic resume styles used to apply for most private, nonprofit and many public sector jobs (CVs and Federal Government Resumes have their own rules and are covered in separate handouts).

- **Chronological** – The most widely used resume format. Your education and most relevant experiences (both paid and unpaid) are listed in reverse chronological order with the most recent first. It demonstrates upward growth in skill and knowledge.
- **Functional/Skills Based** – The format least preferred by employers because it lacks context, but still useful in selected cases. In a functional resume you do not list your jobs as you do on a chronological resume, but rather create skill categories.
- **Hybrid** – This style uses the best qualities of chronological and functional resumes. You will see it in most of our resume examples. In this style, you review your most relevant paid and unpaid experiences for themes, then create 1-3 skill categories and list experiences in reverse chronological order within the categories. (*Also see our Resume Section Headings handout*).

First Draft – Start by gathering EVERYTHING you might include in a resume: jobs, volunteer experiences, campus involvement, major class projects, campus leadership roles, etc...and start writing down ideas about what you accomplished or learned in each.

Arrangement – Start the resume with your strongest skills and most relevant information so that you catch the reader's attention and encourage him/her to read more! Recent grads usually begin with the Education section followed by one or more Experience sections, but not always. A career advisor can help you decide the most suitable arrangement to meet your prospective employer's needs.

Length – One page is the rule of thumb, but like all rules, there are exceptions. If you have extensive work experience, a Masters or PhD, or can otherwise “prove” that you need it, then a two-page resume may be warranted. If you do have a second page, make sure the content takes up at least half of the page, and include your name and the page number at the top right.

Content – You don't have to list everything you've ever done; keep it short and to the point. Make sure that the items on your resume answer the following questions: “Which of my skills and experiences will most benefit a prospective employer based on their needs?” “How does this entry/bullet point relate to the job I am applying for?” “What intangible qualities do I need to communicate about myself to the employer?” Above all, be 100% truthful in your content.

Style – While there are no absolutes about how your resume should look, there are some basics we'll address in the “Tips” section on page four. You can also review the examples on our website and if in doubt, ask a career advisor for guidance.

Proofread – Get a second or third pair of eyes to review your content before you apply. The last thing you want is to lose the chance at a job because you sent out a resume with a bullet point like: “Proven track record of *accuracy* and attention to detail.”

Always Tailor Your Resume

It's important to carefully review your resume *each time* you submit it and alter/update your content in order to tailor the items you highlight to the needs of the prospective employer. Remove information irrelevant to different jobs/employers and organize entries so that the most important information for that job is listed first. This will not take long and can have a lot of impact!

Things Not To Include On Your Resume

- Personal pronouns (I, me, my).
- Height, weight, age, date/place of birth, marital status, sex, race, photos/graphics, or social security number (some of these may be expected on resumes for jobs outside the US – check standards by country to be sure before you add them).
- Abbreviations and jargon – If in doubt, spell it out! Never assume the recipient will know what it means.
- Salary, supervisor's contact information, or reasons for leaving previous jobs (these items often go on an application).
- References (These go on a separate page). The words “References available upon request.”
- Interests and hobbies (unless directly relevant to the position in some way).

Resume Sections – Look Across to See Chris Badger’s Example

The Header

This section includes your name, address, cell number and email address. It may also include a link to your LinkedIn.com page and/or blog/portfolio. Since it is unlikely that the employer will contact you via US Mail, it is only necessary to list one street address. However if you are seeking a job out of state and have a local address in that state, it may be best to list it instead of, or in addition to, your Madison address. Either way you should list only one email address and phone number. Make sure that your voicemail message and email address are both professional. We suggest emails follow this format: Chris.Badger@Gmail/Yahoo/Hotmail or UWAlumni.com.

The Objective Statement

If you will be submitting a cover letter or application essay(s) with your resume, it is unlikely that you will need to include an objective statement. They are ideal for career fairs and networking situations, but if used they must be as concise and tailored as possible.

