HOLY GRAIL TO APPLICATIONS

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WHAT IS A RESUME?

A resume is defined as a quick and informative summary about yourself and your experiences. These highlight the strongest assets and skills for the position you are interested in.

General categories of information that should be included in the resume:

1. Name + Contact Information (Email, Phone Number)
2. Education (refer to Education section of the guide)
3. Experience (refer to Work/Volunteer Experience section of the guide)
4. Technical Expertise and Skills (refer to Skills section of the guide)

A resume can be organized using many different formats. Here, we have listed the 3 most common formats known to employers:

Chronological Format:

Presents experience and education in reverse chronological order starting with the most recent experiences.
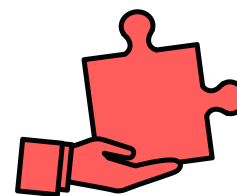
- Simple and straightforward
- Most widely used format

Functional Skills Format:

Focuses on areas of job-specific skill that conveys strength to your employers.

- A bit more complex, need job-specific skills
- Less common format

Combination Format:

Focuses on both experience and job-specific skills.

- A combination of both formats listed above

1 | EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS/ ACHIEVEMENTS

The Education section of the resume aims to provide a brief overview of your academics and/or professional schooling experience.

Information to include in the Education section:

- Most recent degree or education in progress
- Name of school
- Location of school
- Field of study (major + minor)
- Expected graduation date
- Academic honours, scholarships, and awards
- Relevant Coursework (course codes) - optional
- GPA - optional

| NOTES

The education section of the resume can go before or after the experience section. This depends on the position you are applying for and how much experience you have. For example, it is good to state education first for positions that require an academic background such as a registered nurse or a chartered accountant. If you have years of experience working in a particular field, your education becomes less relevant and can therefore go after your work. For the majority of students, the education section should come before your experiences since you are applying to things using your degree.

2 | WORK AND VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE

Following the Education section, we arrive at the Experience section. This section is the 'meat' of your resume and is the place where you get to show employers why you are the ideal candidate for the position you are applying for. *So, how does one proceed with writing this section?*

First, we recommend making a list of all your experiences (work, volunteer, internships, etc.) and deciding on which opportunities you are going to include in your resume. The experiences that you choose should correspond to the qualifications and skills that are applicable to the position you are applying for. For example, if the job posting indicates that they want someone who collaborates well, it would be smart to include experiences where you got to work with others (i.e. a research project or as a member of the executive team in a club).

Remember, you are trying to market yourself as the ideal candidate with the experience you have, so use the job posting as a guide and be selective about which opportunities you want to showcase. Depending on the relevancy and variety of your experiences, you may choose to separate this section into two parts to highlight both paid and volunteer experiences.

A separate volunteer section may be a good idea if…
- There are significant gaps in your work history
- You have a little paid work experience or not enough relevant work experiences
- Certain volunteer positions highlight skills that are not apparent through your work placements (eg. leadership, technological skills, organization)

 | NOTES

If you choose to list all your experiences under one section, be sure you indicate 'volunteer' for positions where volunteer is in the official position title (i.e. Pharmacy Assistant Volunteer).

2 | WORK AND VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE

How to write the Experience section:

With your experiences chosen, we now get the chance to show employers what we have achieved and what our impact or role was in each of these positions.

Experiences should be listed in reverse chronological order (most recent to least recent) where the following information should be included:
- Position Title
- Company Name
- Location (City and Province/State)
- Duration of Experience (Month and Year)
- Achievements Working in that Position

Achievements are typically presented in point form as that makes your resume easy to read for employers. When listing out the individual achievements, various structures can be followed. One common structure is the *PAR method* (problem, action, result). For the PAR method, each bullet point addresses these 3 important details:

P — **Identify what needs to be resolved in the position you work at**

A — **What measurable steps did you take to address the problem?**

R — **What happened after you took action to address the problem? How was the problem resolved or changed? If possible, include tangible evidence (numbers, percentages, etc.) for employers to better understand the magnitude of your impact.**

Example:

"Demonstrated politeness and professionalism when dealing with customers by engaging in conversation and restocking inventory when needed, resulting in shorter wait times and positive shopping experiences"

P
A
R

For each bullet point, begin with an action verb to help drive the point home that you actively contributed to the problem in that position. We have linked a couple of resources at the end of the guide to lists of action verbs, so feel free to refer to those when crafting your resume.

