

People First.

Building Your Resume



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Whether you are a recent graduate or have many years of work experience, your resume can be the doorway to a more fulfilling career. When a recruiter looks at your resume and decides whether to invite you for an interview, the “first appearances” rule applies. You only have a few seconds to make a good impression and set yourself apart from other candidates. Following the guidelines in this brochure will make it easier to write your resume and succeed in gaining an interview.

Why write a resume?

The point of writing a resume is to get you an interview. Once there, you have the opportunity to sell yourself and get the job. However, without the right resume to open the door, you may never get the chance.

Be aware that within the first seven to ten seconds of reading your resume, the person screening applicants must be convinced that you merit further consideration. In that short window, they need to find and review a summary of your education, skills, accomplishments and experience!

Basic rules for a successful resume

Certain general rules apply, no matter your level of experience or the job opportunity for which you apply.

1. Be brief

If you have one to five years' experience, one page is sufficient. One or two pages are appropriate for a candidate with more than five years' experience. If you are mailing or faxing your resume, never go beyond two pages. If you are submitting your resume via an Internet application form or to a large employer with an automated applicant tracking system, you can submit a slightly longer or shorter resume, as it will not appear in a specific 8.5" x 11" format to the reviewer.

2. Use standard resume structure

List jobs and education in chronological order with the most recent first. When listing specific tasks or accomplishments within a job summary, use bullet points whenever possible. Make it easy for the reader to follow the format.

3. Presentation is critical

If you're mailing your resume or giving one out at your interview, it should be on white or off-white paper. Type in an easy-to-read font such as Times Roman, Arial or Helvetica, and in an easy-to-read size (depending on the font, between 10 and 12 point). Don't make the mistake of using attention-getting colored paper, artistic borders or pictures. Don't cram in too much information. White space can be very effective as well as making it easier for the reader to absorb content.

If you're emailing your resume as a Word document, or cutting and pasting it into an Internet job form, keep the format simple. Avoid using tables in your resume. Complicated indents, tabs and other formatting may get lost in translation to a different version of the software or job form and your information may be garbled or deleted.

New graduates and candidates with less than five years' experience

Your resume should consist of one page. The following guidelines have been specifically developed to help people with limited experience meet the criteria important to the hiring decision.

Format

Header

Center your name, address, telephone number(s) and email address at the top of the page. Indicate whether the telephone numbers are home, work or cell phone. Only list your work number if it is appropriate for a prospective employer to call you at your current job.

Objective

Although "Objective" is a standard resume section, be careful! Objectives that qualify you for one position can immediately disqualify you for another. Always review the objective on your resume against the requirements of a specific job opportunity and change it if necessary.

An objective is a statement that expresses the intended career path in your field(s) of interest. Your objective needs to be specific. State a positive, such as: "To secure a position as an analytical chemist in the pharmaceutical or biotechnology industry," or "Participate in the start-up of a new hospital unit and contribute positively to its success." Don't waste the space on generalities such as "To find employment with a dynamic company that will utilize my professional skills and experience." Every job seeker has this objective and it's meaningless to a potential employer.

Education

Early in your career, you should always put your education before your work experience because it tells the prospective employer more about your current qualifications. List your education in reverse chronological order including: degree, major, school and year. Add honors and awards you have won and relevant courses, projects or activities that are applicable to your stated career path.

Employment History

List dates (month/year), title, company and location for each job held, beginning with the most recent. Give a one-sentence summary about the company if it's not an immediately recognizable name such as "\$1 billion pharmaceutical R&D company."

Briefly summarize duties and accomplishments in each position held. Use action words to define activities and responsibilities. For example: Achieved, Designed, Generated, Launched, Supervised and Budgeted.

Group all jobs unrelated to your field(s) of interest, full or part-time, that you held while attending school. An introductory statement such as: "I worked at the following positions to cover 75% of my tuition during college" will show your sense of responsibility and a ability to hold a job.

Don't disregard any experience just because it was unpaid. Internships or other unpaid positions that you gained valuable experience from can be included here.

Never assume that the prospective employer will understand accomplishments and duties implicit in a previous job. Be as complete and concise as possible. When applicable, clearly point out how your efforts have led to revenue generation or cost-savings. For example: "Created and implemented new inventory management system" is nice, but "Created and implemented new inventory management system saving 20% over previous year's expenses and reduced work hours by 45%" is downright impressive.

Additional Skills

This is the section in which you can place skills and abilities that aren't immediately obvious by your degree(s) or positions held, such as familiarity with software programs, photography or knowledge of foreign languages.

Professional

If you are a member of a professional association, list it, along with any committee position you hold with the association or awards you have won from the association.

