

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE RESUME

The resume is usually the first item employers look at during the employment screening and hiring process. Employers usually spend no more than seven to fifteen seconds pre-screening resumes to find the candidates that are best qualified for the positions they are looking to fill. Writing a clear, concise resume that demonstrates your qualifications and achievements quickly is essential to the job search process.

Essentially, your resume is a written commercial in which you summarize and promote your greatest qualifications and accomplishments drawing on your most relevant personal, educational and work experiences. There is no single model of resume that fits all people in all circumstances. Your resume is a personal statement designed to emphasize the qualities that a potential employer looks for in a candidate. The Career Services Center library offers a variety of possible layouts helpful in formulating ideas for your own resume. Sample resumes are also available on the Career Services Center web site (www.stcloudstate.edu/careerservices) under "Preparation for Job Search".

To develop an effective resume, follow these steps:

- ❑ **Establish Your Objective!** What job do you want to get with the resume you are writing? Resumes are not like socks - one size does not fit all! If an employer is looking for a human resource specialist, he/she will probably screen out resumes from people who look like counselors (or teachers or sales reps or ...). In other words, if you want a human resources job, your resume should reflect human resources related skills.
- ❑ **Identify and Assess Your Audience!** Who hires for the position you want? What are the skills, knowledge and qualities for which these employers will be looking?
- ❑ **Gather Your Selling Points and Prioritize!** Now that you know what the employers are looking for, you need to identify where you have demonstrated or obtained these qualifications. What key qualifications, buzz words or action verbs do you need to highlight on your resume?
- ❑ **Focus On Achievements & Accomplishments!** Everyone wants to hire a winner. Your resume should demonstrate your history of successes (i.e. college degrees, honors grades, relevant experience, job promotions, outstanding recommendations, leadership, community involvement, creativity, etc.).
- ❑ **Choose Your Format - Design Your Layout!** Which format (chronological, functional, combination) will best highlight your qualifications for the job. How can you layout your resume so that your best selling points will be quickly noticed by the employer who is reading your resume?
- ❑ **Describe Position Specific Verbs & Qualities!** You know the employer is looking for specific key items - make sure they stand out on your resume.
- ❑ **Prepare, Review & Revise Your Drafts!** Counselors in the Career Services Center are available to review your resume.
- ❑ **Make It Look Professional!** Use a word processor and quality printer. Use high quality resume paper (can be purchased at most office supply stores).

Career/Job Objectives

An objective states in simple and concise terms what you are looking to accomplish through your career search. When writing your objective, specifically target the job you wish to attain... but **BE CAREFUL!!!** If you are unsure of the positions available or are open to many different positions within a company, an objective could actually diminish your appeal to employers. Conversely, creating a vague objective can create an impression that you lack knowledge of the industry. Here are a few examples of objectives to give you an idea of how they are constructed:

- To obtain a position in manufacturing that will utilize my training in quality control.
- Seeking a sales representative position in the consumer products industry.
- To obtain an elementary teaching position. Also interested in working as a coach or student advisor.
- Seeking a position as a personnel assistant within a public service organization utilizing my knowledge of recruitment, benefits and employee relations.

Resume Content

Many people wonder what should be included in the body of a resume. Simply stated, a resume should include any experience or qualification that you possess that make you an interesting, qualified candidate to potential employers. A resume should speak to how you as a person will fit within the employer's company based on their philosophy of service. Research the employer through websites or networking to identify the key points to highlight in your resume. Here are just a few of the many experiences that may help you tailor your resume to a potential employer:

- Employment
- Involvement in University Clubs
- Professional Organizations
- Volunteer Experiences
- Internships
- Field Experiences as part of Major
- Tutoring
- Extra Curricular Activity
- High GPA
- Valuable Certifications
- Sports Leadership / Coaching
- Professional Recognition

Resume Headings

Once you have identified the skills and experiences you wish to include in your resume, you should consider how you will organize the information in your document. Generally, details of experiences fall under specific headings in your resume (see handouts in the Career Services Resource Library for resume samples). Below are a number of possible headings for your resume.

- Objective
- Career Objective
- Professional Objective
- Education
- Educational Background
- Teaching Preparation
- Professional Development
- Experience
- Relevant Experience
- Related Experience
- Work Experience
- Work History
- Employment Summary
- Summary
- Summary of Qualifications
- Highlights of Qualifications
- Skills
- Technical Skills
- Teaching Skills
- Professional Skills
- Special Projects and Skills
- Academic Projects and Skills
- Computer Skills
- Related Skills
- Capabilities
- Honors and Awards
- Honors and Activities
- Extra-Curricular Activities
- Professional Development
- Professional Affiliations
- Volunteer Activities
- Community Service
- Leadership Activities
- Additional Information
- Other Information

Action Verbs for Describing Job Function

As a rule, students are often too brief in their description of their skills, qualities and traits. Consult the following list of action verbs when writing your resume and describing your experience. Use these verbs to describe each skill you demonstrated in your duties. These verbs often provide good ways to start a "bullet point" in your resume.

