



## SELL YOURSELF: QUICK TIPS FOR RESUME WRITING

*There's no 100% standard format or template for a professional resume, which is both good and bad news. At a basic level, your resume is an opportunity to tell a potential employer everything you've done in the past. Less obviously, and just as importantly, it's a chance to tell that employer why your experience matters and how it has directly prepared you for the specific job for which you are applying. This is why it's important to revise your resume every time you apply to a new position. Be sure to thoroughly read the posting for every job to which you apply. Many will provide specific guidelines for resume formats and contents. A potential employer's clear instructions always supersede any other advice.*

### **Know your type:**

- The Chronological resume is best for people with significant, continuous work experience who have grown professionally within a single field. The most common resume form, it can pose problems for new graduates who lack significant work experience.
- The Functional resume privileges skill acquisition over job titles and employment history by grouping related skills and abilities in sections with discrete headlines (e.g. Leadership Skills, Communication Skills). It is very rarely recommended for students or new graduates.
- The Combined resume is generally the best choice for our purposes. It can emphasize skills and experiences accrued in the classroom or through extracurricular activities and volunteer positions while still including a chronological employment history.
- For detailed examples of your options – and everything else discussed in this resource – please consult the Career and Employment Services online resume writing package.

### **Format functionally:**

- Use a simple mainstream typeface between 10 and 12pt. Headings may be 14pt.
- Do not exceed two pages (of plain white 8.5x11" stock) unless you have explicit permission to do so.
- For emailed and uploaded resumes, send a .pdf file as it will preserve your typeface and formatting.

### **Make the MOST of your competencies:**

When detailing your skills and abilities, it pays to be specific. The skills your focus on should be Measurable, Observable, Selective, and Transferable. Provide qualitative and quantitative support for the claims you make about yourself, choose only skills that are related to the field in which you are applying, and be sure to consider how skills you acquired during your education can translate to the working world. Describe what you've done, not what you're like. How many clients did you manage? How much money did you raise? How much web traffic did your blog generate?

The following headings articulate a strong spine for most resumes. Note that section headings are guidelines. You may title the sections of your resume slightly differently, and you should only include the sections that apply to your situation.

### **Header/Contact Information**

List your first and last name, full mailing address (permanent or long-term, if possible), a telephone number at which you can be reached during the day, and an appropriate e-mail address. Include your LinkedIn URL.

### **Objective (Optional)**

Begin your resume with an Objective section if you have a very clear, appropriate short-term goal. In one or two sentences, summarize the career direction you envision, making reference to your ideal job description, location, and level of employment. In most cases, a good cover letter removes the need for this section.

### **Profile of Skills/Summary of Qualifications**

In most cases, you should begin your resume with a succinct summary of your most impressive selling points, as relevant to your field. Try to pique the reader's interest. Be as specific as possible, avoid generalities, and tailor your points to the position and organization to which you apply. Aim for five or six total points.

- Be RAD: Highlight your Responsibilities, Accomplishments, and the Duration for which you demonstrated the skills you are describing. Note that you must be truthful.

### **Related/Technical Skills**

Specify any computer and language skills – both common and uncommon. Research, technical, and report-writing skills are also valuable. You may include completed health and safety training in this section.



## Education

As a full-time student or recent graduate, this section should come near the top. For each degree or diploma you've earned, include its full name (no abbreviations), the institution that granted it, that location's city and province (and country, if not Canada), and a graduation date. Use reverse chronological order. Also include relevant professional certifications. Use bullet points to list your major and/or minor. Consider including "career-related" courses. Your GPA may be helpful if it is particularly strong, but it is not required.

## Scholarships and Awards

If you've won many honours, include only the most appropriate; you don't want to bombard a recruiter with a long list of minor awards. Clarify why you earned an award when its criteria might not be obvious to a recruiter. Avoid awards based solely on financial need.

## Academic Projects

You don't want to list everything you did in university, but some major academic projects may be relevant to the job for which you are applying. Highlight these projects when they emphasize skills and experiences you're unable to relate through employment or volunteer experience.

## Employment Experience:

State your experience in reverse chronological order (start with your most recent job). Describe your duties in the past tense, using action verbs to stress skills used on the job. Begin every sentence with a verb. Avoid personal pronouns ("I") and do not refer to yourself in the third person in this section. Use a bulleted format for readability. Use standard bullet points rather than dashes, arrows, or other icons.

## Volunteer Experience and Community Involvement

This section is particularly important for students who lack significant work experience. Use the same format as you did for Employment Experience. Specify which duties you performed and your level of responsibility, accomplishments, and skills gained. Focus on leadership, initiative, and energy (your "star quality").

## Interests, Activities, and Accomplishments:

Include relevant professional development courses, additional training certificates, workshops, and conferences, plus affiliations and memberships with/in clubs, societies, and career-related associations. Remember, your resume is not a dating site profile!

## References:

Unless you are specifically asked to provide a reference, note that your references are available upon request. If you are called for an interview, be expect to need between three and five total professional, academic, and/or character references.

## Further reading:

- Resumes, CV's & Letters (Western University Student Success Centre)
- Writing a Resume (Government of Canada Services for Youth)
- Yes, Your Resume Needs a Summary (Harvard Business Review)
- The Most Overused Words in Canadian Resumes (Workopolis/The Toronto Star)
- Writing a Cover Letter (Government of Canada Services for Youth)
- Cover Letter (Western University Student Success Centre)

Co-op, Career and Employment Services: [www.uwindsor.ca/cces](http://www.uwindsor.ca/cces) | mySuccess: [success.uwindsor.ca](http://success.uwindsor.ca)

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Job searching • Career planning • Work experience • Career preparation workshops • Personal appointments • Resume critiques  
Mock interviews • Interest testing and assessments • Job fair and networking opportunities • Volunteer Internship Program (VIP)



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