References

Do not list references on your resume. The simple line: "References available upon request" is appropriate, but optional. When asked to submit references, do so on a separate sheet of paper and make sure you check with the people you name first. This is important because:

- The person may not want to be a reference
- The person may have moved, changed jobs or otherwise not be at the number you're listing
- The person may be open to suggestions as to what will be said about you. It may not be immediately obvious to them why you are a good match for the position and you need to spell it out

Salary History/Requirements

Do not list your salary history or requirements on your resume. There are many variables in compensation including benefits and bonuses. Listing a salary history that immediately places you out of range for a specific position disqualifies you from consideration. You may be willing to take a lesser salary to work for a specific organization because it's prestigious, a non-profit, or for some other reason, but the person reading your resume may not understand or readily accept that.

JOHN D. CANDIDATE
1234 Main Street
Anytown, CA 90200
777.777.7777 (Cell)
email: johnd@calabsupport.com

Objective: Laboratory position supporting R&D or QA/QC in the pharmaceutical or biotechnology industries.

Education: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, Berkeley, CA
B.S. Biochemistry, June 2002
Completed an honors research project analyzing amino acids by electrophoresis, ion exchange chromatography and density-gradient centrifugation.

Relevant coursework:
Biophysical chemistry Organic chemistry Genetics
Microbiology Physiology Toxicology

Experience:

June 2004 – Present
Bentley-Hayes Laboratory, Santa Barbara, CA
Laboratory Technician

Conducted stability testing on new pharmaceutical products to determine viability under different environmental conditions and interactions with other chemical compounds.

July 2002 – June 2004
University of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Laboratory Assistant

Prepared reagents and supplies for freshman chemistry labs.

Sept. 1998 – Feb 2002
Financed 75% of university tuition through several summer and part time jobs.

Laboratory
Chromatography: paper, thin layer, ion exchange
Electrophoresis: Disc, SDS-PAGE, and Agarose centrifugation
GC: HP 5890 HPLC: Waters 486

Computers
Microsoft Office Suite, Lotus, Dreamweaver

Professional: Student Affiliate of American Chemical Society
Freshman Steering Committee

References: Available upon request.

Example of a resume for a recent graduate or person with less than five years' experience

The previous section headings, as well as headings that follow in the next section, cover the majority of information that is essential to a well-structured, complete resume. It may be appropriate, based on your specific background and experience, to include one or more of the following sections:

- Honors
- Awards
- Activities

A resume update is only necessary once a year, or when you change jobs. When you reach the three to five year plateau, a radical change should be made to more clearly define your qualifications.

A brief recap of this format

Header

Name, address, telephone number and e-mail address centered at the top of the page.

Objective

A clear, concise statement expressing your intended career path in your field(s) of interest.

Education

Degree, major, school, year, honors, awards won, and any additional courses, projects or activities that are applicable to your stated career path.

Employment History

All employment listed in reverse chronological order showing dates, titles, company and location. Group all jobs held during your school years and group all internships.

Additional Skills

Additional skills including knowledge of computer hardware/software, languages, etc.

Professional

Any professional associations you belong to or have won awards from, including any volunteer work.

References

"References available upon request" on your resume; names and contact numbers on a separate sheet if required.

Resume for the experienced candidate

The basic rules still apply, but now the resume may be extended to two pages. Regardless of length, the following format changes should be made.

Format

Qualifications Replace Objective

It's time to remove the objective stated at the top and replace it with a summary of your professional qualifications. You are now a specialist by virtue of your professional and personal strengths and overall experience that transcend a specific job duty or function. You must package yourself as you would a product by determining what it is that a prospective employer is buying when they are hiring you.

For example, if you have 10 years' experience as a lab manager in both pharmaceutical and petroleum industries in positions where you managed both staff and a budget, you can package yourself as "Successful lab staff manager in pharmaceutical and petroleum industries working through team building and staff development, as well as contributing to the bottom line through cutting expenses and developing revenue-generating policies." Follow this with bullet-pointed specifics such as:

- Demonstrated expertise in analyzing, interpreting and solving problems
- Skilled in operation of a variety of analytical instruments
- Excellent problem solving skills

Employment History

Following your professional qualifications, this section contains your employment history presented in the same format discussed earlier, i.e. date, title, company, location and duties. Employment history now precedes education because years of practical experience become a greater factor in hiring decisions.

Your accomplishments should also be introduced within each employment listing, as these are the milestones within the scope of a job. You should present them in bullet format and they should be stated, if possible, in quantifiable terms that show how you personally contributed to the company's bottom line.

For example:

- Supervised 30 employees, reduced department turnover 50%
- Managed new product introduction which increased sales 25% over previous year
- Developed successful five-year strategic business plan

Additional Skills

This follows employment history and is presented in the same way as the earlier resume. This section may include special licenses, certifications and training you've acquired during your years of employment.