General Tips:
- Focus on realistic and measurable achievements, not your responsibilities
- The number of points you choose to include for each experience will depend on how much you want to highlight from it; however, try to stick to 5 or fewer bullet points
- No experience is irrelevant! Think about what transferable skills you have gained from each position

3 | SKILLS - LANGUAGE & TECHNICAL

Skills can be divided into 2 major categories: professional and personal. Professional (hard) skills consist of any technical knowledge gained through education and/or career experience that are essential assets for individuals in their respective professions (i.e. computer skills (Microsoft, Adobe), presentation skills, marketing skills). On the other hand, personal (soft) skills help convey how individuals express themselves and interact in their workspaces, such as critical thinking, leadership and communication. These skills are typically built from experiences and are essential for the fluidity and non-technical aspects of the position.

Where?

There are a variety of different places to incorporate the Skills section in your resume. Professional skills are typically listed in their designated section after work and volunteer experiences. Unconventionally, professional skills could also be highlighted as bullet points under each work and volunteer experience to showcase the skills utilized for that specific experience. On the other hand, personal skills are emphasized as keywords within each experience to display such key assets under realistic scenarios.

What should I include in the Skills section of my resume?
Always include professional skills relevant to the position you are applying for. This requires reading job descriptions and doing some background research into the field itself. For example, if you are applying to a Big 4 Accounting Firm, it is crucial for you to include proficiency in Excel and other accounting software.

When incorporating personal skills into the section, ensure that they are tuned to your work and volunteer experiences. For instance, if you had a position working in nursing, a personal skill such as emotional resilience would be applicable as the job requires lots of interactions with patients under unexpected and stressful situations. However, a skill such as creativity is not as relevant or less obvious in terms of how that was developed in such a nursing position.

Finally, DO NOT INCLUDE ALL YOUR SKILLS; only place what is relevant. Recruiting officers are often busy people; therefore, the goal is to drive your points across with minimal 'fluff.'

4 | DO'S AND DON'TS OF RESUME WRITING

	Do's	Don'ts
Header and Skills	• Include a link in the header to your Linkedin profile (especially if applying for a non-local position)	Try not to overdo soft skills. • 3 soft skills with short explanations of times you've demonstrated them is sufficient
Submitting the Resume	• Ensure that the file name includes your name and/or position that you are applying for (no version names like JohnSmithResume(5)) • Send resumes as PDFs as this is better for applicant tracking systems (ATSs) used by many companies/ employers	
Personalization	• Personalize your resume for each position (i.e. if you're applying for a research position, highlight skills relevant to research like data collection) • Try to incorporate keywords from the job/position posting in your resume (i.e. If the job posting specifies that they are seeking someone proficient in Python and you are, make sure it is obvious on your resume)	• Avoid using a headshot or other pictures (including charts or graphs) as this opens the door for recruiters to reject your application due to unconscious biases • Don't include contact information or social media that may be deemed inappropriate (i.e. social media or email usernames with names that are not your own or have inappropriate content)

4 | DO'S AND DON'TS OF RESUME WRITING

	Do's	Don'ts

General and Structure	• Use standard non-Serif fonts (easier for automated screeners to process) like Arial
	
	• Use the same formatting for every past position/experience
	
	• Keep your resume to 1-page maximum (optimal); if you must use 2 pages, ensure that all 2 pages are filled (i.e. if you only have 1.5 pages, cut it down to 1 or bulk it up to 2 for aesthetic reasons)
	
	• Use a chronological resume format if possible (most recent experiences at top)
	
	• If there are large gaps in experiences/not many experiences, consider a skills-based resume (http://career.uwo.ca/pdfs/resume_examples/Pharmaceutical-Sales.pdf)
	
	• Choose muted colours if you are choosing to incorporate coloured text → i.e. darker blues, greys, etc.
		Don't put too much text
		• If a summary of your qualifications can't come from a quick scan of your resume, chances are there's too much text
		
		• Don't include unnecessary personal information such as:
		  ○ Religion
		  ○ Gender
		  ○ Sexual orientation
		  ○ Age
		  ○ Political stance
		
		• Don't lie about your qualifications
		
		• Don't put too much colour because clashing colours make a resume hard to read, and too much colour may get rejected by an ATS

