

The Writing Lab

Elements of a Résumé

Handout courtesy of Angela Gulick

Résumés are divided into sections that highlight certain aspects of your academic and professional experience. Some of these sections are expected, so they are required for Assignment Five. Other sections are optional and can be named to suit your purposes. Before we get started, you need to decide if you are going to create a chronological or a functional résumés. Note the difference:

Chronological Résumé: A chronological résumé uses **time** as its main organizational device, beginning with the **most recent** jobs and educational experiences. You can decide which section you wish to start with (work history or schooling) depending upon which you think is stronger for a particular job. A chronological résumé is a good tool for showing your reader a **steady work history**. Chronological résumés are also good for those who have a **good amount of work experience** in the line of work for which they are seeking employment.

Functional Résumé: A functional résumé uses **order of importance** as its main organizational device, beginning with the jobs and schooling deemed most relevant for a particular job. Again, you can decide which section you wish to start with (work history or schooling). A functional résumé is a good tool for focusing on **what** you did and not **when** you did it. For people with a lot of different jobs or who have had “holes” in their work history, a functional résumé can highlight your strengths without drawing so much attention to those time lapses. Also, for people without a lot of work experience concentrated in their fields, a functional résumé allows the applicant to highlight those jobs that are in the field (if there are any).

Now let’s look at the components of a résumé.

Contact Information

Begin your résumé by providing your name, mailing address, telephone number, and email address. If you have two addresses (one during the school year and one during the summer), you can provide them both by labeling them “school address” and “permanent address.”

Career Objective

Include a short descriptive phrase that tells an employer the general kind of work you are seeking and possibly the focus within that job. Job objectives can be tricky – too general and they are worthless but too specific and they might prevent you from being considered. The job objective should match as closely as possible the type of work being advertised because this is the first place employers look to start “thinning the herd.” Note the examples below:

- **Ineffective Job Objective:** Seeking job in a bank. *This is too general – what kind of job?*
- **Ineffective Job Objective:** Seeking a job as a mortgage loan officer at First Federal and Savings Bank of Champaign. *This is too specific – what if you were applying to Busey Bank?*
- **Effective Job Objective:** Seeking an entry-level position as a mortgage loan officer where I can use my analytical, leadership, and customer service skills. *This objective not only tells the type of job a person is seeking but also the skills the candidate can bring to that job.*

Education

Educational history is generally listed in **reverse** chronological order (the most recent education first and working backwards). Do not go back any further than your high school. Provide the following information from your various schools:

- Name of school
- City and state of school
- Dates of attendance (starting/ending)
- Whether you graduated or when you intend to graduate

You may also include coursework relevant to the job you are pursuing. However, this is important: Never provide just the course number without a description of what that course is. For example, you wouldn't just provide "ENG 102" because someone from outside of Parkland would have no way of knowing what that course was. Rather, you would provide, "ENG 102: Documented Report Writing." Here is an example:

Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

1989-1991

Master of Arts in English

Relevant Coursework: ENG 503: Teaching Business and Technical Communication; ENG 520: Computational Analysis of English; and ENG 587: Internship in Business, Technical, and Professional Writing.

Work History

Work history is generally listed in **reverse** chronological order (the most recent job first and working backwards). You don't need to list every job you have ever had, particularly those that were very brief or unrelated to the job for which you are applying. As you get more experience, you will eventually leave off all but the most relevant jobs. Provide the following information from your various schools:

- Name of employer
- City and state of employment
- Dates you were employed
- Job duties by focusing on **action verbs**

Here is an example

Barker and Allen, and Architects, Denver, Colorado

2008 - 2011

Job Duties: served as chief designer for three hospital additions, one band shell, and two nursing home additions; supervised 17-member design and construction team; and managed 3.2 million dollar budget for three-year project.

Notice the verbs here: **served**, **supervised**, **managed**. These are past tense verbs (-ed) because the job was in the past. If the job was in the present, present tense verbs would be used:

Barker and Allen Architects, Denver, Colorado

2008 - present

Job Duties: serve as chief designer for three hospital additions, one band shell, and two nursing home additions; supervise 17-member design and construction team; and manage 3.2 million dollar budget for three-year project.

Summary of Qualifications

Some employers prefer to see a brief list of qualifications related to the résumé's stated objective at the very start of the résumé to see if the candidate is a match for the job. Here is an example:

Summary of Qualifications

- Bachelor of Science in Chemistry with organic chemistry focus
- Seven years working for 3M in Automotive Innovation Department
- Proficient in Psychometrics, Enviropak, and Cerebro PV software programs
- Fluent in Spanish and Mandarin

Additional Skills, Honors and Awards, Additional Activities, Professional Organizations, etc.

If you want any additional sections in your résumé, you just need to remember to **explain** their contents carefully. Ask yourself if an outside reader will understand your achievements. Be very careful not to assume that readers understand what various organizations or awards mean without clarification. For example, look at this:

Honors and Awards

PACE Award, 1989 – 1991

Impressed? Think I won it because I ate a lot of picante sauce 😊 Here is a more clear way to describe it:

Honors and Awards

Premium for Academic Excellence (PACE) Award, 1989 – 1991

- two-year full tuition scholarship offered by the Iowa State University Graduate College

References

Readers of résumés will expect to see some mention of references, and you have two choices:

Option 1: Under References heading, write “References are available upon request.”

Option 2: Leave References heading off of résumé and provide a list of specific references on another sheet of paper. If you choose this option, you should include the following for each reference listed: reference's name, job title, place of employment, address of employment, telephone number, and email address. Here is an example:

Angela Gulick

Professor of English
Room C243, Parkland College
2400 West Bradley Avenue
Champaign, IL 61821
217.373.3797
agulick@parkland.edu

Everyone's résumé is different because every life is different. For more information on creating résumés and other job search documents, check out the Job Search Writing section of the Purdue Online Writing Lab (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html). You can also get further assistance in the Career Services department.

For more handouts and PowerPoint Presentations on writing topics, go to <https://spark.parkland.edu/wl/>
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For additional assistance with your job search and employment materials, please contact
Parkland College Career Services: room U267, 217.351.2219, careerservices@parkland.edu.