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This article seeks to be the complete compendium on the questions that job-seekers most often asked about resumes. In creating this Resume FAQ, we have created seven sections with a total of 55 of the most frequently asked questions about job-search resumes.

Here's how this Resume FAQ is divided for navigation ease:

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See also our special supplemental [Frequently Asked Resume Questions for College Students and New Graduates](#).

I. Job-Seeker Resume Basics

What is the purpose of a resume?

- To get a job interview.
- To structure the interview process.
- To remind the interviewer of you after you're gone.
- To serve as the basis for justifying the hiring decision to others.

What are the absolute, unbreakable rules of resume writing?

We believe there are only two absolute rules in resume writing:

These rules, however, are absolutes:

1. No typos or misspellings.
2. Do not lie.

Almost every rule you have ever heard can be broken if you have a compelling reason.

What about "breakable rules" of resume writing?

Many of the breakable rules of resume relate to the [length a resume](#) should be; all breakable rules are covered in other parts of this FAQ.

Do I need more than one version of my resume?

Most likely, yes.

- You may need more than one **organizational format** for your resume. See table below for the most common organizational formats.
resume organizational formats chart

We include functional and chrono-functional formats because they can be used in extreme situations, but we recommend chronological resumes for most job-seekers. Purely functional resumes are the least common, least preferred by employers, detested by recruiters... and most Internet job boards do not accept this resume format.

While the chrono-functional/hybrid/combination resume is slightly more acceptable to employers than the purely functional format, most employers are unaccustomed to functional formats of any kind, finding them confusing, annoying, and a red flag that something is wrong in your background. At the very least, they will probably scrutinize a chrono-functional resume more closely to check for details and find the flaws that inspired the candidate to use this format. Some employers insist on knowing exactly what you did in each job.

Recruiters/headhunters particularly disdain functional formats, so this approach should never be used if you are primarily targeting recruiters with your job search. Employers in conservative fields are not fans of functional formats, nor are international employers. Functional formats, even chrono-functional, also are not acceptable on many online job boards. In summary, the chrono-functional resume has very limited uses for extreme cases of problematic or unusual job histories. If you feel you have no other choice than a chrono-functional resume, we recommend you enlist a professional resume writer to craft the resume into a viable marketing tool.

See our article [What Resume Format is Best for You?](#).

- You may need more than one **delivery format** for your resume. See table below for the most common delivery formats.

resume delivery formats chart

One additional delivery format to consider is a Portable Document Format (PDF) resume, which offers the advantages of being completely invulnerable to viruses and totally compatible across computer systems (requires software such as Adobe Acrobat Reader, a free download, to be opened and read). A

resume converted to PDF, which carries a .pdf file extension, looks virtually identical to the original document from which it was created, thus preserving the resume's visual appeal, and it also appears consistently from computer to computer. A few employers specifically request PDF resume files. However, for resumes placed in employers' Applicant Tracking Systems (which comprises most resumes submitted electronically) PDFs are problematic because "applicant tracking systems lack a standard way to structure PDF documents," cautions Jon Ciampi, CEO of Preptel, a company that aims to help job-seekers penetrate these systems (as quoted in an article on CIO.com by Meridith Levinson). Read our article, [Pros and Cons of PDF Resumes in Job-Search](#).

For more about delivery methods, see our articles:

- [Your E-resume's File Format Aligns With its Delivery Method](#)
- [The Top 10 Things You Need to Know about E-Resumes and Posting Your Resume Online](#)

- In addition to a possible range of organizational and delivery formats, you will probably want to customize each resume you send -- at least to some extent -- to the job you're applying for. Use our [Cover Letter and Resume Customization Worksheet](#) to help you customize.

If I've never created a resume before, how do I get started?