5 | RESUME EXAMPLE: BUSINESS

Julius Blackwell

jblackwell@gmail.com | 123-456-7890 | 180000 Richmond Street, London ON, A#A #B#

[Linkedin Link Here](#) ⟶ **Online Profile URL**

CPA-certified accountant with wealth of experience conducting cost analysis, audit, and risk management to companies in a wide breadth of industries. Possess knowledge on managing complex accounts and assisting with corporate strategy. Recently provided top line analysis of cost trends for Company ABC to tighten expenditures by over $5,000,000 per year. Thrive in a fast-paced and high-pressure environment. ⟶ **Executive Summary**

Professional Experience ⟶ **Reverse Chronological Order**

Certified Public Accountant
Company ABC · Toronto, ON · 2018 ― Present

- Provided internal and external audit services to minimize legal risk and identify areas of excess expenditure, finding over $5,000,000 in cost-cutting opportunities
- *Insert other responsibilities using the PAR (problem, action, result; not necessarily in that order!) method.*
- *Insert other responsibilities using the PAR (problem, action, result; not necessarily in that order!) method.*

Pro-Bono Auditor
Company WBS · Toronto, ON · 2019 ― 2020
⟶ **Put extra information about experiences in PAR format; mention problem that you solved and outcome of solution**

- Created and implemented new cost-tracking system to address redundancies in expenditure, improving ease-of-use for other employees
- *Insert other responsibilities using the PAR (problem, action, result; not necessarily in that order!) method.*
- *Insert other responsibilities using the PAR (problem, action, result; not necessarily in that order!) method.*

Volunteer _____
Company · City, State · Start Date ― End Date

- *Insert other responsibilities using PAR (problem, action, result; not necessarily in that order!) method.*
- *Insert other responsibilities using PAR (problem, action, result; not necessarily in that order!) method.*

Education

⟵ **Only list university education and if currently attending university program, put expected graduation date** ⟶

The University of Western Ontario · London, ON · Canada   **2014 - 2018**
Bachelor of Accounting and Finance with a Minor in Data Analysis
- Dean's Honor List (2014-2015, 2016-2017)
- Beryl Ivey Continuing Entrance Award ($64,000)

Technical Skills

Proficient in Microsoft Office · Advanced Excel · Outlook · Quickbooks Certified · Sage 50 Accounting · Xero · Wave · SAP

Quickbooks ProAdvisor Certified : Quickbooks Desktop, Quickbooks Online 2020
Technical/Professional Skill #2 : Details
Personal Skills: Detail-Oriented, Effective Communicator

Ensure skills are relevant to job positions and are apparent through work experience

8

John Doe

email@gmail.ca | Mobile: +1 (123) 555 555 | 180000 Richmond Street, London ON, A#A #B#

Education
→ **Consistent font and format throughout resume**

The University of Western Ontario - London, ON, Canada   2XXX-2XXX

Honours Bachelor of _____ - (Your GPA)
- Dean's Honor list (2XXX - 2XXX, 2XXX - 2XXX) → **Includes Relevent Awards**
- Entrance scholarship worth $1500 for admission average of 90%
- Relevant Coursework (put in courses that demonstrate skills relevant to job you're applying to)

Relevant Experience
→ **Uses PAR Method**

The University of Western Ontario

Science Student Council President   September 2020 - Present
- Demonstrated leadership through coordination with the SSC executives, ensuring successful event planning and execution
- *Ensure to start with an action word to drive the specific quality home. Use the PAR method (problem, action, and result) to structure your points*

London Food Bank

Volunteer Helper → **Includes "Volunteer" in Title Description**   June 2020 - Present
- *Ensure to start with an action word to drive the specific quality home. Use the PAR method (problem, action, and result) to structure your points*
- *Ensure to start with an action word to drive the specific quality home. Use the PAR method (problem, action, and result) to structure your points*

Research Experience

Research Student at Lab X   July 2020 - June 2021
- Analyzed tissue cultures for rats with cancer to study the efficacy of drug A in comparison to a control group, concluding that drug A was successful in cancer suppression by up to 50%
- *Ensure to start with an action word to drive the specific quality home. Use the PAR method (problem, action, and result) to structure your points*

Research Student at Lab Y   May 2019 - December 2019
- *Ensure to start with an action word to drive the specific quality home. Use the PAR method (problem, action, and result) to structure your points*

Professional Skills
→ **Technical Skills section is at the bottom**
- Data Science Programming - Python, MATLAB, and R
- Microsoft Office - Word, Powerpoint, Excel, and Project 2019
- Adobe - Adobe Photoshop, and Adobe Premiere Pro
- Lab Techniques - Western Blot, PCR

6 | FAQ

1. What is the difference between a resume and a curriculum vitae (CV)?
A curriculum vitae (CV) is an academic resume that is often used when applying for research, college, or university teaching positions. It can be as extensive as necessary (i.e., variable in length) in order to list one's qualifications, publications, papers, etc.