Your career objective should inform the potential employer of:

- The Position that you would like to apply for
- The Industry that you would like to work in *and/or*
- The Skills which you would have to offer or would like them to focus on

They can also cover functional areas of interest and/or specific job title (sales, research, copy-writing...) or the type of organization you seek (social service agency, financial institution...)

Samples:

- Career in media or market research with a large agency focusing on corporate communications (broad focus)
- Position as a programmer or systems analyst with an interest in marketing and finance applications (specific focus)
- Personal Assistant to Volunteer Training and Supervision Coordinator (specific position with title and department known)

The Education section

- Contains your university’s full name, your degree (ex. Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science), anticipated graduation date (May 20xx), major(s), certificate(s), and GPA.
- If your GPA is 3.0 or above, you will want to include it. Make sure you include “/4.0” so the employer will know the scale. You can list just Cumulative or Cumulative and Major if your major GPA is higher in the major
- Do not list the name of your high school and only list transfer institutions if you received a degree from them or are referencing experiences you had while attending them.
- You may also wish to list relevant coursework, honors and academic awards, and study abroad in this section

Experience Section(s)

- Each entry should include four parts: 1) Employer/Organization name, 2) Your title 3) Location (City, State or City, Country), and 4) Dates of employment (month and year started and ended. For current jobs use the format: “Month, 20xx – Present”).
- Entries should combine paid and unpaid experiences such as jobs, internships, student organizations, major class projects, and volunteer activities. Employers don’t care whether or not you got paid to learn a skill, they only want to know if you have it, where you got it, and how much experience you have using it!
- Each entry should be listed in reverse chronological order with most recent listed first.
- To make your resume really stand out, consider grouping similar experiences under employer-targeted section headings such as: “Research Experience” or “Leadership and Grant Writing Experience.” (This uses the Hybrid format we spoke about on page one.) If you do this, list each experience in reverse chronological order within its section.
- After the four-parts above, craft 2-5 bullet points to highlight your achievements/accomplishments/skills. Each bullet should attempt to answer the questions: How did you do X? Why did you do Y? What was the outcome?

“Skills” and Other Special Sections

The Skills section might include Language(s), Computer Skills, Research Techniques, Professional Certifications, Memberships (student clubs or organizations), or Professional Affiliations (student chapters of professional organizations or societies). Each of these could be a section by itself if the skill/experience is a major component of qualifying for the job.

References

Your reference list belongs on a separate sheet of paper. Only include references with your resume and cover letter at the employer’s request. When you have a job interview be sure you bring your list of references with you. There is no need to state “References Available Upon Request” on your resume.

Chris Badger

1234 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53706, 608-555-1234, cbadger@uwalumni.com, linkedin.com/ChristopherBadger

Education

University of Wisconsin – Madison

Bachelor of Arts, May 20xx

Double Major: Psychology and Spanish

Certificate (Minor): Business

GPA: 3.2/4.0, Psychology GPA: 3.4/4.0, Spanish GPA: 3.5/4.0

Honors: Dean's List (2 semesters), Chancellor's Scholar

Relevant Coursework: Financial Accounting, Grant Writing, Advanced Spanish Conversation

Leadership and Communication Experience

Badger Herald

Communications Intern

Reporter

University of Wisconsin - Madison

September 20xx - Present

April 20xx - Present

- Gained valuable media knowledge while honing writing and interviewing skills; write two feature stories per week
- Interacted effectively with fellow staff members and community members, gaining access to exclusive stories

Letters & Science Career Services

Peer Advisor

University of Wisconsin - Madison

September 20xx - May 20xx

- Effectively worked with professional staff to create new resources for the office, including information on negotiating job offers, different styles of interviewing, and guides for choosing graduate school programs
- Advised students individually on improving their resumes

Noodles & Company

Assistant Manager

Madison, WI

May 20xx - December 20xx

- Arranged scheduling for staff of 35 involving great attention to detail and mediation of conflicting requests
- Entrusted with interviewing, hiring, training, and evaluation of staff, requiring excellent interpersonal communication skills

