

RESUME WRITING
Career Center - University of South Carolina

WHAT IS A RESUME?

A resume is a brief highlight of your work or activity experiences, educational background and skills. It summarizes your qualifications and experience as they relate to the type of job you are seeking. Your goal is to market yourself effectively on paper to a specific audience – your reader! It should be constructed to gain attention, arouse interest and generate action (an interview!) so that you can sell your strengths in person. Keep in mind that there is no one way to write a resume - only guidelines.

HOW IS A RESUME USED?

A resume is most often used when applying for employment. It can also be used to apply for a co-op or internship, a summer position, graduate or professional school, or may be required when applying for leadership positions in particular organizations.

RESUME CONTENT

There are many different opinions about resume content and organization. The key to writing a strong resume is to highlight those areas of your background that best demonstrate your skills and abilities as they relate to the position for which you are applying. Following is a list of categories most often used in resumes. The types of categories you list on your resume and their order depend upon which parts of your background and qualifications you want to emphasize, as there is no prescribed or standard resume format. Typically however, the first place a reader's eyes fall when looking at a document is the second quarter of the page, so the most relevant information should be placed there.

1. Identifying Information / Heading:

Cap the top of your resume with:

- Full name (can put nickname or what you go by in parenthesis if you wish)
- Complete address (include both permanent and present addresses and phone numbers if still in college)
- Home phone number (can list work phone number as well - designate each with an "H" and "W")
- E-mail address
- Personal website (if appropriate)

2. Objective:

(May also be called job target, job objective, professional objective or career objective. Use only if you are focused in your job search.) The career objective sets the tone for your resume and indicates the type of work you are seeking. It also tells employers how you might fit into their organizations. It forces you to focus on your primary area of interest and unifies the rest of your resume. Essentially your objective says "this is what I want to do," and the rest of the resume says "and this is *why* I am qualified to do it." The body of the resume should support your objective at all times. The objective may include any combination of the following types of information:

- The level of position, job title or industry area (i.e. entry level, sales trainee, social worker, computer programmer, financial industry, educational arena)
- The type of organization or environment that interests you (i.e. forward-moving, competitive, growing, stable)
- Special interest area within the organization or world of work (i.e. marketing department, change management group, international news, event coordination, purchasing division)
- A description of job activities you wish to perform or skills you wish to gain
- Interests, knowledge or skills you wish to contribute to the organization
- Long and short term goals

Examples:

- An entry level position in human resources management with particular interest in wage and salary administration
- A position in a cutting-edge technological company applying knowledge of software development and modification using Windows based products
- A consulting position in the financial industry utilizing strong analytical and communication skills with the

opportunity for advancement in financial services management

3. Education: (List each educational experience in reverse chronological order)

This section may include:

- Names and locations of schools or programs
- Dates of attendance or graduation date
- Degrees, certificates or licenses
- Major, minor and / or cognate
- Grade point average (if 3.0 or above)
- Awards / Honors / Scholarships
(add a separate section if more than three)
- Percentage of schooling paid for by self
- Study abroad experiences

Example:

Master of Industrial Statistics, May 2001
University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC

Bachelor of Science in Engineering, May 1999

Major: Chemical Engineering *Minor:* Economics

University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC

- *Major GPA:* 3.4 *Overall GPA:* 3.2
- Dean's List, President's List, National Dean's List
- Financed 60% of education

4. Related Coursework:

This category is optional and can also be part of the Education section. It is mainly used when you are lacking related experience but want to demonstrate relevant academic training and knowledge by listing the titles of specific courses.

5. Experience:

Include all types of experience (if relevant) including full-time, part-time, summer, volunteer work, military service, internships, self-employment, research projects, and even activities if the skills that were developed in those activities are directly related to the position at hand. In some cases you may wish to divide this category into two sections: one called Related Experience and one called Other Experience. Whether you choose to list your job title or your employer name first depends on which sounds more impressive, but the order you choose should be consistent throughout the resume. Whether you use periods at the end of your statements or not is up to you, but again should be consistent throughout.

Include:

• Your title	• Dates of employment	• Bulleted <i>active</i> descriptions of your responsibilities
• Employer name	• City / State of the employer	• Major accomplishments and contributions

6. Honors, Activities, Research or Professional Affiliations:

You may specifically want to mention:

- Activities that demonstrate job related skills, leadership or membership in career related organizations
(Some of these experiences may be significant enough to have bullet statements explaining them in detail.)
- Honors or awards (Scholarships may or may not be relevant depending on their selection criteria.)

