

Resumes

Preparing a resume can be more difficult than it appears because each of us has had different life experiences and often question which of those experiences should be included in a resume and which could be omitted. In addition, the guidelines regarding what is acceptable and what is not acceptable on a resume changes over time. And, now, the increasing popularity of online resumes has made resume writing even more complex.

Even so, a plethora of helpful resources exist on the internet (Just make sure the site is credible and up-to-date.), at employment agencies, college employment services, and in libraries. Even the Western Library has an entire aisle filled with books on resumes, cover letters, and interviewing. You may find it helpful to consult other resources for more detail and examples than what are provided here. This is especially true if you are starting a second career, have not worked outside the home for a decade or two, only have work experience with family enterprises, or have a criminal record.

Three Resume Types

There are three types of print resumes: chronological, functional, and hybrid. It is crucial that you use the type that will immediately showcase your assets to potential employers.

NOTE: A resume can be just one page or two, but not anything in between or any longer than two pages. Two of the three sample resumes on the Online Writing Center site are two pages because the hypothetical Marjorie Barnes is an experienced secretary. If you have little to no work experience related to your job objective, your resume should be just one page long.

Chronological

For an example, click here:

<http://www.westerntc.edu/writingcenter/pdf/handbook/TypesOfWriting/Chronological%20Resume.pdf>

This kind of resume would be better described as “reverse chronological” since it organizes your employment and education in a reverse time order, meaning that the most recent is described first and the oldest is described last. Regardless of its misleading name, the chronological resume is the most traditional of all resume formats and has definitely stood the test of time. Many hiring professionals prefer this format because it is familiar to them and can be quickly read; there are no “gaps” that must be interpreted. While a chronological resume is effective for applicants who have a steady work record with increasing responsibilities over time, it should be avoided if any of the following are true:

- You are a recent graduate with little work experience or little relevant work experience.
- You have changed jobs often.
- You have gaps in your employment history (i.e. periods of time in which you were not employed).
- You are entering the work force after a long absence and/or your work experience may be viewed as outdated.
- You are changing careers and your past experiences aren't relevant to your new career goals.
- Your employment history may call attention to your age.

Functional

For an example, click here:

<http://www.westerntc.edu/writingcenter/pdf/handbook/TypesOfWriting/Functional%20ResumeI.pdf>

A functional resume focuses on skills and accomplishments, which explains why a functional resume is sometimes called a skills resume. These skills are grouped under different categories (See the suggestions in the chart below.) so that talents and assets can be highlighted without emphasizing specific jobs or dates. In fact, the skills appear at the top of the resume and job titles and employers only appear briefly at the bottom of the resume. The focus is on what you did (or can do) and not on where and when you did it. Because of that, a functional resume, in its truest form, does not have any dates on it. However, most sample functional resumes that appear in books and on web sites do include the dates. Regardless, the functional resume is newer than the chronological resume and is not yet well accepted by all employers; the lack of chronological development often raises suspicion and implies that the applicant may be a job hopper, an older worker, or someone with academic or skill deficiencies. Yet, the functional resume does a much better job of identifying an applicant's skills and strengths than the chronological resume. The functional resume is the best for you if any of the following are true:

- You have primarily done consulting or freelance work.
- You have been in the military and are now entering civilian employment.
- You have relevant volunteer experience that needs to be highlighted.
- You have skills that may not be communicated merely through job titles or degrees earned.
- You have skills that were acquired through both school and work.
- You have held a number of different or unrelated jobs during a short period of time.

Possible Categories for Skills/Qualifications for Use with a Functional Resume		
machinery knowledge	software skills	supervisory skills
problem-solving skills	electronics knowledge	teamwork experience
troubleshooting skills	technical expertise	repair and maintenance
equipment expertise	communication skills	organizational skills
customer service skills	interpersonal skills	mechanical strengths

Combination/Hybrid

For an example, click here:

<http://www.westerntc.edu/writingcenter/pdf/handbook/TypesOfWriting/Combination%20Resume.pdf>

The combination or hybrid resume incorporates the best features of both the chronological and functional resume and is well-received by hiring experts. It highlights skills, accomplishments, and experience and then provides a chronological listing (in reverse order) of employment and education. It is ideal for applicants with lengthy work experience since the most recent experiences—and those that best target the job objective—can be highlighted and those of less importance and less relevance can be downplayed. For this reason, it works best for applicants who have lots of relevant work experience (at least four years with the current employer) and a significant number of relevant accomplishments to emphasize. It is also recommended that the applicant have some management or leadership experience. Perhaps because Marjorie Barnes lacks in work-related honors and leadership, her hybrid resume (attached) is only 1½ pages. As indicated earlier, a resume should always be one page or two pages, never one page plus part of another page.

