

WHAT IS A RÉSUMÉ?

A résumé is a short, enthusiastically written summary of your skills and experience as a working person. It is primarily used to convince a prospective employer to grant you an interview. It is either mailed or emailed with a cover letter, unless dropped off in person. It is currently common for a résumé to be uploaded into internet search engines or copied and pasted into an employer's application online. It can also be used when presenting yourself in other less-formal job search situations.

The language in a résumé does not have to be boastful, exaggerated, "puffed up," "beefed up," or anything like that. A résumé must be only two things: clear and interesting. If you are clear about your motivation, skills, and personal qualities, you will eventually be able to describe these in an interesting way. This guide will help you write a good résumé.

Remember that a résumé is the first part of dialogue between you and your prospective employers. It helps to think clearly, not about what you feel you should write down but about what you really want to say.

THE THREE "SHOULD" OF A RÉSUMÉ

A résumé should be easy to read.

Capitals, page breaks, indentations, and different fonts or types should be used to make your subject matter clearer, not fancier. Your résumé must be COMPLETELY FREE of all typographical, spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors. A hard copy should be neatly reproduced on a good printer, then copied on a good copy machine on high-quality paper or reproduced by a good printing establishment. Uploading your résumé on the internet is best using a text-only format or a pdf.

A résumé should "market" you.

Focus on knowledge and experience that will be interesting to the people for whom you want to work and on what you feel you have done well.

A résumé should make you feel good.

Trust yourself. If you like it, it is easy to read, and it highlights your skills and background, chances are it is good enough. If you are uneasy about how it looks or reads, you might want to work on it a bit more.

RÉSUMÉ FORMATS

Chronological Format: A chronological format lists education, work experience, activities, and other items in reverse chronological order (most recent to least recent). Job titles and place of employment are highlighted. This format works best when past experience is directly related to future goals, when you want to give a general sketch of your background, or when prior job titles or places of employment are impressive. It might be considered the "standard" résumé format and is the one that employers will generally expect and like.

Functional Format: This format highlights the areas of specific strength or skill that relate to a career or job objective. Job titles and places of employment are de-emphasized. The functional format works best when changing careers or applying for a position that requires specific skills but in a field in which you have not worked before. The disadvantage is that it is harder for an employer to grasp your actual work history, may be confusing, and (at worst) may look like you're trying to hide something.

Combined Format: The combined format highlights job titles and places of employment—like the chronological format—but is also organized according to skill areas, like the functional format.

WHAT TO PUT IN A RÉSUMÉ

- **Identifying Data:** Name, address, email address, and phone number of both home (permanent) and cell
- **Job Objective:** Only if you have something fairly specific in mind. This is optional.
- **Education:** Name and location of institution; degree granted; major, minor, or concentration; and date of graduation. May include GPA, honors, awards, or special certifications.
- **Significant Experience:** Paid work, volunteer, or academic
- **Activities/Additional Experience:** Memberships and other leadership positions in community organizations. Include personal interests only if relevant or somehow striking or important. Computer skills, foreign language ability, publications, or travel experience may be included or highlighted in a separate section.

- References: Contact information for references is generally not included with the initial cover letter and résumé, but it is customary to include a line on the résumé stating that references are available. This line is optional.

HOW TO WRITE A RÉSUMÉ

Give the context in which your experience occurred: with whom you worked, to whom you reported, or for whom a project was done.

Use phrases that indicate the extent and scope of your work, such as:

- “...in a busy firm of six lawyers”
- “...for a cabin of 12 girls, ages 8–13”
- “...with a team of reading and special education teachers”
- “...for the largest department in this upscale clothing store”

Use words that are specific with respect to skill. It is not enough to say you are “good with people.” If you are good with people, you might manage, coordinate, delegate, encourage, teach, coach, organize, and so forth. All of these words are refer to “people” skills. Use action-oriented verbs that accurately describe what you did. Visit the CLP office for a list of action verbs appropriate for résumés.

Describe the results of what you did. Try phrases like:

- “Contributed over \$3,000 toward college expenses by successfully managing a small painting business.”
- “Developed plan for social studies unit subsequently used by full-time third grade teacher.”
- “Designed and produced newsletter to assist in marketing campaign for a small social service agency.”
- “Developed the methodology to synthesize a masked diene to be used in subsequent Diels Alder reactions.”
- “Gained valuable insight into corporate environment through working a variety of temporary assignments.”

THE THREE STEPS YOU NEED TO TAKE:

Before you write anything down, ask yourself these questions:

- What did I do in this job?
- What did I do well?
- What did I get out of this experience?
- What did it really teach me?
- What is the first thing I would like to say to a prospective employer about this experience?

Write this down IN YOUR OWN WORDS first or make some simple notes. Do not try to sound fancy. Then use the “Action Verbs” and the samples to translate your language into “résumé”

Do not overlook anything or take your experience for granted. Most jobs teach us something, and we usually get a chance to contribute in some way.

GO FOR IT!

Writing a résumé is hard work, and there really is no way to minimize that. The important thing is just to get started. Don’t say to yourself that you will write a résumé “this weekend” or “tonight.” (Who would look forward to a night like that?).

Instead, make up your mind to work on your résumé for 30 minutes at a time. Just 30 minutes at a time, perhaps after dinner or with your morning coffee, but don’t spend more than 30 minutes at a stretch. Little by little, you will see a beautiful piece of communication come into being and become much more aware of your skills and capabilities in the process.

And as always, email or visit a career advisor at CLP@nec.edu for assistance. CLP has plenty of résumé samples to help you get started.