A resume, on the other hand, is a brief, concise presentation of your skills and qualifications for a specific position, so the length is generally shorter (~ 1 to 2 pages) and is determined by years of experience.

2. Do I need an objective on my resume?
An objective on the resume can help the resume and the reader, but it is not essential if the remainder of your resume already demonstrates how and why you are a good fit for a position based on your own abilities and experiences.

However, if there is something you need to convey to employers that the rest of your resume does not, then it may be a good idea to include an objective. For example, if you are pursuing a position that is different from what you previously held, your objective can explain why you are applying to a different role. In this case, an objective might help a potential employer better understand what position or job title you are looking for and why.

When in doubt, it is best to include an objective to let your potential employer know what specific position at the organization you are applying for.

3. How far back do I go for experience?
Employers are generally interested in your most recent experiences, so focus on the experiences you have gained during university, or experiences that go back about 4-5 years. Unless you're in first or second year, you can omit experiences from high school.

4. Should I specialize my resume or keep it general?
Your resume should include sufficient experience to demonstrate your ability to accomplish the job that you are applying for and to establish yourself as a working professional. Although directly related experience is preferred, unrelated work can also help you demonstrate that you have acquired useful skills.

6 | FAQ

5. What do I write if I don't have any experience in the job field that I'm applying for?
If you don't have any relevant work experience for the job you are applying to, try highlighting other past activities (i.e., education, volunteering, extracurriculars, etc.) that demonstrate any sought after soft skills that you possess. Even if you don't currently possess the technical skills that are necessary to perform a role, you may be capable of developing such skills and excelling as an employee. Therefore, you'll want to demonstrate your professionalism, competency, and willingness to learn new skills.

6. What file format should I use to send my electronic resume?
Candidates are usually expected to send their electronic resumes in a word document or a PDF. Using a PDF ensures that your resume's formatting will be preserved when a hiring manager opens the file on their computer.

7. Is paid experience more important than unpaid?
As long as you describe your skills and achievements that are relevant to the position you are applying for, both paid and unpaid work experience are valuable to the employers.

8. Can I send the same resume to different employers?
While it is possible to send the same resume to different employers, particularly when you are applying for the same job role in different companies, it is recommended that you submit a tailored resume to each position and employer that you are applying to. This involves showing how your skills and experience fit those that the employer seeks. In other words, you must demonstrate that you are qualified for the specific position. By doing this, employers are better able to identify candidates who best fit their company's values.

6 | FAQ

9. Should I include personal pronouns on my resume?
Do not include personal pronouns when writing your resume. It is understood that the resume pertains to you, so it is redundant to specify personal pronouns. Furthermore, your resume should be a factual description of who you are and your capabilities rather than how you see yourself. The use of personal pronouns would make it seem like you are drawing conclusions about yourself which should be left up to employers

10. Should I include my high school education as well?
If you have already previously completed a college/university program, then you do not need to list your high school education. However, if you have not attended college/university but have completed high school (or equivalent), then you must include this information, along with any experiences (work, volunteer, etc.) that you have had since completing high school. Also, keep in mind that it's best to begin your Education section with your highest or most recent degree. Then add all additional degrees in reverse-chronological order.

11. Should I include my references on my resume? How many references should I include? Whom should I include as my references?

Unless specifically requested, references don't belong on your resume. If references are required, the employers will let you know at which point you can provide a document with information for your references.

Job seekers usually look for 3 to 4 references, while those looking for more senior positions should consider listing up to 5-7 references. It is recommended that you list the strongest reference first. Your references may include recent bosses, coworkers, teachers/professors, volunteer coordinators, coaches, etc. Refrain from using friends or family as references as they may present unwanted biases towards your competencies.

Action verbs

- https://resumegenius.com/blog/resume-help/action-verbs
- https://ca.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/resume-action-words
- https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/1393/2018/01/Action-Verbs-for-Resumes.doc.pdf
- https://careerservices.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2271/f/downloads/Resume%20Action%20Verbs.pdf

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