Here are some suggestions for resources to get you started:

- Use our [Quintessential Careers Resume Worksheets](#), especially our [Resume Components Worksheet](#).
- Try the [Inexpensive Resume Workbooks](#) from the late Yana Parker.
- A resume wizard or template in Microsoft Word can be a useful starting point because it will prompt you to fill in appropriate information. Once you've used a Word template to start your resume, it's best to customize the layout and design. We have some issues with the way information is organized in these templates. Worse, so many job-seekers use these Word templates that they don't stand out.
- Use our [Fundamentals of a Good Chronological Resume](#) as a basic template.
- Get inspiration from our collection of more than 100 [Free Sample Professional Resumes](#).
- If you're really stuck, consider [hiring a professional resume writer](#).

What are the most important aspects of a resume, and how can I remember them?

The most important things to remember about writing an effective resume can be encapsulated in a six-letter acronym, FAKTSA, in which the letters stand for:

- Focus
- Appearance

- Keywords
- Transferrable Skills
- Accomplishments

Get more details about these elements in our article, [FAKTSA: An Easy Acronym for Remembering Key Resume Enhancers](#).

Resume Components

What should be included on a resume?

We offer lists of the items that you absolutely *must* include in your resume and a list of optional items to consider including:

Resume Musts

- Name
- Address(es)*
- Phone numbers*
- Email address
- Education
- Experience

Resume Optionals

- [Objective Statement](#)
- Headline and/or Branding Statement (often used instead of an Objective Statement); see more about career branding in our [Career Branding Tutorial](#)
- Professional Profile or Qualifications Summary (use this [Professional Profile/Qualifications Summary Worksheet](#))
- [Keyword Summary](#)
- Licenses/Certifications
- [Accomplishments/Achievements](#)
- [Transferable Skills](#)
- Strengths
- Affiliations/Memberships
- Languages

- Foreign travel
- Presentations
- Publications
- Activities
- Hobbies/Interests
- Military
- The notation, "References available on request"

We also offer this list of items that should *never* be included on a resume:

- Height, weight, age, date of birth, place of birth, marital status, sex, race, health, social security number (except on an International Resume/CV)
- Reasons for leaving previous job(s)
- Name of boss or supervisor
- Street addresses and phone numbers of past employers (city and state is sufficient)
- Picture of yourself
- Salary information
- Specific names of references (more on this issue later)
- The title "Resume"
- Religion, church affiliations, political or other controversial affiliations: Any disclosure on your resume that could get you screened out as a candidate is risky. You may take the stance that you don't want to work for an employer that would eliminate you because a hiring manager didn't like your political beliefs or religious affiliation. But given that, for most candidates, religion, politics, and any other controversial affiliations are not relevant to your next job, it's wise to leave them out.

There's nothing tricky about listing my name, is there?

Use the name by which you are known professionally. If you go by your middle name, for example, you can list your name one of these ways:

- W. Scott Carson
- William "Scott" Carson

The same goes for nicknames. Keep in mind that some nicknames don't exactly project professionalism, but if you are universally known by your nickname, you may want to list yourself that way on your resume.

With your name, list also any professional credentials (M.D., CPA, Ph.D.) that are integral to the job you seek.

What if my name is hard to pronounce or it fails to clarify my gender?

This issue isn't as silly as it seems. Even if you're well qualified, an employer may hesitate to phone you for an interview if he or she can't pronounce your name or even doesn't know whether to expect a male or female. For the difficult-to-pronounce name, include a phonetic pronunciation of your name in small type in the "letterhead" portion of your resume. Example: "Sally Hsieh (pronounced 'Shay')." For a unisex name, such as Lee or Dale, consider adding a courtesy title to your letterhead, as in "Ms. Lee Anderson" or "Mr. Dale Burns." Especially consider adding a courtesy title if your name is almost always thought of as belonging to the opposite gender or if it is a non-English name, and English-speakers would not know whether to expect a man or a woman: "Ms. Michael Crane" "Mr. Jocelyn Smith." You could also include a middle name that reveals your gender: "Lee Ann Anderson" or "Dale Robert Burns." Of course, you may consider your ambiguously gendered name an advantage and prefer not to reveal your gender (even though your gender will become obvious if you're called for an interview).

