

GUIDE TO RESUME WRITING

A resume, historically, has been a compilation of work experiences. Over time, particularly in the U.S., it has become more of a marketing tool to be used in a job search. In reality, it is a document that serves both as a work history and as a document that demonstrates your "fit" for a particular job. Any job seeker, with the flexibility offered by word processing, is likely to have more than one version of their resume to be used in various situations. There are several steps to be taken in developing a resume that is ready to send to an employer.

Step One: The "Everything" Resume

A first attempt at writing a resume should result in an "everything" resume. In addition to listing any paid work experiences you've had (summer jobs, internships, on-campus jobs, etc.), your "everything" resume should list unpaid experiences you've had, including internships, voluntary work, student organizations, leadership positions, practicum experiences, committee service, research experiences, etc. It may also, since you are currently a student, list academic experiences such as research, lab or field skills, independent study and courses related to your work goals, presentations made at conferences, or publications. You may also want to list additional skills and/or interests that you have, such as language skills or computer skills.

First, choose a "format" for your resume. You may choose to have your headings either centered on the page or lined up on the left margin. We highly recommend that you begin your resume using a blank Word document. The resume template in Word is acceptable for dashing off a last minute document, but you will find it extremely restricting as you move from the "everything" resume to a more "targeted" resume. Here are some tips on using Word for your resume:

TABS: Tabs are the only way to make sure that things stay lined up vertically within the document. Using the space bar to indent or line up columns may look fine on the screen, but things will likely move around when you print the document or try to send it electronically. Also, for more ease later on, do not move the margins as a method of indenting information – keep the left margin consistent for the entire document.

MARGINS: To give you more space, extend all of the margins to 1" (margins are typically set at 1 1/2" as a default). Margins smaller than 1" risk having contents cut off by the printer – and if you are sending it electronically, you want to make sure it won't lose information on the other end. Do not use the "right justify" option – it will create problems for you when you are revising your resume.

FONT: Choose a standard font such as Helvetica, Times, Times New Roman, or Palatino and use the same font for both your resume and cover letter. Do not mix fonts in your documents as it looks sloppy and unprofessional. 10-point is an appropriate size when printed from a Mac; we've found that it's a bit too small when printed from some PCs. Check the actual "readability" after printing, not just on the screen. 11 or 12-point is appropriate if you need to expand your information to fill a page. Smaller than 10-point is rarely acceptable. Different fonts take up different amounts of space and you may find that changing the font for the entire document may affect how your resumes fit on a page.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Don't include personal data such as height, weight, age, or marital status. Include only your full name, college and home address, telephone numbers and e-mail address.

Save space by using standard abbreviations for the names of states (e.g. ME, MA). Do not abbreviate words an employer may not understand.

Do not include any salary information or street addresses of prior employers (city and state are sufficient).

Avoid first person pronouns and purely subjective statements in your resume ("I am an intelligent, diligent researcher"). These will be more appropriate in your cover letter or interview.

Step Two: Identify Your Goal

Now that you've pulled all of your information together in one place, take the time to identify what you will be applying for. You may find you have interests in two or more distinctly different career fields. Research what an employer will be looking for in each field. This research may be as easy as looking at various job listings, or it may involve reading books, web sites, and possibly talking with people who work in that field. Before moving on to step three, take the job description you will target your resume for and underline or highlight all of the words that describe what the employer is looking for. If you don't have an extensive description, make your own list of qualifications based on your research. Career Service's Library is an excellent place to do this kind of research.

★ If you need help with this step – either figuring out what you want to do or finding openings to apply for, make an appointment with a counselor in Career Services for guidance.

Step Three: Developing a Targeted Resume from your “Everything” Resume

Now, compare the list of qualifications you discovered from your research to the list of items on your “everything” resume. You will discover that some items match up closely and that others do not match as well. Your goal is to develop a one-page* targeted resume that demonstrates your qualifications for the position for which you are applying (if you are applying to various positions, you may develop more than one targeted resume). There are two approaches to narrowing down your resume to one-page: rearranging (format and content) and editing (content).

*The only exception to the one-page rule, for students and recent graduates, is if you are looking for jobs in the field of teaching. In that case, you may need a two-page resume (see our resume sample for teaching in the sample section).

