

Sequence of resume information

The order and content of everyone's resume does not have to be the same. However, formats are somewhat standardized so that employers can easily find the information they seek. After your heading, sequence the information on your resume from most important to least important with regard to supporting your career objective.

Heading

Head your resume with this information:

- Your full name. Use the form of your name as it appears on academic records and other documents an employer may require you to provide, so there will be no confusion that documents belong to the same person. If you go by a middle name or nickname, you can emphasize or insert this, as in George Bradley (Brad) Martinez, or Kathryn (Kate) E. Winthrop.
- Current/school address and phone number and your permanent address and phone number. Employers may wish to contact you during school breaks or even months after you submit your resume. Make it possible, and easy, for them to find you.
- Email address(es).
- DO NOT place the word "resume" at the top of your resume. It's simply not done. (If the employer can't tell it's a resume, you've got bigger problems.)
- DON'T include a URL for a personal web site unless the contents are strictly professional / academic. We see many student resumes listing web sites that contain inappropriate material — a quick way for employers to decide you don't have the judgment or maturity to be hired.

Objective

Your objective tells a prospective employer the type of work you are currently pursuing. The rest of your resume should be designed to most effectively support your objective. If you are using your resume to support an application for a scholarship, admission to graduate school, or the like, you can state this in your objective. Always state your objective simply and concisely; it is never necessary to have a long-winded statement.

For a job search, don't make an employer guess what you want to do. Therefore:

- Make sure the employer knows either the industry you want to work in, or the type of work you want to do, or the skills you want to apply, or some combination. **Example:** Marketing position in sports or sports promotion, interest in using writing and public speaking skills.
- Avoid objectives like, "position which utilizes my skills and abilities" without specifying your skills and abilities.
- Avoid objectives like, "position related to (name of your major)," when your major does not describe a job or career field or is too broad to be meaningful. For **example**, "position in business" is far too broad to give an employer an idea of what you want to do.
- It is not the employer's job to be your career counselor, so the employer should not have to hunt through your resume to guess what you are interested in doing. Employers won't take time to do that anyway.

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- If you are seeking an internship or summer employment, a co-op position or other non-permanent position, state this in your objective, so the employer will not misconstrue and assume you are a graduating student seeking permanent work.
- If you find you have several different areas of focus or different objectives, create more than one version of your resume. Each version of your resume can be slightly different to support its objective.

Education

Your education section should almost always immediately follow the objective statement. This is because your education is your most recent significant accomplishment and is usually related to your objective. Even if your major is not specifically tied to your objective, you want the employer to know that you are completing (or working on) a college degree.

Include:

- Degree(s) - first list the most recent degree you are pursuing or have earned, then list previous college degrees, as in master's degree first, followed by bachelor's degree.
- On one line include the degree level, major (and second major, minor or concentration), and date of completion or anticipated completion by month and year. If your combination of majors, minors, concentrations, etc. are too long to fit on one line, put the extra information on the second line.
- The word "major" is unnecessary.
- On another line include institution and location by city and state. You can use the university's full name, or the official nickname of the university, or both — see example. Think about the types of employers to whom you will be providing your resume and whether or not they will be familiar with the university names.
- Either the degree or the university name can be first, and either line can be bold, depending upon whether you want to call attention to your institution or your degree.
- List additional degrees in reverse chronological order (most recent first).
- Study abroad, if you have done it or have been accepted to do it, should be included.

Example: (one degree)

B.ed. English, May 2005

Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL), Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Example: (degrees from different institutions)

M.S. Biochemistry, May 2008

Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (Virginia Tech), Blacksburg, VA

B.S. Biology, May 2005

Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Example: (degrees from same institution)

Master of Business Administration, May 2007

B.S. Computer Engineering, May 2005

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National University of Management (NUM), Phnom Penh, Cambodia

You may include:

- Overall and/or in-major GPA
- Technical or continuing education experience can be listed if it is related to your career goal.

The following could be included in the Education section, or in other sections of the resume:

- Academic awards, scholarships, scholastic achievement are generally included in an "Honors" or "Activities and Honors" section. However, if you have one significant academic honor and/or a particularly outstanding academic honor, you may wish to list it in your education section. This can be helpful if your GPA is not truly reflective of your achievements.
- Career-related course work.
- Class projects or independent studies.
- Publications.