How should I list my address?

- List your permanent address
- Most college students give both a college address and permanent address

***What other contact information do I need?**

While job-seekers were once advised to include as much contact information as possible, the emerging trend for contact information on a resume is to include a Website address/URL, city and state only (no street address), a single phone number (no second/third number, no fax number), and a single email address, says Findings of 2011 Global Career Brainstorming Day: Trends for the Now, the New & the Next in Careers, published by the Career Thought Leaders Consortium. Make sure your email address is professional, not one such as SexyBabe2301@aol.com. You may also want to include links to online profiles, such as on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. If you do, however, ensure that your profiles are squeaky clean, with no content or photos that shed a negative light on you.

If you are in serious job-hunting mode and employers who call your phone are likely to get voicemail, make sure your voicemail greeting is professional.

Elements to Sharpen a Resume's Focus

Why does a resume need to be sharply focused?

The reader needs to be able to tell in a quick glance what you want to do and what you would be good at. A recent study indicates that the reader will spend as few as 6 seconds screening your resume, so you need to focus the reader's attention quickly.

How can you sharpen the focus of your resume?

- Use a branding statement or headline or both atop your resume.
- Add a profile/qualifications summary with keywords relevant to the job you seek.
- Add a keyword section relevant to the job you seek.
- Beef up portrayal of accomplishments and transferable skills. Be sure to spotlight skills that apply to what you want to do next.
- Use our [Cover Letter and Resume Customization Worksheet](#) to help you sharpen your focus.
- For college students and new grads: Consider adding class projects in your major (or other classes) that are applicable to what you want to do upon graduation.

Should I include my career objective on my resume?

Objective Statements have fallen out of favor. Many employers and recruiters claim they don't even read them. That's because most objective statements are badly written, self-serving, too vague, and not designed to do what they're supposed to do, which is to sharpen a resume's focus.

For a very detailed discussion of ways to sharpen your resume, see [Your Job-Search Resume Needs a Focal Point: How Job-Seekers Can Add Focus to Resumes](#)

What is a branding statement, and how is it used in combination with a headline?

A "headline" atop your resume usually identifies the position or type of job you seek.

A branding statement is a punchy "ad-like" statement that tells immediately what you can bring to an employer. A branding statement defines who you are, your promise of value, and why you should be sought out. Your branding statement should encapsulate your reputation, showcase what sets you apart from others, and describe the added value you bring to a situation. Think of it as a sales pitch. Integrate these elements into the brief synopsis that is your branding statement:

- What makes you different?
- What qualities or characteristics make you distinctive?
- What have you accomplished?
- What is your most noteworthy personal trait?
- What benefits (problems solved) do you offer?

See a good discussion of branding statements and headlines, with samples, starting in this section of our free e-book, [The Quintessential Guide to Words to Get Hired By](#).

What about a Profile, Skills Profile, Qualifications, or Resume Strengths section?

Whether or not you choose to include an objective statement, branding statement, and/or headline on your resume, you may wish to present a Qualifications Summary or Profile section. In addition to Profile and Qualifications Summary, these resume-topping sections go by numerous names: Career Summary, Summary, Executive Summary, Professional Profile, Qualifications, Strengths, Skills, Key Skills, Skills Summary, Summary of Qualifications, Background Summary, Professional Summary, Highlights of Qualifications. All of these headings are acceptable, but our favorite is Professional Profile.

Twenty-five years ago, a Profile or Summary section was somewhat unusual on a resume. Career experts trace the use of summaries or profiles to include information about candidates' qualities beyond their credentials to the publication of the late Yana Parker's *The Damn Good Resume Guide* in 1983. For the last 20-plus years, resume writers have routinely included these sections; however, the age of electronic submissions has now caused the pendulum to swing the other way.