Cross-Cultural Experience

Atwood Community Center, Volunteer, Madison, WI

August - December 20xx, May 20xx - Present

- Coordinated events for local children on celebrating all cultures
- Led workshops to help students learn more about their own culture

Freelance Spanish Tutor, Madison, WI

May - August 20xx and 20xx

- Worked with four high school students to prepare them for international study trips
- Helped students improve Spanish conversational skills

University of Wisconsin Study Abroad, Selected Participant, Oaxaca, Mexico

January - May 20xx

Skills

Computer: Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint (proficient), Microsoft Access, Adobe Page Maker and Photoshop (familiar), Comfortable using both Windows and Mac operating systems

Languages: Spanish (highly proficient), French (conversational)

Tips for Success

Remember that although your content is the most important thing, the potential employer will also make some assumptions about you based on the general appearance of your resume.

Font – Select and use a single font style throughout the resume. Best choices are Times, Calibri or Arial.

Size – With the exception of your name and category headers use the same font size throughout. Do not go smaller than 10pt or it will be too hard to read. It's better to have a second page than a scrunched up document!

Emphasis – Be consistent and don't overuse bold, caps and italics. All your section headings should match.

Spacing – Balance is key. Try to leave some white space, but not so much that it looks like you have no experience.

Margins - If you need to save space, you can go as small as .6 on all four sides, but do not go smaller or it will look too crowded.

Bullet Points/Descriptive Lines:

- Use to highlight key skills and accomplishments within an experience; avoid long, hard-to-read paragraphs.
- 2-5 per experience is ideal. Make sure that most of the bullet points answer the questions under "Content" on page one.
- Use action verbs to begin each line (see separate handout for a list).

Tense – Use past tense for activities that have ended. You may use either past or present tense for ongoing activities; just be consistent within your entry (don't mix past and present within the same activity description).

High school - Do not include high school jobs or experiences (there are some exceptions – check with a career advisor)

Relevant Coursework – If you use this section, make sure to only list courses that will demonstrate breadth (not obvious from the name of your major), depth (specialized study in one area), or which add to your hireability in some way.

Controversial Areas - Take care when including experience in areas that may be controversial to some people, such as religion, politics, sexual orientation, etc. You can include it, disguise it, or omit it. Please see a career advisor to talk about this if you are concerned about how to describe these kinds of experiences

Resume Templates - We recommend that you don't use them at all. Templates tend to be inflexible and you will need to make changes later. Additionally employers get sick of looking at the limited number of templates over and over. You want your resume to stand out, not look like all the rest!

Electronic Format: Unless the employer asks for the resume to be submitted in Word (".doc/.docx") convert it to a ".pdf" before sending. This will ensure that your document looks the way you intended when the recipient downloads it.

Naming the Resume and Applying Online – Since you will submit a tailored resume for each job, save the resume as: Title of Job/ Internship – Your Last Name. If you apply via email rather than on the employer's website, the e-mail subject line should be the same as the document unless the employer specifies otherwise.

For Jobs Outside the USA - These are all suggestions relevant to resume formats for jobs in the United States! For information on resume standards in other countries, log into BuckyNet and look at the resources on GoInGlobal for guidance.

Paper Resumes – It is no longer necessary to use special resume paper since the majority of the time you will submit your application materials online. When you do print out your resume (e.g. career fairs), make sure that it's laser-printed on white paper. If you do need to mail your application materials, post them in a large manila envelope so that you don't have to fold them (and don't staple).

One Last Thing...

Make an appointment to get feedback on your resume by scheduling online at <http://www.careers.ls.wisc.edu>.

To find handouts on the following specific topics, please visit our website or come to our office!

Power Verbs

Descriptive Lines

Section Headings

More Sample Resumes

References Page

Cover Letters

Anatomy of a Bullet Point

Federal Resume Sample

Marketing International Experience