

A GUIDE TO RESUME WRITING

A resume is:

An ingenious device that turns a human being into an object (sheet of A4 paper). This transformation device is then often used to try and convince people whom we have never met to invest thousands of dollars in us by hiring us for a job we have not yet specifically identified.

Sections found on a resume:

Personal Details:

Your resume should start off with your personal information such as name, address, contact numbers, e-mail (if available). It is not customary anymore to disclose things like, age or date of birth, marital status, health, race or gender. These demographics leave the door open to potential discrimination and have no impact on whether you can do the job.

Career Overview:

This is an optional extra on a resume which can give a positive statement about your background, both personal and career goals and your experience. When writing this section try to:

- Keep it short and to the point;
- Highlight your career goals; and
- Highlight what you hope to achieve.

A Career Overview should provide the reader with a quick preview of what he or she will find in your resume. It is there to make sure they actually read through the resume. It should be a few sentences and written as one paragraph. It should include a smattering of your professional, academic and industry training. Some personal attributes are optional. As stated, your career goal could serve as the last sentence.

eg. I am a motivated individual seeking a career in the health industry. My extensive training in the areas of nursing has given me the foundations upon which I hope to build my career within Queensland Health.

This example has been tailored to suit the company the person is applying with (Queensland Health). A more generic statement can be used. Ensure the statement is adapted around the position being applied for. Also, avoid airy, fairy statements. If a sentence doesn't contain factual information, ditch it.

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Education:

Quite simply, this section should include all formal and informal education and training undertaken. This should be in date order from most recent to least recent. This should include the name of the course (e.g. Bachelor of Science, Senior Certificate), the institution, and the year in which the qualification was gained. If still in the process of studying, indicate when the course started and leave a dash.

Start with your highest qualification first. Unless you are fresh out of school, leave your secondary school history out.

Education and Training section can cover university, TAFE training, industry courses, in-house courses, and any other professional training.

Employment History:

Outline your career history in the most recent order.

The structure to follow for each role is:

Job title, employer, dates, what you did, for whom and when.

Achievements:

Achievements show potential hirers what you are made of and what they can expect you will do for them.

Up to three per job is good and be specific. List the things that you did that you were not paid to do. Items would include staff awards and special commendations. Also ideas you put forward, scoped out or helped to implement that led to a cost saving or an increase in revenue or delivered new clients or resulted in higher levels of customer service or time efficiencies. The key here is results.

Please note meeting a target is not an achievement - it's doing what you are paid to do. Exceeding a monthly target is an achievement.

Indent your achievements by one tab on your resume to make them stand out.

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Plugging resume gaps:

Employers and recruiters don't like mysteries so if you have been out of the workforce it is better to try and explain the gap in your resume.

It is a good idea to write a short paragraph explaining the gap and inserting it into the right place in your career history. Remember, your career history is in reverse chronological order. Add in a line about any new skills or training you acquired.

An example would be: let's say you are a mum returning to the workforce, you could write something like:

Home manager/full time mum - January 2006 - September 2009

Skills acquired: Excellent organisational skills, communication skills and the ability to multi task. During this time I completed both a MYOB course and a first aid certificate. I managed the books for my husband's plumbing business and I created and managed the roster for volunteers at my daughter's child care centre.

Personal Attributes:

A personal attributes section is another optional extra but also an important section in providing the employer with information about your personality. This gives a rather impersonal document some personality. Also, methods used for recruitment and selection in today's market are more and more making use of personality profiling. Psychologists have linked personality traits to work habits so it is in your best interest to be aware of your positive personality traits and to mention these on your resume.

Skills/Attributes:

Also titled 'key credentials' or 'demonstrated skills' this is another section that is under used. It is an important way to communicate succinctly – usually in dot point form – just exactly what your stand out skills are. Resumes tend to always be too long and due to the short amount of time an employer spends reading the resume, making sections easy to read enables the employer to take in more information. Using a section on skills can give clear concise information about what you can offer the employer.

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Professional Memberships

Include only those relevant to your career as well as an indication of how active you are in the organisation.

Other Interests:

This section is used sparingly usually because people don't think their personal interests have any bearing on whether you can do the job. In reality, they don't, however, this section merely provides a talking point or a point of difference. Your personal interests will give an indication of what you are like as a person. For example – a person who likes reading, sewing, craft and classical music conjures a completely different image to a person who likes sky diving, salsa dancing, action movies and bungee jumping!!

Referees:

Your list of referees are last on a resume, they are the names of people you have nominated to give you a good reference, not just a reference! You should of course have permission from them to name them as a referee and let them know when you have applied for a position or got to the interview stage. As well as the person's name, include their current position, company worked for, and their contact phone number.

Putting it all together:

For school leavers and those that have been in the workforce for a few years, two pages is fine but for everyone else three pages is ideal.

Hiring managers and recruiters want to see how your career has developed as well as some detail of your achievements, both what they were and how they added value to the business.

Mature candidates say don't go back more than 10 years on your resume. You can include a paragraph under the heading "Other professional experience" if you want so you can mention earlier work of particular interest or relevance. Or you can provide a full summary of your professional history. You can end with the sentence: "Full resume available upon request."

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There are no rules about the order of the sections on a resume, apart from that your personal information should always go first, career overview should always go second and referees should always go last.

As for the rest of the information, it is an individual decision about where to put them. It depends on what you see as the highlight of your experience, the focal point on your whole resume, the most important piece of information about you. Usually this will come down to either your employment history, education or skills.

If you have a steady continuous employment history then this might be something you want to highlight, so putting it on the front page of your resume would do that. If you had a very up and down employment history with a lot of unexplained gaps then you might put something else first.

If you have just completed a training course or a degree and have a solid education, then you would probably consider your education to be the focal point so that would go on your front page under career objective.

Furthermore, if you have had broken employment and a disrupted education, but have travelled extensively and worked in many different industries, you might like to highlight your skills set on the first page. However you decide to format your resume sections just remember to put your sections in order of importance.

Some important things to remember:

- Describe your skills, abilities, and attributes and what you can do for the employer.
- Highlight achievements for each of your previous positions.
- Keep language simple and direct.
- Underline, capitalise, use bold print to emphasise certain aspects you want to highlight.
- Do not cram your resume – a cluttered resume is hard to read. Leave some information to talk about when you get an interview.
- Only use professional-sounding email addresses as this is a marketing document promoting you.
- Keep the resume to 3 pages maximum if possible.