Presented by the UAHuntsville Office of Career Development

HOW TO BUILD A RESUME

How important is a resume?

A resume is a first impression. *Very often it's the last impression too.* If it does not look good and read well, recruiters will move on to other candidates. It must market and sell you well! Recruiters can start with a stack of hundreds of resumes. They look for ways to size down the list. Any mistake can get your resume filed in the garbage can!

How long should my resume be?

A resume is a *brief summary* of one's skills, abilities, accomplishments and experiences . It is recommended that a resume generally be no more than one page. Individuals with 10+ years of applicable work experience can move to a 2 page resume.

If an employer advises you to include very detailed information (with information such as supervisors' names, reasons for leaving an employer, etc.), additional pages may be necessary.

General Guidelines

- Keep 1 inch margins on top, bottom and sides.
- Do not use less than size 11 font.
- Use a simple font type.
- Nouns are always understood in a resume. Never use "I", "me", "my", "we", "us", etc.
- Avoid abbreviations or words/terms that are not universally understood.
- Spelling and grammatical errors are not forgiven. They WILL cost you a job.
- Avoid bold text except in headings or subheadings. It can appear that you are screaming at the reader.
- Use past tense when speaking of past experiences and present tense when speaking about current experiences.

Before you start, choose your style.

There are 3 basic resume styles: chronological, functional and combination (sometimes called hybrid). Chronological resumes are the most commonly used.

What is a chronological resume?

In a chronological resume, work experiences and schools attended are listed in order beginning with the most recent. Employment dates are included.

EXAMPLE:

Burger Queen	2006-Present
Tech Gadgets	2004-2006
Lawn Cares	2003-2004

What is a functional resume?

In a functional resume, experiences are grouped together and skills are summarized. Dates are not listed.

EXAMPLE:

- Over 10 years of customer service experience.
- Six years combined experience with hands-on troubleshooting.

Who should use a functional resume? Individuals who have several employment gaps or many short-term jobs. Both can signal trouble to an employer.

What is a combination resume?

In a combination resume, an individual begins by summarizing their total work experiences and skills and then concludes by listing past employers with dates.

Who should use a combination resume? Individuals who feel "pigeon-holed" in a particular area due to past experiences or individuals who are trying to advance. A functional resume will allow them to place emphasis on past experiences and skills that move them in another direction.

EXAMPLE:

- Over 15 years experience managing and directing staff.
- Twenty years experience building and managing budgets.

H & L Foods	2002-Present
Meaty Restaurant	1998-2002
Creative Catering	2003-2004

Starting from the Top

Name and contact information should always be at the top of your resume. You must include (1) name, (2) mailing address, (3) phone number *with area code*, and (4) an *appropriate* e-mail address. Do **NOT** include any personal information including age, sex, race, social security number, number of children or picture.

Do NOT use an e-mail address that says anything personal or innappropriate (e.g. Ilovemydog@gmail.com. It is best to use your UAHuntsville e-mail address.

What are Objectives and Summaries?

An objective briefly tells the reader what type of opportunity is being sought (e.g. Seeking an entry level position as a teller with Bank US). A summary is a brief snapshot of the individual's past experiences. **Objectives and/or summaries are not required on a resume.**

Be careful to modify objectives for each employer. Sending a resume to an employer that states your interest in working for a different company will cost you the job.

What School Information Should be Included? Where does it Go?

College students should place their school information just beneath contact information or objectives/summaries (if they are used). Where you are currently enrolled must be listed first followed by other colleges and/or high schools (if listing). City and state where institution is located, degree pursuing and expected graduation date must be included. GPA is optional, but if not listed, most employers will assume it is bad.

My Major GPA is Better than My Overall GPA. Can I use it Instead?

Sure. But, but it should be clear that it is a Major GPA. If it is not clear, employers will assume that it is an overall GPA. If/when they receive a transcript later that does not verify what they believe, they will question your honesty.

Should I Include High School Information?

At some point, high school information must be removed from the resume. A good general rule of thumb is to keep high school information on the resume while seeking a degree related job opportunity in college (e.g. co-op or internships). Once real-world work experience is gained, remove ALL high school information. College graduates should NEVER include high school information on resumes.

What do I List about my past work experiences?

If work experiences are being listed, you should include the name of the company/ business, the location (city and state), dates of employment and your job title. Unless it is requested, do NOT list supervisors' names, reasons for departure/termination or rate of pay. With either bullets or in paragraph form, summarize your tasks and accomplishments.

What separates the good from the great?

Accomplishments, facts, numbers, percentages…

Most people who have worked at a retail store can say that they "assisted customers with sales." Those that can say they "assisted over 50 customers on average per day with 100% customer satisfaction," pull themselves away from the pack. Numbers cannot be fabricated… you must be able to back up anything that you put on your resume.