Education

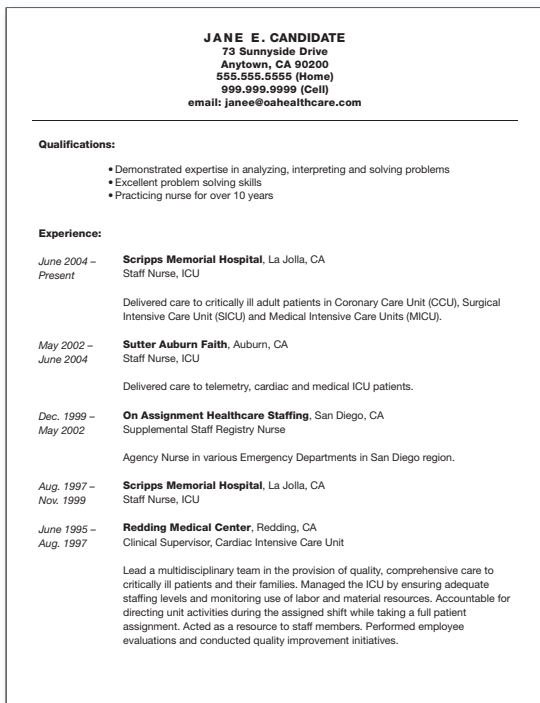
This section follows additional skills and is presented as described earlier. Coursework listings are removed from your resume, as work experience becomes the most relevant factor for employment. Be sure to include your academic thesis title, if appropriate.

Professional

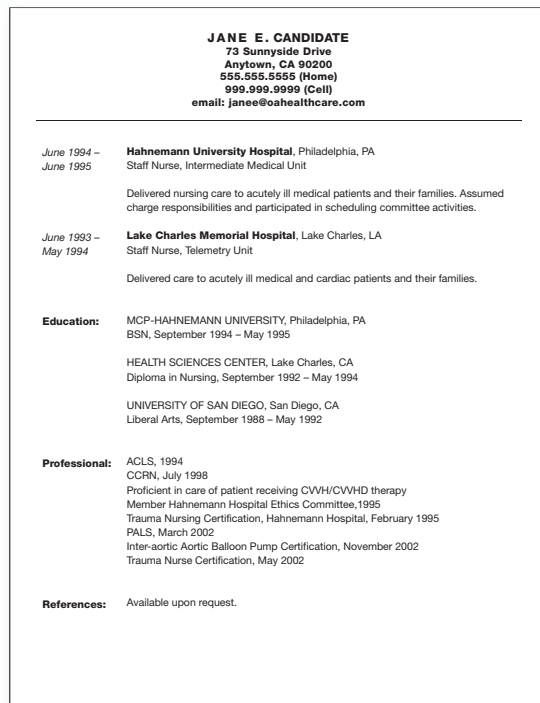
Professional information is entered below education. You will most likely have added to the credits you previously listed.

References

The notation "References available upon request" is the last item on the resume, but is optional.



Example of a resume for the experienced candidate



Page two of sample resume

A brief recap of this format

Header

Your resume may now extend to two pages.

Qualifications/Objective Change

Replace the objective stated on your previous resume with brief bullet points describing your professional strengths, capabilities and experience.

Order of Sections Change

Employment history including accomplishments precedes education. Professional and finally the notation "References available upon request" follow this.

Writing a cover letter

Cover letters are critically important when applying for a specific job. Your letter should directly address the job requirements as posted and emphasize the items from your resume that are most pertinent to the job posting. Make it easy for the person reading your letter to see how your previous experience makes you a perfect candidate for the job.

- Note the order of importance in which requirements are listed on the job posting and reflect that order in your cover letter
- Draw attention to your industry-related experience
- Add anything else from your professional history that may be relevant to the position
- Research the company to which you are applying

NEVER...NEVER...NEVER

Here are four main things to avoid when applying for a job:

1. **Never send a form letter**

These do nothing to build your stature with the reader. In fact, they create a negative first impression because the reader feels you're not interested enough to take the time to respond specifically to the posting. Customize every cover letter you write to focus on your specific qualifications and keep a copy for reference.

2. **Never change your resume to suit the job**

Your resume may end up on the desk of the same recruiter if you respond to blind ads or different divisions within a company. However, when applying via Internet postings, review your resume for usage of keywords listed in the job posting. For example, if a posting calls for a nurse manager to supervise a staff of 10, use the words "nurse," "manager," and "supervise staff" in your resume. Without emphasizing such terms, a company using scanning software may dismiss your resume.

3. **Never send out a resume or cover letter without checking spelling, grammar and appearance**

Typos are an automatic turnoff!

4. **Never include any of the following information**

Age, ethnicity, political affiliation, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, birthplace, photos, height, weight or health.

Finally, remember to refer to the job posting number and job title exactly as they appear in the job posting as the recruiter may have several positions with the same title to fill.

Conclusion

Following these simple resume-writing rules won't get you the job. However, assuming you are well qualified, you will have a much better chance of getting an interview. Getting an interview is a significant accomplishment, since a small percentage of all applicants for a particular job make it to this stage, especially in today's tough job market.

Remember, if you get a call for an interview, you know your resume has succeeded and you can use it to gain with confidence! Now, you need to effectively sell yourself to the prospective employer. As with your resume, first impressions are critical. You may have the greatest technical skills, but pay attention to your professionalism, appearance, promptness, preparedness, vocabulary, articulation and communication skills. They're just as important and can win or lose that job for you!

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