

Writing Your Résumé

Have you taken a lot of time off work or learned skills off the job?
Are you unsure of how to explain that time or experience on a resume?
Do you feel uncertain about how to “sell” your talents and knowledge?

Getting Started

Putting together a résumé will help you organize information so an employer can quickly look at your history. There is no one way to put together a résumé but the guidelines below will help you include key information and highlight your strengths and experiences.

Drafting Your Résumé

The first step in creating a résumé is to plan what you want to include. Think about what job experiences you have, skills you have developed and how these things will help you at your new job.

Make a list of all paid and unpaid jobs you have had. Include in your list: when you had the job, who your employer was, what your title was and what you accomplished.

Write down the education you have had after high school, including college classes and degrees, training courses, licenses, certificates and any other learning experiences you might have.

Write down any skills or special knowledge you may have, including languages spoken, experience with computers, ability to use special tools or machinery, etc.

Consider unique knowledge or skills you gained while raising children, caring for family members, volunteering or during other personal experiences.

Create a professional e-mail address where potential employers can contact you. It should contain some combination of your name and initials, but do not use nicknames or silly words or phrases. Get your own free e-mail account at www.hotmail.com, www.yahoo.com or at mail.google.com.



Résumé Formats

There are different ways of organizing your information in different types of résumés. Different résumé formats can highlight strengths, such as numerous work experiences, or downplay weaknesses, such as being out of the workforce. Choose between the “reverse chronological” and the “functional” résumé styles. Each style has benefits and disadvantages. Use the one that best fits your life and work experiences.

Functional

- Useful for people with breaks in employment history and skills. A functional résumé shows experience not evident in a “reverse chronological” resume.
- Focuses attention on accomplishments and minimizes emphasis on jobs.
- Lists skills and special knowledge without reference to employment.
- Lets you explain openly why you want a certain job or why you think your skills and experience would benefit a certain organization.

Reverse Chronological

- Useful for people with a steady employment history.
- Lists experiences from most to least recent.
- Shows responsibilities and accomplishments at each job.
- Displays educational and professional accomplishments.
- Lists your future employment goals.
- Does not show off skills, experience, and knowledge gained off the job.

Look at the sample résumé on the following pages for fictional office manager Susan S. Smith. Using the Susan S. Smith résumés as examples, replace Susan's information with your own. Be sure always to use your own words.

Check out free example résumés online:

www.quintcareers.com/resume_samples.html
www.jobweb.com/Resources/Library/Samples/default.htm
resume.monster.com/archives/samples

Résumé Tips

Fit your résumé onto one page. Prospective employers will only glance over it at first.

Make all your important information clear and concise. Say what you mean in a few well-chosen, specific words. When describing your work, list your accomplishments, not your duties.

Describe your accomplishments and skills using powerful, action words. Try words like “direct,” “analyze,” “manage,” “examine,” and “develop.”

Tell the truth. Making false claims on your résumé can only hurt you.

Use one professional looking, easy to read type style for your whole résumé. Arial, Garamond, Times New Roman type styles are all good choices.

Do not repeat the same words. Think of other words that have similar meanings. Check out the free online dictionary at www.dictionary.com and thesaurus at www.thesaurus.com.

Keep it simple. Many résumés are submitted through the Internet and companies will scan the text into their system. Too many bold, italicized or underlined words may not scan as you want.

Perfecting Your Résumé:

Check your résumé before sending it to employers. Pay attention to the details and make sure information is correct. Follow the checklist below to avoid mistakes.

- ✓ Proofread! Check over your résumé many times looking for spelling and grammar errors. Make sure you have used the same formatting throughout.
- ✓ Have a close friend or relative look it over for you. He or she might find mistakes you missed.
- ✓ Tailor your résumé for each organization or each job type. You can emphasize experiences and skills relevant to each organization or position. Tailoring your résumé will show you understand their organization.
- ✓ Print your finished résumé on high quality paper if you are mailing it to the prospective employer. Select an 8-½” x 11” paper that is a bit heavier than standard paper; weights between 20 pound and 50 pound are most often used. White, beige and gray are common choices since neutral colors communicate a professional tone. This paper can be bought at a bookstore or an office supply store. You can also photocopy your résumé onto nicer paper at a copy store and usually you can buy matching envelopes.