Don't include:

- With rare exception, don't list your high school degree. If you're in college the employer knows you have one. The only exception would be if you are a freshman or sophomore and attended a special or well-known high school for outstanding students, or something similar. By junior year, you need to be showcasing your college accomplishments. By graduate school, list college and graduate level work only.

Experience

- If at all possible, use relevant experience to support your objective. This experience can be paid or unpaid, an internship or a substantial class project, volunteer positions, or positions held in clubs, etc.
- Your experience does not have to be paid to be relevant. This allows you to include any experience in which you learned or demonstrated skills, knowledge or abilities that are related to the type of job you are seeking.
- If your experience seems to break into two distinct categories of "related" and "other," you can use these two headings and divide your experience this way. Related experience might include a mixture of paid employment, volunteer work, student organization work, etc. You can give more detail in your related experience section, and leave out details in the other experience section.
- If you have not had related experience, you should still list your employment background. This shows an employer that you have learned basic work ethics and skills such as taking responsibility, working cooperatively with co-workers, customer service, time management, or other characteristics that are important to any work environment. Think about skills you used that are transferable to a different work setting.
- Generally, within each category, list your experiences in reverse chronological order.
- For each entry, give name and location (city and state) of organization, the job title, dates of employment (month / year), and a concise description of your accomplishments. Use phrases; not complete sentences.

Example:

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Pour un Sourire d'Enfant, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Community Crisis Center Volunteer, Worked 10-15 hours per week; September 2005 - May 2006

- Learned about community resources for various citizen needs.
- Made referrals for mental health and social services issues.
- Scheduled other volunteers for telephone hotline shifts.

Activities and Honors

- Your accomplishments and extracurricular activities tell an employer about your interests, motivations, and skills (e.g. organizational, leadership, interpersonal, etc.).
- You may include scholarships, awards, recognition of academic achievement, etc.
- Activities and Honors can be one combined section or two separate sections, depending on how many you have, the types you have, and how you want to sequence them in your resume.
- For example, if you have several activities that are related to your career objective, you might list Activities nearer to the top of your resume, while listing Honors nearer to the end.
- However, if you have one honor, or items that could fall in either category, use a combined section.
- If you have one significant academic honor and/or a particularly outstanding academic honor, you may wish to list it in your education section. This can be helpful if your GPA is not truly reflective of your achievements.

When listing organizations:

- Use a complete name instead of just the abbreviation. Example: Royal University of Law and Economics (RULE).
- If the nature or purpose of organization is not clear from the name, provide a brief explanation. Example: XYZ, co-ed service fraternity.
- DON'T precede each of your organizations with "member of...", "member of...", "member of..." If you list an organization, the employer knows you are a member; the organization name is sufficient.
- DO indicate positions held and/or activities in which you have participated (and about which you can articulate your accomplishments in an interview).
- If you held offices or leadership positions, you may wish to briefly list or describe your accomplishments (as you do with work experience). Emphasize the activities or skills that support your career objective. See the section on Experience above; you may wish to include an activity under "Related Experience" if applicable.
- You may indicate dates of membership and leadership roles held.

Example:

Comedy Club, 2006-present

President, 2007-present; Events Chair, 2006-2007.

Skills

- Almost every resume should include a skills section. The heading might simply read "Skills," and include a list of various skills, including computer skills, laboratory skills, foreign language skills, etc.

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- If all the skills you list are of one type, i.e., computer skills or foreign language skills, etc., head the section "Computer Skills," or "Foreign Language Skills," etc.
- If you have skills in several categories, head the section "Skills," and include subheadings to organize your categories, such as "computer skills," "laboratory skills," "foreign language skills," "organizational skills," etc.
- In ordering your resume, if your skills are more closely related to your career objective than other parts of your background, place this section higher on your resume than other less-related sections.

Certifications / Licensure

- If you have a certification or licensure (i.e., teaching certification, Engineer in Training, etc.) which is relevant to your career objective, include a "Certifications" or "Licensure" heading and give this information.
- In ordering your resume, place this section higher on your resume than other less related information.

Coursework

Whether or not to include a "coursework" or "relevant courses" section depends on several things:

- DON'T include courses that you would have obviously taken based on your major, minor, etc. That doesn't add value to your resume or help you stand out from other candidates. Your space would be better spent on other relevant information.
- DO include courses that are relevant to your objective that the employer wouldn't otherwise know you've taken. For example, if you're an English major, and have taken four computer science classes (but don't have a CS minor that you can mention), it probably can't hurt to list those courses.
- DO include courses important to your career objective if it would not be assumed from your major (or minor, etc.) that you have completed those courses.
- You can list upper level electives in your major (or related to your career goal). DON'T list lower level courses or basic prerequisites to upper level courses.