7. Skills:

As technology skills become increasingly valuable to employers it may be beneficial to have a separate section to list computer skills. Be specific, listing product names and version numbers if possible. Indicate your level of knowledge using such terms as "working knowledge of" or "proficient in." Students seeking positions specifically in technology should break this list down into subcategories such as programming languages, hardware, software, operating systems, databases, peripherals, etc. If you have minimal computer skills, you may wish to combine this section with one of the above categories or demonstrate it through bullet statements in the experience category. If you speak more than one language, you should also list them here, indicating your level of written, reading and oral proficiency in each.

8. Other:

There is certainly the option to add additional categories that reflect your uniqueness, such as interests or volunteer work, but again, consider the relevance that the category and its contents have to your objective and / or the position at hand.

9. References:

List them on a separate page that matches your resume paper. (See the last page of this packet for more information.)

Include your references:

- Complete name (using Mr., Miss, Mrs., Ms. or Dr.)
- Job title
- Name of the organization where they work
- Work address (home address if no work address)
- Phone number (ask if they prefer work or home)
- E-mail address if appropriate

RESUME WRITING

- **Your resume may take you hours to prepare.** Writing an effective resume is an investment which takes dedication and time. Having someone else write your resume means that you may not know it by heart and will not be able to talk about it in an interview. No one knows you better than you!
- **Be prepared to write and rewrite.** Have your resume critiqued by a career counselor not just once, but several times until no more corrections are needed. Professors (especially of English) can also be good proofreaders of both resumes and cover letters, but may not always know the latest trends in resume writing. Remember that suggestions will help improve your resume; they are not criticisms.
- **A one-page resume is sufficient for most students.** Your resume doesn't have to list every position you've ever held or every activity or club you've been involved with - only relevant experience. The exception is if you have significant co-op experience, meaty part-time jobs, professional summer jobs, internships or extracurricular activities in which you held leadership positions. Go to two pages only if absolutely necessary. Employers look for your ability to use industry terminology and be concise.
- **Custom design your resume for each opening / environment.** You should change your objective with each position for which you apply, and if necessary, change the content and / or the format so that it best supports that objective. You want to send the message that the organization should hire you because they need what you have to offer, not that you need them because you need a job.
- **Catch your reader's eye.** Most readers will only spend 20-30 seconds on the initial scan of your resume. Readers prefer statements that begin with bullets, **bold print** and indentions to guide their eyes quickly to the main points. You may also use all CAPITAL LETTERS, *italics* or underlining to highlight key areas, but **do not mix font styles**. It can make your resume look cluttered. Stick to one font. Organize the information such that the resume is visually appealing to the eye and easy to follow.
- **Accentuate the positive.** Your resume is the first impression most employers will have of you and how well you write it is an indication of what type of employee you might be. Be results-oriented and highlight accomplishments, not mere duties. Don't just list what you did; show how it contributed to or impacted the organization. Quantify your statements by using numbers, statistics and percentages.
- **Use action oriented verbs** (created, delegated) as opposed to passive verbs (took, had) to help the reader identify transferable skills that could be applied to their organization. Keep the verb tense consistent with the dates you list. For past activities, use past tense verbs (supervised, developed). For activities you're currently engaged in, use present tense verbs (supervise, developing).
- **Do not include on a resume:** religion, race, gender, high school information (unless applying for an internship and it is relevant), marital status, height / weight, birthplace, birth date or a photograph.

RESUME APPEARANCE

- Use light colored resume paper (white, ivory or beige) that will copy cleanly and not come out gray.
- Use the same style paper for both your resume and cover letter.
- You may use simple graphics such as lines to create a border, but don't overdo it. *Exception:* If you are a graphic or interior design major, you may want to use your resume to display your design skills.
- Maintain reasonable margins. (In general, 1 inch margins are preferable) Apply to cover letters also.

COVER LETTER (Guidelines)

USC P.O. Box 9999
Columbia, South Carolina 29208
March 9, 2004

Mr. U.R. Employer
Director, Personnel Department
Knick Knack, Incorporated
Columbia, South Carolina 29208

Dear Mr. Employer:

Introductory Paragraph: This paragraph should include information introducing yourself, why you are writing and specifically where you learned of this position or organization. You might make reference to a previous conversation or correspondence, giving specific dates if possible. If you learned of the position through another person, be sure to mention his or her name as personal referrals often attract more attention. For example, you might open by saying: "I am writing to apply for the Community Relations Coordinator position advertised in the March 5th issue of *The State*." or "I am writing to express my interest in positions in retail marketing at Knick Knack, Incorporated."