On one hand, electronic submission means that hiring decision-makers are inundated and overwhelmed with resumes and have less time than ever before to peruse each document. That means that many of them do not read Profile or Summary sections.

On the other hand, the age of electronic submissions has increased the importance of keywords so that candidates can be found in database searches. Even some of the hiring decision-makers who don't read Profiles and Summaries advise including them as a way to ensure sufficient keywords in the resume.

A vocal contingent of decision-makers, especially among recruiters, strongly advocate for a Summary section -- but one that is quite succinct -- a short paragraph or single bullet point. They want to see in a nutshell who you are and what you can contribute.

For a detailed discussion of these sections, including guidelines for crafting them and samples, see [Chapter 3 of our free e-book, The Quintessential Guide to Words to Get Hired By: Your Professional Profile: Bullet Points that Describe Your Strengths in a Nutshell](#).

Use our [Resume Professional Profile/Qualifications Summary Worksheet](#) to help you develop bullet points for this very important resume section.

What are keywords and how should I use them in my resume?

Inundated by resumes from job-seekers, employers have increasingly relied on digitizing resumes, placing those resumes in keyword-searchable databases, and using software to search those databases for specific keywords that relate to job vacancies. Most Fortune 1000 companies, in fact, and many smaller companies now use these technologies. In addition, many employers search the databases of third-party job-posting and resume-posting boards on the Internet. It is safe to estimate that well over 90 percent of resumes are searched for job-specific keywords.

The bottom line is that if you apply for a job with a company that searches databases for keywords, and your resume doesn't have the keywords the company seeks for the person who fills that job, you are pretty much dead in the water.

To some extent, job-seekers have no way of knowing what the words are that employers are looking for when they search resume databases. But job-seekers have information and a number of tools at their disposal that can help them make educated guesses as to which keywords the employer is looking for. See a detailed discussion of resume keywords and how to identify them in our article, [Tapping the Power of Keywords to Enhance Your Resume's Effectiveness](#) and use our [Keywords Worksheet](#) to help identify keywords for use in your resume.

What is the Resume Ingredients Rule?

Note: From author Donald Asher.

- Organize the information on your resume in accordance with your desired impact on the reader. This rule should govern which information you present and the order in which you present it.
- That's why you always list your work experience in REVERSE chronological order -- because your most important and applicable jobs are likely to be the most recent.
- You don't want the first thing that the employer sees to be bagboy at the supermarket or waitress if

you've had more important and relevant jobs.

What kinds of Licenses or Certifications should I list?

Any that are relevant to the job you seek.

Handling Education and Experience on Resumes

What goes first -- education or experience?

- It depends on whether your degree or your experience is your best selling point. Always list the most relevant section first...
- If you are a current college student or about to graduate, generally list education first.
- If you are currently working, generally list experience first. A good cutoff point for moving your Experience section to the forefront of your resume is a year to 18 months after graduation.

What should I always list under the Education section?

- If you have multiple degrees, list the most recent first.
- For each degree, ALWAYS list NAME of your degree FIRST.
- Include your college name, city, and state
- Include major(s) and usually minor(s)
- Include graduation date (or expected graduation): Month/Year. Once you've been out of school a year or so, you can omit the month. Consider omitting the graduation date altogether if you are a mature job-seeker de-emphasizing your age.

Special note to college students and new graduates: At this point in the FAQ, you may wish to take a side trip to our special [Frequently Asked Resume Questions for College Students and New Graduates](#).

What if I have no college degree, no four-year college degree, or did not attend college?

If you have at least some college, list it. List an associate's degree or incomplete studies toward a bachelor's degree. For the incomplete degree, list the college, major, location, span of dates you attended, and, ideally, number of credit-hours completed. Your listing of an associate's degree, incomplete bachelor's degree, or no college at all should be beefed up with any training, professional-development, and certificate programs. In

the unlikely event that you have absolutely none of these, leave off the Education section. Some employers (and most recruiters) will screen you out, but if you have succeeded in the past without educational credentials, your professional accomplishments will likely be enough to propel you to an interview.