Resume Components

1. Contact Information
2. Job Objective
3. Summary of Qualifications
4. Education or Work History
5. Education or Work History
6. Military Records, Achievements, Volunteer Experience, Etc. (optional)

NOTE: Do not include your references on or with your resume, and avoid typing “*References available upon request*” on your resume. This is unnecessary since it’s obvious that you will provide references if employers request them. And, when employers make the request, you can then provide them.

1. Contact Information

This section of your resume must be complete and accurate so potential employers can contact you with ease. It consists of your full name, mailing address, e-mail address (optional), and phone number(s).

2. Job Objective

The job objective, also known as a resume capsule, career goal, professional goal, or professional objective, is a fragment that communicates the kind of position you are interested in obtaining, as shown yellow column below. It should also indicate what you have to offer to the company, as shown in the blue column below. It should not indicate what the company can provide you, or, in other words, what else you want from the company besides the job, as shown in the pink column. Always keep the focus on what you can do for the employer! Stay work-centered, not self-centered!

Position Desired	Position Desired & What You Can Offer the Employer	Position Desired & What the Employer Can Offer You
seeking a sales representative position for a growing business, such as Channel 15, that is open to experimenting with new sales techniques	seeking a sales representative position for a growing business, such as Channel 15, that is open to experimenting with new sales techniques and can benefit from my innovative yet feasible ideas	Seeking a sales representative position for a growing business, such as Channel 15, that is open to experimenting with new sales techniques and will offer me challenges and opportunities to work with a wide array of people
to utilize my computer expertise as a network specialist for a large Mid-western company	to utilize my computer expertise as a network specialist for a large Mid-western company and thereby improve the company’s efficiency and profits	to utilize my computer expertise as a network specialist for a large Mid-western company that will offer me employment for the long-term

Stating your job objective offers a number of benefits:

- ◆ By indicating how you can benefit the company, the job objective allows you to start selling yourself to the employer. This is especially crucial if an employer sorts through a hefty stack of resumes and merely scans the objective so that he/she can create two piles: one for consideration and one to be discarded.
- ◆ It also gives your resume a focus and, thereby, helps you identify what information to include on your resume. Any aspect of your career life that does not support your job objective should be omitted. What remains is a clear and uncluttered snapshot of you.
- ◆ The job objective also aids employers. Without having to read the entire resume, employers can get an immediate sense of what kind of job you desire. With large companies, the job objective also tells the human resources coordinator/recruiter which department or individual should get your resume to review.

Because the job objective is usually one of the very first statements that is read in your application materials, it must be written well. Here are some pointers to follow:

- ◆ Be concise! The “Too General” examples on the chart below are wordy. Also note that a job objective is rarely a sentence.
- ◆ Be specific, but not too specific. As shown in the green column below, if you are too vague, your job objective will appear to be mere “gobbledygook.” An employer will wonder exactly what it is that you want in a job. Yet, if the job objective is too specific, it may limit your job possibilities, as indicated in the purple column below. So, strive for the “Just Right” level of specificity. Obviously, you can be more specific if you are preparing a resume in response to a job posting rather than a generic resume.

TOO GENERAL	TOO SPECIFIC	JUST RIGHT
A. to utilize my knowledge and expertise with different kinds of art techniques and mediums at a long-term care facility	A. an art therapist with the mentally ill <i>(limited to working with the mentally ill at a facility that also services the terminally ill and ailing elderly)</i>	A. a position where my knowledge of therapeutic art can be used to improve clients’ lives
B. a position with a progressive health care facility that will fully utilize my 11 years of nursing knowledge, skills, and talents on a part-time basis	B. a part-time position as an oncology nurse’s assistant <i>(limited to working in an oncology dept. while positions may also be available in other departments)</i>	B. part-time employment with a progressive health care facility that will benefit from my 11 years of nursing experience in various specialties

- ◆ It is critical that your career objective is completely true of you and, above all, is substantiated on the resume and/or cover letter. You should not write *to put my people skills and leadership experience to use while serving as a night foreman* if you don’t possess people skills and leadership experience and there is no proof of either kind of skill on your application materials.

