



Guide to writing a great resume

What is a resume and why is it important?

Your resume will be one of the most important documents in getting you an interview with an employer. It's a description of your education, paid employment, volunteer activities (including school activities), general interests and personal strengths.

It should outline your technical, transferable, employability and personal skills relevant to the position you are applying for.

Most job applications require a resume at a minimum.

CV vs resume

CV is short for 'Curriculum Vitae' which is Latin for 'history or course of one's life'. A resume and curriculum vitae are different words used to describe the same thing, although a CV is generally longer and more detailed than a resume. They are both documents which are used to outline your skills and experience when applying for a job.

Targeted to each position

Your resume is an important document. It is like your advertising brochure and needs to be 'targeted' to each position you apply for. For example; if applying for a retail sales position your resume should highlight your customer service experience — but if applying for an office administration position it should highlight your experience relevant to that kind of work.

Your resume should be written in a way that is easily modified, so that you can update it for each job application, quickly and easily.

Whilst it is fine to use a similar version of your resume for different jobs, you will need to make sure each time you send a resume that it reflects the skills the employer is looking for. That is why you usually require more than one version of your resume.

Focus on your key skills

Your resume should focus on your skills and abilities – regardless of where you developed those skills and abilities. There are many different styles of resume, and no one way to write a resume correctly. However, there are some basic things that you definitely need to include and these are outlined here for you.

What to include in your resume

- Profile
- Personal details
- Key skills
- Key achievements

- Educational qualifications
- Employment history
- Professional memberships/community involvements



Profile

A profile is a snapshot of your experience, skills and abilities relevant to the position. It gives the employer a clear indication of what is to follow in the rest of your document. It may or may not include a career objective.

Your profile should be clearly outlined on the front page, using a combination of paragraph style formatting and dot points. This should encourage the employer to want to read the rest of your application and is an important part of your resume.

Personal details

These details need to be provided somewhere in your resume. You may have a heading for 'Personal details', or depending on the layout of your resume, you may provide the information elsewhere (eg header or footer).

Make sure it's easy to find, as it advises of basic information about who you are and how you can be contacted.

Always ensure you have updated this information to include the correct details:

- first and last name;
- address (optional);
- telephone number/mobile; and
- email address.

Key skills

This section outlines your specific abilities, skills and experience for the job you are applying for. It is what tells the employer whether you are 'right' for the job based on the information provided. Other terms used to highlight this section of a resume include: demonstrated abilities, relevant skills, competencies, capabilities, skills summary, work skills.

Here you should list all the skills that you have acquired from both paid and unpaid work – grouping skills together that relate to the job. This section may also be used to list any licences or special qualifications.

For example, for an administrative position you may have the following headings:

- office administration skills;
- organisational skills;
- customer service skills; and
- general skills.

Key achievements

This section is used to highlight anything you are extremely proud to have achieved in your career. It may include personal achievements (only when related to the position).

This section lists five to ten dot points of key achievements related to your technical and transferable skills suitable to the job.



Educational qualifications

Include your most recent educational qualifications that are relevant to the position. If you are just out of school, include your highest level achieved. Information possible to include in this section:

- university degrees;
- certificates;
- short training courses;
- workshops; seminar and conferences;
- other professional training; and
- any licences and accreditations.

Employment history

This section explains your past and present work activities. 'Employment history' is preferable to 'Work experience' due to the confusion between work experience and unpaid work which is usually only short term. However, if you are just out of school, it is worthwhile to include 'Work experience' if you do not have a history of paid employment. Each job listing should include:

- job title;
- company name and location;
- dates of employment; and
- duties (you may not list duties here, depending on the style of resume you choose to use. Duties can also be grouped under your 'Key Skills' section to avoid your resume becoming too long and too repetitive).

Professional memberships/community involvements

If you have any professional associations or community involvements relevant to the job, you may list them under this heading. Use your common sense in making a judgement about the relevance of your professional and community memberships – be mindful of listing anything that is not relevant or unsuitable. If you do include this section, you will need to list:

- name of the organisation;
- date/duration of involvement; and
- title/nature of your involvement.

Referees

Referees provide details on your experience and skills in relation to the job to a potential employer. They must be willing to be contacted by telephone to provide information about you – so always make sure to ask if they are willing to speak on your behalf and inform them of any positions you have applied for.

You must obtain permission from your referees before including their details on your resume. It is common to include a minimum of two referees (preferably three). This is the last piece of information to go on your resume. If you do have the correct details and have sought their permission to include on your resume, add the following details:

- referee's name;
- job title;
- employer; and
- contact details; eg phone/mobile/email.



If you are unable to locate your referee/s in time to submit your application, you still must include this section on your resume. Simply state 'Available upon request' and then if you are invited to an interview, ensure you can provide referee details to hand to the potential employer in person.

Optional things to include

Cover page

It is up to you how you style your resume, however, cover pages are generally not that important. They tend to be an additional page that adds bulk to your resume and the information contained in a cover page is usually provided elsewhere in your document.

Career objective

If you are prepared to update your career objective each time you apply for a job, then you can include this information. Always ensure your objective is relevant to the job you are seeking and is up to date with your career goals. You may add this under your profile, or include as a separate heading.

Activities and interests

You may add this information if you feel the employer would see how your interests show that you have a well rounded personality suited to the type of work they are offering. For example, a mechanic may find it useful to state they are a member of an automotive club and have affiliations with sports car racing, motorcycle clubs etc. It is not recommended to put any activity or interest that conflicts with the nature of the work you are seeking.

Photo

Generally speaking you would not usually add a photo to a resume, unless it is specifically requested by the employer, and your appearance is in some way important for the job. However, it is common that your photo will be available when you apply for jobs using social networking sites if you have provided one on your profile.

Personal attributes

Don't worry if you don't include these in your resume. By all means, space permitting, you may add them – but always ensure they are relevant to the job.