Should my other major heading be "Employment" or "Experience?"

Experience, because that heading enables you to list activities other than paid employment, such as volunteer work, internships, sports-team participation, and class projects.

Should the Experience section be further broken down into subsections?

While a resume can sometimes include subsections, such as Relevant (or Professional) Experience and Other Experience, we find it confusing when resumes, especially those of college students, list multiple types of experience -- internship experience, volunteer experience, extracurricular experience, leadership experience, etc.

How should my jobs be listed under the Experience section?

List information in this order:

- Job title;
- Job subheadings should include name of company, city, and state (Do NOT include street addresses, names of supervisors, contact telephone numbers, or other extraneous data.);
- Dates of employment (include month or seasonal descriptor and year);
- Bulleted list of key accomplishments (more to come on this subject);
- Company description (optional; often sought by recruiters and employers of senior-level job-seekers).
- Reporting relationships -- title of person you reported to and titles and departments that reported to you (optional; often sought by recruiters and employers of senior-level job-seekers).

Should I list company names first or job titles first?

Generally, list job title first unless you are trying to call attention to the name of prominent companies for which you've worked. (Example: If you plan to enter the tourism industry, and you've had internships at Disney World, Sea World, and Universal Studios, you could list company names first).

How should I list what I did in each job?

- Do NOT use phrases such as "Responsible for . . .," "Duties included . . .," and "Responsibilities included..."
- When you use those phrases, you are giving job descriptions instead of describing the skills you used, the accomplishments you made, and the initiative you took.
- Focus on specific accomplishments -- how you made each job your own, and quantify these accomplishments whenever possible. Read more about using [accomplishments in job-hunting](#).
- Use [action verbs](#) in describing your accomplishments.

Why and how should accomplishments and achievements be incorporated in the Experience section?

- Try to come up accomplishments/achievements for each job -- ways you did the job that distinguish you from others doing the same job.
- It's not easy for college students to identify these accomplishments, but you should try.
- Always quantify accomplishments whenever possible. Read more about [tracking and leveraging your accomplishments](#).
- As you are developing your resume, use our [Accomplishments Worksheet](#).

How do I handle multiple jobs with the same employer?

We recommend listing each position separately, as if it were a separate job, even repeating the name of employer and employer location each time. This approach provides more consistency throughout the resume and clearly shows your progression from job to job. It can also illustrate rapid promotions when the prospective employer sees short time periods between positions.

How far back should I go in my job history to avoid age discrimination?

Hiring decision-makers are split on this point, which is affected by the growing practice of conducting background checks. Many, especially recruiters, are adamant about seeing every job listed from your college graduation to the present. They argue that background checks -- or even just seeing you in person at an interview -- will reveal your age anyway, so why hide it? Others recommend going back 15-20 years, with the idea that jobs beyond that point are likely not relevant to your next career move. If you have the opportunity to contact the decision-maker before sending your resume, you can always ask his or her preference. Another option is to include your jobs that are more than 15 years old, but list them in bare-bones fashion (title, employer, location) with or without dates of employment. You may want to title this section Previous Professional Experience. Even if you opt to leave off the dates, the recipient will at least know that you have provided full disclosure by listing all jobs. A similar option is to insert a disclaimer statement to the effect that "additional employment history is available upon request."

See also our article, [Resume, Cover Letter, and Interview Strategies for Older Workers](#).

What if a former employer no longer exists or has changed its name?

For the out-of-business employer, you can simply state "no longer in business," "ceased operations," or "defunct" after listing the employer's name. For an employer that had a different name when you worked there than it does now, list like this:

Andersen Consulting (now Accenture)

Or, if you work in a renamed company and fear its new name won't be recognized, list like this:

Accenture (formerly Andersen Consulting)

What are transferable skills, and what is their significance on a resume?