Rearranging Are there experiences relevant to your goal that are sprinkled throughout your “everything” resume? If so, you may want to rearrange them to place them in a more prominent location on your targeted resume. One way to do this is to create a "Relevant" or "Related Experience" section in which you place all of those related experiences (in reverse chronological order), putting what is left over into an "Other Experience" category. You may also add a "Related Coursework" section to highlight coursework related to your goal.

CATEGORIES: Arrange the sections of your resume in order of importance and relevance to the job for which you will be applying. Remember that if you plan to have a **HEADING** that uses the words "Related" or "Relevant" (Coursework, Experience, etc.) you must have an objective for that section to be related to (i.e. your goal position).

OBJECTIVE: Your objective is the position for which you are applying and may change somewhat on each resume you send. State the type of position and the type of organization for which you are applying (usually you can take this information directly from the position description). Do not include the employer name, but characterize the employer's business. Do not write a wordy description of the job or work environment you'd like to find or the job expectations you have. Refer to the attached sample resumes for examples.

SPACING: Be consistent in spacing between entries and between headings and sections. "White space" makes your resume easier to read, so take advantage of space you have left over to separate sections. Conversely, you may need to eliminate spaces to keep your resume on one page.

STYLE: Utilize **bold**, *italics*, or any **combination** to highlight important information. Be consistent—if you italicize your job title in one entry, do it for all job titles. If your resume will be scanned into an employer's database (from a paper copy), you should **not** use any of these embellishments.

Editing Once you have all of your experiences listed in a draft of your targeted resume, the next step is to decide which listings should be emphasized with detailed descriptions, and which can simply be listed with little description. Look again at the descriptions you've written for your experiences. Have you said enough about the experiences that are related to your goal so that the employer will clearly understand

your skills? Have you said more than the employer will care to know about experiences that are not related to your goal? Editing your descriptions is an important step toward targeting your resume.

Descriptions should create vivid word pictures that demonstrate your skills and experiences. On the next two pages are “action verbs” listed in functional skills categories. Action verbs add a dynamic dimension to your resume and catch the reader’s attention. They also encourage you to think in terms of skills you have acquired, which can be transferable from one career field to another. Use these lists to remind you of the skills you’ve acquired in jobs, internships, and volunteer opportunities, and to make your descriptions as clear as possible. The description will be a collection of phrases, rather than full sentences. Begin each phrase in your descriptions with an action verb – in present tense if it is something you are currently doing and in past tense if it is something you are no longer doing.

Use quantities, amounts, dollar values whenever they enhance the descriptions of your accomplishments (“grossed \$6,500 sales during first summer managing an independent landscaping service” or “scheduled daily activities for up to 15 teens”). If possible, describe results you have produced in work you have done, rather than merely listing duties and responsibilities.

Look at all of the entries on your resume – are any of them too outdated (for example, high school experiences if you are a junior or senior) to be included in this targeted version of your resume? (Remember to keep these things in your “everything” resume, however, as you don’t know what might be useful on the next version of a targeted resume.) Cutting irrelevant and outdated information will help you get the resume to one page in length.

If space is tight, make sure that you don't have just one or two words taking up a whole line of space. If needed, edit the description so that it doesn't go onto that next line, or use the space to say more.

PROOFREAD: And re-proofread, and then have at least one other person proofread your resume. One typo, spelling error, or goof could cost you a chance to be considered for the job you want.

★ GET HELP: Come to drop-in hours or make an appointment with a counselor in Career services if you need help making decisions about reformatting or editing your resume.

EVERYTHING RESUME (several pages)

Education

- high school
- Colby
- study abroad

H.S. and college jobs

- part-time
- work-study
- summer

Student Involvement

- leadership
- committee work

Academic Highlights

- research/major projects
- practicum experiences
- lab/field skills
- coursework

Additional Skills

- computer
- language

Other

- conference presentations
- professional organizations
- published research or writing

Internships

Volunteer Activities

TARGETED RESUME (one page)

Education

- Colby
- study abroad
- H.S. (if room)

Related Coursework

(optional)

Related Experience

- work/internships
- volunteer experiences
- research
- leadership experiences

Other Experience

- other summer jobs
- other internships
- demonstrate work ethic/steady employment

Additional Skills & Interests

- any important support information that doesn't show up elsewhere
- computer/language skills
- special training /certifications