3. Summary of Qualifications

This section of the resume, also called a professional summary, profile, core strengths, areas of strength, or synopsis, or sometimes even left untitled, summarizes the experiences and qualifications that are most pertinent to the job that you are applying for. It is a keyword summary of your most valued assets; it is a list of fragments that show what you can offer an employer. Other equally-qualified candidates may not possess these traits. Many employers read it right away—right after reading the job objective—so it is a great opportunity to sell yourself. Not only does the summary of qualifications indicate what you can do for employers in an easy-to-read manner, but if you have a wide array of assets, it helps employers identify if you might be better suited to another position, maybe even one that you are not aware of.

The qualifications summary usually consists of four to six phrases, all of which are fragments. The fragments must be parallel. That means that each item in the list must start with the same part of speech. For help with this, consult

<http://www.westerntc.edu/writingcenter/pdf/handbook/Mechanics/ParallelStructure.pdf>

In the box below, each fragment begins with an adjective, a descriptive word.

- Experienced in mortgage and loan processing (six years)
- Organized and timely amidst tight deadlines
- Detail-oriented when tabulating figures and completing required paperwork
- Committed to quality customer service

These parallel fragments can pertain to your experience, knowledge, recognition, workplace reputation, job-specific skills, life skills, or anything else relevant to your job objective. To be most beneficial, the list should **not** consist of job-specific skills that all applicants with the required qualifications would possess. For example, why list *technical diploma in welding* if that is one of the requirements for the job? Or, why list *excellent blueprint reading skills* or *familiar with SMAW, GMAW, and GTAW* if all welders with a technical diploma would possess that experience?

Whatever you choose to include, make sure it is truthful and that rest of your resume (or possibly cover letter) validates your truthfulness. So, if you write *outstanding diplomacy that consistently produces win-win results for customers and the company*, other details on the resume must show that you are an effective mediator. You might indicate that you have *received two weeks of advanced training in conflict resolution* or *was December 2009 employee of the month for resolving two contractual issues*. Without proof, it will appear as if YOU believe these traits are true of YOU, but would others agree with you? If you offer proof, others are likely to agree, and if you offer **specific** proof, they most certainly will.

4. Education

NOTE: List education before work experience only if your skills and expertise come primarily from education. This would probably be the case if you have fewer than three years of work experience in your desired career.

When presenting your educational background, list the schools you attended in reverse time order (The most recent school you earned a degree at or are in the process of earning a degree will appear first.) and provide the following information about that school and any other school you choose to list:

- ◆ official school name(s)

NOTE: All words should be capitalized, such as Blair-Taylor High School.

- ◆ the location (city and state only; no street address or zip code)

NOTE: If you were home school, this would be the city and state of your parent(s) home.

- ◆ program area and/or major and minor (college education only)

NOTE: Use the official title of the program, such as "Automotive Service Technician," "Welding," and "Fire Protection Technician."

- ◆ degree attained (e.g. diploma, GED certificate, HSED diploma, certificate, technical diploma, associate degree, associate of applied science, BA, MA, etc.)

NOTE: Use the correct term. There's a huge difference between a certificate and a technical diploma. The same is true of a technical diploma versus an associate degree.