- Skills obtained through ANY of the experiences in your life (including extracurricular activities, sports, homemaking, volunteer work, and classroom experience) that can transfer and apply to the kind of job you want when you graduate.
- Portraying your experiences in terms of transferable skills is probably the MOST IMPORTANT aspect of your resume.
- Most college students could do a much better job of portraying their experiences in terms of transferable skills. Those who do so successfully will be most likely to get interviews.
- Read more at [Quintessential Careers: Transferable Skills](#) and [Transferable Skills -- A Vital Job-search Technique..](#)
- Use our [Transferable Skills Worksheet](#) to develop lists of skills and examples of how you've used them.

How do I handle employment gaps?

A chrono-functional resume is one way to deemphasize employment gaps, but as we've seen earlier in this FAQ, these formats are highly unpopular with employers and especially recruiters. Another approach, if you can legitimately do so, is to frame periods of unemployment as stints of self-employment, consulting, or project work. Some job-seekers quit their jobs to pursue advanced education or training; you can account for a period of unemployment by listing yourself as a Graduate Student during that period. One recruiter we talked to called gaps "a huge red flag," so they should be explained in your resume if you can gracefully do so. Other options include explaining them in your cover letter or being prepared to do so in an interview (however, gaps may preclude you from getting the interview).

See also our article, [How to Handle a Gap in Your Job History](#).

How can I avoid appearing to be a job-hopper?

Job-hopping is far less a concern than it was just a few years ago. Mature job-seekers will remember a time when long-time company loyalty was expected. Those days are gone. Workers at all levels stay at their jobs for much shorter periods than they used to. That's not to say that job-hopping is no longer questioned. Very short, frequent job stints can certainly raise eyebrows. A chrono-functional resume will deemphasize job-hopping but comes with its own drawbacks. Another choice is to omit jobs of short duration. In these days of background checks, however, your omission can be risky. Most hiring decision-makers we've surveyed emphasize that nothing should be left off because jobs you've omitted will be discovered eventually in the vetting process, and you'll be eliminated. It's best to list everything, but make a strong case for your qualifications in your cover letter and top third of your resume so that you get called for an interview. Then be prepared to explain and put a positive spin on problematic or short-duration jobs face to face.

What if I have no paid experience?

Identify transferable/applicable skills from these areas:

- Internships
- Summer jobs
- Campus jobs (work-study)
- Entrepreneurial/self-employed jobs
- [Temporary work](#)
- Volunteer Work: school, church, club, not-for-profit organizations
- Research papers/projects
- Certification courses
- Campus activity positions
- Fraternity/sorority/social club positions
- Extracurricular or sports leadership positions

College students with minimal experience can brainstorm using our [College Experience Worksheet for Resume Development](#).

Which transferable skills are most in demand by employers?

- Every career expert has a different list of skills most in demand by employers (although certain items,

such as teamwork, interpersonal, communication, and leadership skills, appear on almost all lists).

- Familiarize yourself with these lists of most in-demand skills so you know what skills to play up on your resume.
- The most important in-demand skills are the ones that are in demand in YOUR FIELD. Get to know what those are.
- Here's career expert Donald Asher's list of the skills most in demand by employers:
 - Ability to acquire new technical, analytical, or computer skills quickly
 - Teamwork skills
 - The ability to sell ideas and persuade others
 - Creative problem-solving talents
 - Ability to follow orders
 - Leadership aptitude
 - Drive, stamina, strong work ethic
 - Intelligence
 - Diligence, "stick-to-itiveness"
 - Initiative
 - Ability to acquire foreign languages
 - Ambition
 - Reliability

What are Situation > Action > Results statements?

- The Situation > Action > Results statement is one way to frame your accomplishments. Tell what the situation was in the job when you started, what action you took to affect the situation, and what the results were.
- Example: As a result of my reorganization of an extremely messy office-supply store, sales increased more than 20 percent.
- Because the job-seeker has so little time to capture the reader's attention on the resume, consider using "backwards" Situation > Action > Results statements so results catch the reader's eye; in other words, Results > Action > Situation statements. Thus the previous example becomes: "Increased retail sales more than 20 percent by reorganizing extremely messy office-supply store."
- Read more in our [STAR Interviewing Response Technique](#).