accelerated	classified	created	earned	entertained	headed	judged
activated	coached	decided	edited	established	implemented	launched
adapted	collected	delegated	effected	estimated	improved	lectured
administered	completed	delivered	eliminated	evaluated	increased	led
analyzed	conceived	demonstrated	entertained	examined	indexed	located
anticipated	conducted	designed	established	executed	initiated	maintained
appraised	conserved	detected	estimated	explored	inspected	managed
approved	constructed	determined	evaluated	facilitated	installed	marketed
assembled	consulted	developed	examined	formulated	instituted	mastered
assisted	contributed	diagnosed	executed	fostered	instructed	measured
bargained	controlled	directed	earned	founded	interpreted	mediated
budgeted	coordinated	discovered	edited	generated	interviewed	moderated
built	corresponded	displayed	effected	governed	invented	monitored
calculated	counseled	distributed	eliminated	handled	investigated	motivated

negotiated	planned	protected	reinforced	set up	supported
obtained	predicted	proved	reorganized	simplified	systematized
operated	prepared	provided	repaired	sketched	taught
ordered	prescribed	qualified	represented	sold	tested
organized	presented	read	researched	solved	trained
originated	presided	received	revamped	sorted	translated
oversaw	processed	recommended	reviewed	spoke	updated
participated	produced	recorded	revised	streamlined	worked
performed	programmed	recruited	scheduled	structured	wrote
persuaded	promoted	reduced	served	studied	
pioneered	proposed	referred	serviced	supervised	

Formatting an Electronic Resume

There will likely be times in your job search where you will need to submit a resume via an employer's website. According to research, 80% of companies utilize the internet as a recruiting tool. When submitted electronically, your resume enters a searchable database that an employer utilizes to find candidates with specific skills that fit the open position. For this reason, your resume should include actual skill words that will appear when an employer searches for them through their recruitment software.

In many cases it is OK to use your current resume, but it is important to focus on relevant keywords that appear when employers search their database. If the key skill is not spelled out in concrete terms, the employer will not be able to see it in their search. Follow these steps to ensure that your qualifications will come across in an electronic search.

- Do your research!!! This is the best way to determine appropriate keywords for a position. Check out classified ads, job search websites, company websites and job descriptions.
- Use concrete nouns and phrases to describe your qualifications and experiences.
- Include industry jargon, acronyms, and buzzwords in your resume.
- Use common headings such as Objective, Education, Work History, Experience, Professional Affiliations, Publications, Honors and Activities, Certifications, and Licenses
- Be sure to describe job-related skills, transferable skills, and self-management skills.

If an employer requests a "scannable" resume, following these tips will help you create a resume that can easily be scanned by keyword scanning programs.

- Use standard fonts such as Times New Roman, Arial, Helvetica, Palatino and Garamond. Use font size 10-14.
- Avoid using special formatting features such as lines, borders, shading, color, graphics and boxes.
- Use keyboard symbols such as – or * in place of bullets.
- Try using indents, columns and centering to add some visual appeal.
- Be sure to use a lot of keywords.
- Send an original copy printed on crisp white paper that has been printed using a laser printer. Remember not to fold or staple the resume.
- Keep personal information (i.e. name, address, telephone number and email address) on separate lines.
- Leave plenty of white space. This helps the computer to recognize beginning and endings. Using one inch margins on all sides of your resume is preferred.

TEN DON'TS for RESUMES

1. Don't make it too long. A resume is not an autobiography. It's "bait" or an "appetite wetter". It does not have to tell your life story. Very few personnel or business managers will bother to read a lengthy resume. Just highlight the major areas which will help get you the interview.
2. Don't make it too sketchy by just listing your jobs by title, companies and dates, your extra-curricular activities or the names of your clubs. That gives too little information. Tell something about your accomplishments in the position(s) you held and in your extra-curricular activities.
3. Don't be negative. All of us have positive and negative factors in our backgrounds. Always focus on the positive. What relevant skills did you demonstrate? What did you learn that is applicable?

Too often resumes start on a negative note. Here are typical examples of opening sentences taken from actual resumes that never should have been used (and resulted in quick rejections):

"I am now fully recovered from a lengthy illness and ready to return to work."

"Although I did poorly in college, I think I can be successful in a job."

4. Religion, political party and national origin should be omitted. Despite legislation and ethical concepts which make it wrong to discriminate because of race, religion or national origin there is still much prejudice out there, either open or hidden. Indicating your religion or national origin adds nothing to your qualifications, yet it might set up an unfavorable reaction in the mind of the reader.
5. Do not include salary information! Generally, it is wise to omit salary in the body of a resume. If it is requested, give it in the cover letter. This will give you flexibility. It is quite possible that your salary requirement will vary. Most people will work for less money if the opportunity for growth exists or if the job is in an area where the cost of living is lower. On your cover letter, you can adapt your salary requirements to each specific position for which you apply.
6. Don't use a photograph. No matter how good a photo is it shows only a small fraction of your personality and may give a completely wrong impression of you: "This person is too serious", "too flippant", "too cruel looking", "smug", "stupid", "has shifty eyes", "is insincere" are some examples of actual comments made by prospective employers after seeing photos of job applicants. Don't give a prospective employer the chance to make an employment decision about you without even meeting you.
7. Don't list references. In order to keep the resume brief, nothing should be included except essentials. If references are desired, the employer will request them. You should prepare them and have them typed on a separate sheet of paper ready to be submitted upon request.
8. Don't tag your resume with an incorrect title. If you are a chemical engineer and are seeking a job as such, it is logical to list your career objective on your resume as chemical engineer. If, however, you are applying for several different jobs, you need to change your job objective each time. If an employer has an opening for a quality control specialist, he/she wants to read resumes from people who indicate they want to be a quality control specialist. He/she may not read resumes from people seeking some other position or from someone who did not indicate a job objective (and appears unfocused).
9. Don't ruin a well-prepared and carefully thought out resume by using a poor format or sloppy reproduction. Set up your resume as neatly as possible, using a good word processor and laser printer if possible. Leave good margins. Avoid onion-skin, coarse mimeo stock or colored paper. Make copies of your resume on good bonded paper using a high quality copier.
10. Never, repeat never, send a resume without a cover letter.

For more help, attend our resume seminars! Make an appointment to have your resume reviewed!