SAMPLE REVERSE CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ

Susan S. Smith
123 J Street, NW
Washington, DC 20000
202-555-5555
susan.smith@domainname.com

QUALIFICATIONS

Office administrator with seventeen years experience running medium-sized corporate offices and managing a small staff. Fully conversant in word processing, accounting, spreadsheet and database software. Trained in conflict resolution and human resources management.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Johnson, Jones & Associates, Washington, DC, Office Manager, 2000-2002, Assistant Office Manger 1998-2000

Managed an office of 40 legal professionals, directed scheduling, office upkeep, database maintenance and client and personnel relations

James Camera Organization, Alexandria, VA, Administrative Assistant, 1990-1993

Drafted correspondence, handled customer relations, managed an extensive customer and vendor database and supervised billing

Jane Doe Consulting, Inc., Fairfax, VA, Personal Assistant, 1988-1990

Assisted with scheduling, drafted correspondence, assisted with trainings, supervised billing and helped to maintain client relations

EDUCATION

Associate of Science in Business Administration, John Doe Community College, Washington, DC, 1988

Specialized in business and office management

SKILLS

Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Adobe, Access, Outlook; Internet research; Peachtree Accounting Software; database management

ACTIVITIES & TRAININGS

Human Resources Management, Capital Consulting, Washington, DC, November 2004

Modern Computer Skills, Peterson Technologies, Alexandria, VA, March 2001

Advanced Studies, Computer Skills Training Institute, Washington, DC, July 1999

SAMPLE FUNCTIONAL RÉSUMÉ

Susan S. Smith
123 J Street, NW
Washington, DC 20000
202-555-5555
susan.smith@domainname.com

OBJECTIVE

To improve the quality and efficiency of your organization's office life and productivity through the use of my extensive office management experience and skills

QUALIFICATIONS

Extensive office and personnel management experience
Strong written and verbal communication skills
Lengthy experience working in a fact-paced, high-pressure environment
Great ability to complete multiple tasks and work with a varied team

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

INTERPERSONAL

Worked with a range of individuals with varying personal and professional needs
Maintained office harmony and professionalism
Served as personal assistant and scheduler for team of executives
Maintained client relations, arranging meetings, services, lunches, and sales calls
Handled service complaints and maintained corporate image

SUPERVISORY

Directed staff personnel issues, confidential employment information, hiring and firing and performance reports

COMPUTER

Microsoft Windows, Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access; Adobe Acrobat, Pagemaker; Peachtree Accounting Software; Database management; Internet research

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Johnson, Jones & Associates, Washington, DC, Office Manager, 2000-2002,
Assistant Office Manger 1998-2000
James Camera Organization, Alexandria, VA, Administrative Assistant, 1990-1993
Jane Doe Consulting, Inc., Fairfax, VA, Personal Assistant, 1988-1990

EDUCATION

Associate of Science in Business Administration, John Doe Community College, Washington, DC, 1988
Specialized in business and office management

When writing her résumés, Susan S. Smith followed these basic formats:

For a “reverse chronological” Résumé:

Full name

Home address

Phone number

E-mail

Objective

A two-sentence explanation of why you are applying for this job.

Professional Experience

List all your professional (work) experiences beginning with your current or most recent position and ending with your first position. Also, list your title and the dates you were with the organization and describe your accomplishments.

Skills

List languages spoken, computer and technological skills and any other skills.

Education

List your educational accomplishments after high school. Include the dates you attended the schools, major and minor areas of study, significant course work, degrees, certificates and honors earned.

Activities/Trainings (Optional)

List volunteer activities, training courses and other activities from most recent to least recent.

For a “functional” Résumé:

Full Name

Address

Phone Number

E-mail

Objective

A one or two sentence explanation of why you are applying for this job.

Qualifications

List major skill areas and personal qualities.

Experience

Name several of your broad skill areas. Under each skill area, list related accomplishments.

Employment History

List the organizations you worked for, your title, and the dates you worked there starting with the most recent.

Education

List your education accomplishments after high school. Include the dates you attended the schools, major and minor areas of study, significant course work, degrees, certificates and honors earned.