How far back do I go?

Depends. If you have degree-related work experience, you can leave off odd jobs like babysitting, landscaping, etc. However, if you don't have degree-related work experience, list the "odd jobs." They can demonstrate to employers your work ethic, character, ability to work with others, etc. Don't leave off jobs that will result in possibly a concerning gap in employment.

I don't have real-world experience. Can I list volunteer work in its place?

Absolutely. But, make it clear that it was volunteer work. You can also include leadership experience, community activities, etc. if you have no paid work experience. Just be sure to use a sub-heading that appropriately describes what you are listing.

Activities, Awards, Honors...

There are numerous "other" things that you can list on your resume. Select what you include very carefully. A very long list will often go unread. It's best to include a short list of only those things that are degree related or that give the reader a glimpse at your character and/or abilities. These can be listed under separate headings or grouped together.

REMEMBER: At the appropriate time, all high school information needs to be dropped from the resume.

Double…no triple…check the resume.

Slowly proof read your resume over-and over. Have others read it as well. Check carefully for spelling errors. Make sure that you wrote in the correct tense. Did you avoid words, acronyms or abbreviations that others might not understand? Were you consistent? For example, if you abbreviated the state in your address, did you abbreviate states throughout the resume?

Do I list references?

If you submit a resume, you MUST have references lined up. However, they should be listed on a separate page that is consistently formatted with the resume. Do not put the statement "References available upon request" on the resume. It is understood that references are available. On the Reference Page, include the names, titles, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of at least 3 individuals who have **AGREED** to serve as a reference for you. Submit this document only when asked.

Example Chronological Resume

Mary Bartholomew
1234 Main Street
City, State 56789
mary.bartholomew@email.com

Consistently spells out states

OBJECTIVE

Seeking a computer science internship with NASA where I can gain real-world experience with software development.

EDUCATION

Pursuing a Bachelors of Science in Computer Science
University of Alabama in Huntsville
Huntsville, Alabama

Absolute MUSTS

Expected Graduation May 2013
GPA 3.1 on a 4.0 scale

TIP: Push some information to the far right of the resume to give the document physical balance

EXPERIENCE

Best Buy
Huntsville, Alabama

June 2006 – Present
Junior Sales Associate

Accomplishments/ Achievements

Begins with most recent experience

•Help customers select electronic products to meet their needs. On average, assist 45 customers per day.
•Troubleshoot basic electronic issues for customers with a 97% ticket close-out rate.

Present tense for current job and past tense for previous job

Food Land
Madison, Alabama

May 2005 – June 2006
Stocker

•Worked without supervision at night to restock grocery items.
•Responsible for inventory of grocery items.

ACTIVITIES

•Member of National Computer Science Honors Society, 2010 – Present
•Webmaster for the University of Alabama in Huntsville's College of Science

Example Functional Resume

Leigh Kenny
321 Jefferson Street
City, State 65432
leigh.kenny@email.com

OBJECTIVE

Seeking a full time position as a Registered Nurse with Huntsville Hospital.

EDUCATION

Bachelors of Science in Nursing
University of Alabama in Huntsville
Huntsville, Alabama

Summarizes total skills acquired from past experiences.

May 2009
GPA 3.4 on a 4.0 scale

SKILLS

•Ten years of experience with patient care and treatment.
•Skilled in the oral and intravenous administration of prescribed drugs.
•Six years experience with physical rehabilitation.
•Demonstrated ability to supervise and direct nursing staff.

EXPERIENCE

Athens-Limestone Hospital
Athens, Alabama
Registered Nurse

Center for Care
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Licensed Practicing Nurse

Lists past employers with NO dates. Individual has gaps in employment that might alarm an employer.

East Brainard Health Clinic
Chattanooga, Tennessee
Registered Nurse

Clemson Rehab Center
Clemson, South Carolina
Therapy Assistant

Example Combination Resume

Jed Williams
6789 Valley Drive
City, State 12345
jed.williams@email.com

OBJECTIVE

Seeking a full time position as an electrical engineer with Raytheon.

EDUCATION

Bachelors of Science in Electrical Engineering   August 2010
University of Alabama in Huntsville   GPA 3.7 on a 4.0 scale
Huntsville, Alabama

Highlighting skills acquired on previous jobs that will help land the job currently seeking.

SKILLS SUMMARY

- Eleven years experience with troubleshooting electronics
- Professional Welder
- Three years experience working alongside a professional engineer to draft hardware designs

EXPERIENCE

Benchmark Electronic Systems
Huntsville, Alabama
Engineering Technician
August 2002 - Present

Adams Electronics
Huntsville, Alabama
Engineering Technician
February 1999 – August 2002

Employers are listed and dates are included. Individual has been an Engineering Technician for more than 10 years and is trying to sell himself UP to an engineering role.

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