Work Authorization

Work authorization refers to your legal authorization to work in the United States. Employers may specify hiring restrictions:

- Some employers can only hire U.S. citizens.
- Some employers may also hire persons who are "authorized to work in the U.S. on a permanent basis" (a.k.a. green card holder, resident alien, immigrant).
- Students on F-1, J-1, and H-1B visas are not authorized to work in the U.S. on a permanent basis.
- Some employers are willing to consider persons who are not authorized to work in the U.S. on a permanent basis.
- Foreign nationals who are in the U.S. on a visa are not authorized to work in the U.S. on a permanent basis, and must consult the regulations related to their visa status to determine what, if any, temporary work they are authorized to have. For complete information consult The Virginia Tech Graduate School, International Graduate Student Services and/or The Cranwell International Center.

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- Employers' restrictions on hiring are done for security and/or legal reasons related to Federal laws governing hiring of foreign nationals. These restrictions are not negotiable.

Dealing with work authorization on your resume

You may wish to include a statement of your work authorization on your resume if:

- You are a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, and you believe your name or some other aspect of your background may lead an employer to assume you might not be a U.S. citizen or might not be authorized to work in the U.S. on a permanent basis.
- You want employers to know that you have an H-1B visa.
- You expect a change in your work authorization to be effective by a specific time in the near future.

If you are not authorized to work in the U.S. on a permanent basis, do not make any statement or indication that you are. Employers view this as dishonesty. Focus your job search on employers who are able to hire you based on your work authorization.

Availability

- **Students seeking a Cooperative Education position** should state availability; i.e., August 2007 or January 2008. This is because co-op positions can potentially begin during any academic term and the employer will not know when are able to start unless you give this information.
- **Students seeking internships or career-related summer employment** should state this in the objective. Therefore it is not necessary to state an availability date — your availability is implied by your objective. However, if you are applying for a position for which an employer asks you to state specific available work dates, certainly do provide this to that employer, either on your resume or in your cover letter.
- **Graduating bachelor's level students** do not need to state availability, unless your availability is not readily apparent from your degree completion date. For example, if you give "June 2007" as your degree completion month, but you will not be available to begin work until September 2007, then do state your availability. (By the way, employers don't care when you "walk," so if you're walking in May, but don't complete your degree until June, then June is the completion month that should appear on your resume. To state otherwise appears dishonest.)
- **Graduate students** may wish to state an availability date, particularly if you have some flexibility in this. For example, if you expect to complete defense of a thesis or dissertation in February 2008, but could actually begin employment in January 2008, then do include a statement of availability. You might indicate that your availability is flexible between January to March 2008, for example.

References

On a resume:

- On a resume, it is completely unnecessary to state "references available upon request." Most employers assume this. DO, however, prepare a reference list, ON A SEPARATE PAGE FROM YOUR RESUME.

On curriculum vitae, references ARE typically listed.

- For some graduate students and in some career fields (positions in academia, for example), employers ask for your reference list at the time of application. If you are developing a curriculum vita, also commonly used for positions in academia, it is common to include references on curriculum vitae.

Interests

- For graduate students pursuing positions in academia, and for some other career fields, your curriculum vita would include teaching and research interests.
- DON'T include an Interests section listing hobbies and everything that personally interests you. This is usually unnecessary and irrelevant.
- If you have interests, activities or hobbies that are very important to you and that make a statement about who you are, DO list them in your Activities section. For example, if you are an avid rock climber, or you've rebuilt a car, list it as an activity, even if you don't belong to a formal organization and even if it is unrelated to your objective. (It certainly reflects discipline and hard work and skills, which are valuable characteristics.)
- If you have traveled abroad and/or have foreign language skills, put this information in your Skills section, or you may want to include a section labelled something like "International Experience." The ability to function in other cultures and the maturity gained from extensive travel indicate characteristics and skills that are relevant to employers. If you have studied abroad, include this in your Education section.
- If you have musical or artistic talents that are not related to your career goals, DO include these in your Activities or Skills sections as appropriate. Again, these could reflect discipline and other positive qualities.
- It isn't necessary however, to include a long list of everything that interests you. (This is a snore.)