- ◆ graduation date (actual or anticipated) and/or dates attended



When deciding what education-related information to include, keep the following pointers in mind:

- ◆ Only include educational experiences that are relevant to your job objective, especially if you are running out of space on your resume.
- ◆ If you have earned a college degree or are about to do so, it is not necessary to list your high school education. This is especially true if you graduated from high school a number of years ago or were home schooled for your high school years. However, if you are a recent high school graduate and if you successfully completed courses in your career area and/or participated in school activities, held leadership positions, or earned recognition, you will probably want to include your high school education and your involvement/accomplishments on your resume. These kinds of information often support claims you may have made in your job objective or summary of qualifications.
- ◆ If the dates of your educational training are not current, you may want to omit them since they could result in age discrimination. However, on most application forms, you will have to provide the dates.
- ◆ If you are currently pursuing a degree, state that on your resume as well as the projected date of completion. Phrases such as "currently enrolled," "anticipated completion," or "in progress" work well.
- ◆ If you worked on a degree at two or more schools, only list the one that granted you the degree.
- ◆ If you attended a number of schools without completing the degree requirements, list only one or two so that you don't create an unstable impression of yourself.
- ◆ If you didn't complete a degree, you could note the number of credits you earned in a certain program, especially if the coursework is likely to be proof useful in your career area.
- ◆ If your overall GPA is higher than 3.0, you may include it. If you are still working on the degree, you need to make it clear that the GPA represents only the semester(s) that you've completed so far (i.e. *3.85 GPA in three semesters*). Either way, the GPA you present does not have to be your "overall" GPA. The GPA might only need to



reflect your grades in courses directly related to your career area (i.e. *3.6 in my classes with welding instructors*). In other words, you would not have to include the grades you earned in electives or courses you took when you were previously enrolled in a different program.

- ◆ If you have little formal education but have received relevant training through work you could include relevant employer-sponsored workshops and seminars— even relevant workshops and classes that you have taken on your own— as part of your educational history. Or, your training could be a bulleted item under your work history, too.
- ◆ If you are a recent graduate and have little work or volunteer experience, you could list specialty courses or additional training that you completed, ones that would impress future employers.
- ◆ If you desire, you could list extracurricular activities, special projects or relevant coursework, or academic honors and recognition underneath each school that you cite. It would also be acceptable, however, to have separate section(s) for these honors, particularly if some are from your educational background and others are from your employment history or there is overlap (i.e. an award is based on both high school and college performance).

5. Previous Work Experience/Employment History

NOTE: Present your work experience before your education if your employment history is more impressive than your educational training.

List your work experience in reverse time order. This means that your present job (or the last job that you held) will be listed first with previous jobs listed underneath that one. It is advisable that you only record jobs from the last 10 years unless your job(s) from a previous decade is(are) relevant to your current job objective and/or support your summary of qualifications. In fact, your employment history should be limited to those work experiences that are related to your present career goal, no matter if you held the job in the last 10 years or not. The bottom line is this: Only include work experiences that are relevant and support the job objective atop your resume. Don't fret if your work history is incomplete on the resume. After all, **all** of your work experiences—or **all** of your recent work experiences—will appear on the application form.

For each job, you should record the following:

- ◆ company or organization name: If space is available, you could include a brief description of the company. Information about the size, products manufactured or services provided, or annual sales volume could be insightful to hiring personnel.
- ◆ the company location (city and state only; no street address or zip code)
- ◆ your job title: Use a term that will have meaning to the outside world, not just an internal familiarity. For example, if your job title is “technology enabler,” but you really are a “research project engineer,” use the latter title since no one outside the company will understand what is meant by “technology enabler.” Euphemistic language, such as *environmental specialist* for “custodian,” may not impress an employer as much as it will confuse.
- ◆ your specific job duties: If your job title itself communicates your job duties (e.g. A “detailer” at a car dealership details cars.), your duties are not relevant to your job objective, or do not



support claims you've made in your summary of qualifications (e.g. Collected garbage nightly has no bearing on an electronics repair position.), it is unnecessary to list the work that you did. But, if you fulfilled relevant roles not typically associated with your job title (e.g. an oil lube tech who assisted with basic break and electrical repairs when needed) or if your job duties provide support for your summary of qualifications (e.g. an oil lube tech who completed pre-labor paperwork with customers and returned vehicles to customer upon completion of oil changes), create a bulleted list of your job duties. The more specific you are, the better for you. For instance, *assisted customers with making healthy and economical food choices from the deli* is better than *helped customers at the deli counter*. But, be concise with your specifics! While details are beneficial, they can be cumbersome to read, especially if the detail is irrelevant. Above all, be parallel! See <http://www.westerntc.edu/writingcenter/pdf/handbook/Mechanics/ParallelStructure.pdf> for help with this. Stating your job duties as verbs works well to create parallelism.