What is the significance of quantifying on a resume?

- Quantifying means expressing accomplishments in terms of numbers. Employers love to see quantification on resumes.
- Examples: You increased sales by 10 percent, you supervised 4 other employees, you served 150 customers daily.

What is parallelism, and what is its significance on a resume?

- Don't mix job titles with job functions.
- Use same part of speech when you describe your jobs. It is usually best to kick off your bullet points with verbs. Don't mix nouns and verbs.
- Be consistent with verb forms for each listing (all '-ed' verbs or all '-ing' verbs, but not a mixture of the two).

For a detailed discussion of resume parallelism, see [Chapter 6 of our free e-book, *The Quintessential Guide to Words to Get Hired By*](#).

Other Resume Sections and Fine-Tuning Resume

What other sections could my resume include?

- Affiliations/Memberships (of non-controversial groups)
- Languages: Ability to read, write and speak. (We prefer to see language skills listed in your Professional Profile.)
- Foreign travel
- Public speaking, presentations
- Volunteer, Civic, Community Service, Fund-raising, Leadership, and Athletic activities.
- Military

Should I list Hobbies and Interests?

Generally, no. These items are considered superfluous and trivial. Some job-seekers consider these items conversation-starters, while some employers feel the information humanizes the candidate and presents a fuller picture. Many recruiters and employers feel hobby and interest information can expose the candidate to discrimination. A workaholic hiring manager "could perceive the candidate as frivolous with too many outside interests," observes Alison, a corporate recruiter for a specialized information provider. As with most information on your resume, the option to list hobby and interest information is a personal choice, but it's usually more risky to list it than to leave it off. Ask yourself: Does this information add value to my resume? Space constraints may also guide your decision.

Should I list References on my resume?

Never list specific names and contact information of references directly on your resume.

How should I handle references?

If they are requested, list them on a separate sheet, the letterhead of which matches your resume (and do not volunteer this references sheet unless asked).

- List a minimum of 3 business references: People who have direct knowledge of your daily job performance. Get their approval first. Provide your references with a copy of your resume.
- List contact's name, title, company, complete address, phone number with area code, and e-mail address (if they use it).
- See our articles, [How to Obtain and Use References and Recommendation Letters](#) and [References: The Keys to Choosing and Using the Best Job References in Your Job Search](#).

Should I use the line: "References available upon Request?"

Consider leaving off the line "References available upon Request." This statement is highly optional because it is a given that you will provide references upon request. The line can serve the purpose of signaling: "This is the end of my resume," but if you are trying to conserve space, leave it off.

Handling Special Resume Situations

How can I position myself for a career or industry change?

A career change gives you the opportunity to sharpen the focus of your resume toward the new career or industry. Study ads and job postings in your desired new field, and frame your resume bullet points so that your skills and accomplishments in your current career can be seen as directly applicable to your new career. Use copious keywords that relate to your new career, and tailor your profile, headline, branding statement, or objective statement to your aspiration.

How do I handle relocation?

While you can discuss relocation in your cover letter, it never hurts to also mention it in your resume. Express in your objective statement and profile your intention to relocate. Since many employers respond much more favorably to local candidates, consider using an address in your new city (PO box, a friend's address, mail-forwarding service) on your resume.

As an entrepreneur transitioning back to the workplace, how can I make the most of my resume?

Emphasize the entrepreneurial transferable skills that apply to the type of job you're targeting. Many employers, for example, seek candidates who can handle startup and turnaround situations. They're also looking for professionals with experience in asset and liability management, budget development, building strategic alliances, business plan development, capital equipment budgets, competitive analysis, costing and budgeting, financial strategies, market strategy, profit and loss management/direction, new business development, operations management, research and development, return on investment, and strategic planning direction. Focus also on your entrepreneurial successes and accomplishments; avoid conveying any impression that you are leaving the entrepreneurial life because you didn't succeed at it.