- ◆ your work-sponsored education and training (if any)
- ◆ your achievements and accomplishments (if any): These are of great interest to employers because they are an indicator of your potential for success and distinguish you from other applicants. They do not necessarily have to be "official" awards, such as an Employee of the Month certificate. If you've only missed work one day in six months and that was because of an immediate family member's funeral, you could record that on your resume. Or, if you have been known to complete four oil lubes and safety checks in an hour, record that. However, be sure that your supervisors and those you've asked to be your references will be able to verify these accomplishments. In other words, be truthful!
- ◆ Moreover, if you have numerous achievements, you may even chose to make "Achievements" a separate section on your resume rather than cite them amidst your work history.
- ◆ your dates of employment: If you feel that the dates might increase the potential for age discrimination or that the dates may highlight gaps in your work history, which could be to your detriment, you could omit the dates by preparing a functional resume.

6. Military Service (if applicable)



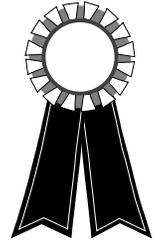
Military information is usually part of the work experience section, but could be separate section. If you have been in the service, list the dates, the branch, the type of discharge, and the rate or rank you held upon discharge. While you were enlisted, if you gained experience that is relevant to your current job objective, document the specific kind of work done, the training involved, and the duration of the experience. Also, list any military service school you attended. As you are doing so, "civilianize" your military language so that *warcollege* becomes *advanced training* and *chief petty officer* becomes *supervisor* or *lead worker*.

7. Optional Headings/Categories of Information

You should not include personal information, such as your age, health, physical characteristics, marital status, race, or religion, on your resume. And, definitely do not include any personal photos unless you are applying for a modeling or performing arts position. But, if space allows, you could consider additional resume sections, such as the following:

- ◆ *Service (or Community Service)*: List community, school, and/or church events that you have volunteered for, have held leadership positions with, or have gained recognition through.

- ◆ **Honors/Awards:** If you have honors and awards that don't fit exclusively under one school or one place of employment, consider a separate category for them. Only mention recognition that is relevant. Chili cook-off grand champion or pie eating contest winner unnecessary, unless you're applying for a chef position. Similarly, being Homecoming queen or king will not necessarily reinforce your skills and accomplishments unless you are trying to convey that you interact well with people. Also, be as specific as possible. *Western's President's List of High Distinction Spring 2007* is more specific than *honor roll-Spring 2007*, and it also is more accurate. Because accuracy is crucial, avoid outdated terms, such as *VICA* and *Shop Student of the Year*. *SkillsUSA* and *Technology Education Student of the Year* demonstrate your awareness of changes in your career area.



- ◆ **Professional Affiliations:** Record organizations that you belong to, conferences that you have presented at, professional presentations that you've done, etc. But, record these names in full, rather than using *DECA* or *SHRM*, which may not be recognized by the employer as *Distributive Education Clubs of America* and *Society for Human Resource Management*. However, there are instances, such as with *FFA*, that you must record *FFA* because the three individual letters do not represent anything else. Years ago, *FFA* did stand for "Future Farmers of America," but that is no longer the case.
- ◆ **Special Projects:** Document community, school, work, or personal undertakings that reinforce your job qualifications.
- ◆ **Hobbies:** Include them only if they are employment-related or highlight skills that could be an asset on-the-job. For example, if you are part of an investment club, include that on your resume for a finance position. Be careful to avoid mentioning any hobbies that might be viewed as controversial, such as deer hunting. Some people believe that is wrong to kill animals, deer included.
- ◆ **Memberships:** Record organizations that you are actively involved in. But, avoid sharing your membership in controversial organizations, especially those with specific religious or political affiliations – unless they directly relate to the job you want or the skills necessary for that job.
- ◆ **Licenses and Certifications:** Cite only those that are relevant to your job objective.
- ◆ **Leadership Activities:** Record any event, job duty, special project volunteer position, etc. that would demonstrate your leadership.
- ◆ **Computer Applications:** Document your computer skills that are not evident on rest of the resume.