How can I ensure my resume will be kept confidential?

Request as much in your cover letter. It doesn't hurt to display the word "Confidential" boldly at the top of your resume. Some job-seekers who don't want current employer to know they're in the hunt go so far as to list that employer by describing the organization rather than actually giving its name.

Resume Design and Mechanics

How many pages should my resume be?

Among the resume "rules" you may have heard is the one in which resumes should be limited to one page. In the current Twitter-inspired communications climate, employer expectations are trending toward resumes that are not only shorter overall, but written in a brief, tight manner. "The norm for most resumes/CVs is one to two pages, even for very experienced professionals," reported Findings of 2011 Global Career Brainstorming Day: Trends for the Now, the New & the Next in Careers, published by the Career Thought Leaders Consortium. "A survey of HR/recruiters on LinkedIn indicated an overwhelming preference for two-page resumes provided there is enough value in the content to warrant a second page," the report said.

One-page resumes can be especially useful for candidates in certain situations, such as networking, in which the job-seeker wants to give potential network contacts a thumbnail glance at his or her career.

A summary of guidelines on resume length:

- One page is usually preferred for college students and new grads, but those with rich campus backgrounds and work/internship experience may need two pages.
- While two-page resumes are suitable for many job-seekers, the trend is toward short, tight resumes.
- While three or more pages may be indicated at the senior level, the trend is to limit the resume to one or two pages and create addenda for additional content.
- Job-seekers should never sacrifice readability (tiny type, narrow margins) just to squeeze a resume into a certain number of pages.
- When a resume spills onto an additional page, it should fill up at least half of that page. If not, try to condense.

See our article, [The Scoop on Resume Length: How Many Pages Should Your Resume Be?](#) for a variety of opinions and guidelines on resume length.

What are the most important design elements for a resume?

- Use a mix of bold type, italics, bold italics, varying font sizes, small caps, and upper-case lettering for emphasis and to control the reader's eye -- but don't go overboard with typographic variations.
- Type should be between 10 and 12 point. 11-point type is ideal.
- Balance the material on your page.
- Allow sufficient white space with margins of .75" to 1". Note that Microsoft Word's default margins of 1.25" are generally wider than needed.
- Bulleted lists are extremely reader-friendly.
- Be consistent with headings so the eye can follow a pattern.
- Do not use justified text blocks. Type should be flush left with occasional centering.
- Do NOT italicize your entire resume or large blocks of type as italics are hard on the eye.
- Don't use more than two fonts.
- Underlining tends to add clutter.

What kind of paper should I use?

- Regular copy paper is fine, but...
- Studies show candidates who use heavy paper are considered more serious.
- Print on a 24- or 28-pound paper.
- Choose a light colored paper; you can't go wrong with white.

How should I duplicate my resume?

- Laser printing or high-quality inkjet
- For large numbers of copies: High-quality photocopies
- When determining the number of copies to have produced, remember, you will want to keep tweaking your resume (for each position you apply to), so don't get massive quantities photocopied at once.

How should I mail my resume?

Although it is becoming less and less common to send resumes by postal mail ...

- Ideally, mail flat; do NOT fold.
- Priority Mail *may* impress the recipient.
- Colorful envelopes and stamps may get attention, but the hiring decision-maker often isn't the person who opens the envelope.

How can I make sure I've covered all the bases with my resume?

Use our:

- [Resume Critique Worksheet for Job-Seekers](#)
- [Resume Do's and Don'ts](#)
- [Ten Easy Ways to Improve Your Resume](#)
- [Avoid These 10 Resume Mistakes](#)

Should I hire a professional resume writer?

Maybe. Many considerations go into the decision of whether to hire a professional resume writer. Read about them in our article [Why Hire a Professional Resume Writer?](#)