Body: The next one or two paragraphs contain your "sales pitch", and should convince the employer that you have what it takes to do the job. The idea here is to "tease" the reader and make them want to look further at your resume. You can do this by saying "As you will note in my enclosed resume, I have.....". You should also emphasize particular skills or duties that are a part of this job description. If a recent graduate, you may wish to dedicate one paragraph to addressing academic qualifications, while dedicating the other paragraph to experience and skills. Your letter will be most effective if you incorporate specific knowledge of the organization and the position for which you are applying. It shows that you have done your homework and are truly interested in the position.

Follow-up Paragraph: This paragraph should be short and to the point. Indicate what steps you would like to happen next. (If you want an interview, ask for it!) There are two different approaches you might take. The PASSIVE approach puts responsibility on the employer to make the next move and you would wait for the employer to contact you. With the ACTIVE approach, you would offer to initiate further contact with the employer. You may indicate that you will call the employer on a specific date or in the near future in order to verify receipt of your letter and / or to arrange an appointment. Finally, remember to thank the employer for his time and considering you.

Sincerely,

Ima Gamecock

Enclosure: resume

COVER LETTER (Sample)

USC P.O. Box 9999
Columbia, South Carolina 29208
March 9, 2004

Mr. U.R. Employer
Director, Personnel Department
Knick Knack, Incorporated
Columbia, South Carolina 29208

Dear Mr. Employer:

I am writing to express my sincere interest in entry-level management opportunities at Knick Knack, Incorporated. Currently, I am a senior at the University of South Carolina and will graduate in May of 2000 with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree.

As you will note in my resume, I have double-majored in both management and marketing and have developed strong skills in both areas over the past 4 years. I currently work for XYZ Corporation as a co-op student and assist both the Regional Marketing Director, as well as the Branch Manager of the Harbison area store in Columbia, SC. In the 3 years prior to this position, I also held several part time positions in customer service and sales. Finally, I have been actively involved on the USC campus by holding leadership positions in several organizations and contributing to the marketing efforts of numerous campus activities. My combined academic, extracurricular and work experiences have each enabled me to develop outstanding analytical, interpersonal, financial and leadership skills, which I am certain would be an asset to Knick Knack, Incorporated.

I plan to contact you in the next two weeks to confirm receipt of my resume and to discuss the possibility of meeting. I am excited about the opportunities that Knick Knack, Incorporated provides and feel confident that both my skills and personal traits will allow me to make an immediate and positive impact on your organization. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Ima Gamecock

Enclosure: resume

CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME (Sample)

Kristi Jackson

kristi@juno.com

Home (864) 574-4970 School (803) 544-0000

Permanent Address

9274 Whisper Lane
Greenville, SC 29301

Current Address

USC P.O. Box 0000
Columbia, SC 29208

EDUCATION

University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, May 2000

- Minor: Spanish
- GPA: 3.2

Universidad de las Americas, Puebla, Mexico, Fall 1997

- Resided with a Spanish speaking family for 4 months

SKILLS

Language: Fluent in Spanish & English, working knowledge of French

Computer: Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), SAS, SPSS

EXPERIENCE

Citizens Against Sexual Assault, Columbia, SC

Crisis Intervention and Victim Advocate, 1/98 - Present

- Provide hotline advocacy services to clients.
- Participate in community outreach and education programs.
- Completed 30 hour victim advocate volunteer training.

International Programs for Students, Columbia, SC

Peer Assistant, 8/98 - Present

- Serve as a mentor and resource for international students.
- Assisted with the coordination of USC's International Fair.

Department of Residence Life, USC, Columbia, SC

Resident Advisor, 8/98 - Present

- Organize social and educational programs for hall of 22 women.
- Explain and enforce residence hall and university policies.

Camp Wildwood, Kings Mountain, NC

Camp Counselor, Summers 96, 97

- Supervised and disciplined girls ages 8-14 in daily recreation, educational and social events to groups with an average size of 30.
- Received certification in CPR and first aid techniques.

RESEARCH

University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC

Research Assistant, 8/98 - 12/98

- Collaborated with a professor in research on the interpersonal development of children of single parent families.
- Presented findings at annual Carolina's Psychology Conference.

HONORS

Dean's List, National Dean's List, LIFE Scholarship recipient

REFERENCES

Choosing your references is an integral part of the job search process and can significantly affect your success in securing a job. There are many steps to making the most of your references:

- **Choose references** - Brainstorm a list of people who can speak highly of your past work performance, (job, classwork or research related). Ideally, your references should be those who were in a position to supervise you or rate your performance, such as a previous boss or professor who knows you and your work very well. In some cases a colleague can also provide a strong reference of your work performance, particularly if you worked on a team project together. Character references should be provided only if requested, or if you are limited in your choices. In general, you should provide the names of a minimum of 3 references, but no more than 5.
- **Ask references** - Contact those designated and ask if they will give you a positive reference. Never provide anyone's name to a potential employer as a reference without first doing so.
- **Gather contact information** - Once given permission, you need to make sure you have the proper spelling of their name, their company name, their official job title and the address and phone number at which they wish to be contacted. For your own use, you may also get their e-mail address.
- **Prepare references** - To help your references speak intelligently about your background and strengths you should provide them with a copy of your resume. They should also know what your goals are and the types of positions you are seeking. Finally, you may wish to coach them as to which skills you would most like them to emphasize so each can call attention to a different strength.
- **Keep references informed** - Notify your references about *each* position for which you apply so they might anticipate a call and prepare to "sell" you based on the specifics of each position.
- **Thank references** - Notify references when you accept a position and send a thank-you letter.

REFERENCE PAGE (Sample)

IMA GAMECOCK
USC P.O. Box 9999
Columbia, South Carolina 29208
(803) 544 - 0000

REFERENCES

Mr. Thomas (Tom) Smith

Associate Vice President
Bank of Carolina
8981 Harden Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29205
(803) 252 - 8888

Mrs. Susan Brown

Director of Residence Life
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina 29208
(803) 777 - 0000
E-mail: sbrown@univscvm.csd.scarolina.edu

Dr. Phillip (Phil) A. Jones

Associate Professor
Department of Business Administration
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina 29208
(803) 777 - 0001
E-mail: pajones@univscvm.csd.scarolina.edu

Mr. Frank Patterson

Summer Staff Coordinator
Camp Wakahatchie
P.O. Box 590
Cullowhee, NC 28746
(803) 367 - 9862

accelerated	conveyed	founded	planned	straightened
accepted	convinced	funded	pointed	streamlined
accommodated	cooperated	funneled	polled	strengthened
accomplished	coordinated	furnished	positioned	structured
accounted for	corresponded	furthered	predicted	studied
accumulated	counseled	gained	prepared	subsidized
achieved	crafted	gathered	presented	substantiated
acknowledged	created	generated	preserved	summarized
acquired	critiqued	governed	presided	supervised
acted	decided	grouped	printed	supplemented
activated	decorated	guided	prioritized	supplied
adapted	decreased	handled	probed	supported
addressed	defined	hired	processed	surpassed
adjusted	delegated	honored	produced	surveyed
administered	delivered	identified	programmed	swayed
advanced	demonstrated	illustrated	projected	synchronized
advertised	described	impacted	promoted	synthesized
advised	designed	implemented	proofread	systematized
affected	detailed	improved	proposed	tabulated
aided	detected	improvised	protected	talked
amplified	determined	inaugurated	proved	targeted
analyzed	developed	increased	provided	taught
answered	devised	indexed	publicized	tested
anticipated	diagnosed	influenced	published	took
applied	directed	informed	purchased	trained
appointed	discharged	informed	questioned	transacted
appraised	dispatched	initiated	raised	transformed
appreciated	dispensed	innovated	ran	translated
approached	displayed	inspected	ranked	transmitted
approved	disproved	inspired	reached	traveled
arbitrated	dissected	installed	read	treated
arbitrated	distinguished	instituted	realized	understood
archived	distributed	instructed	received	updated
arranged	drafted	integrated	recognized	upgraded
assembled	drew up	intensified	recommended	upheld
asserted	earned	interacted	reconciled	used
assessed	eased	interfaced	recorded	utilized
assigned	edited	interpreted	recruited	validated
assisted	educated	intervened	rectified	valued
attained	effected	interviewed	redesigned	volunteered
attended	elected	introduced	reduced	won
attracted	eliminated	invented	refereed	worked
audited	empowered	invested	referred	wrote
augmented	enabled	investigated	rehabilitated	
augmented	encouraged	judged	reinforced	
authored	endured	launched	related	
authorized	energized	learned	relieved	
backed	enforced	lectured	remodeled	
balanced	engineered	led	rendered	
boosted	enhanced	listened	renewed	
briefed	enlarged	located	repaired	
broadened	enlisted	logged	reported	
budgeted	enriched	made	represented	
built	ensured	maintained	rescued	
calculated	entertained	managed	researched	
capitalized	envisioned	manipulated	reserved	
cataloged	escalated	marketed	resolved	
categorized	escorted	matched	responded	
chaired	established	maximized	retrieved	
channeled	estimated	mediated	revamped	
charted	evaluated	mentored	reviewed	
clarified	examined	merchandised	revised	
classified	exceeded	met	revitalized	
coached	exchanged	minimized	scanned	
collaborated	executed	moderated	scheduled	
collected	exhibited	modernized	screened	
commanded	expanded	modified	scrutinized	
communicated	expedited	molded	searched	
compared	experienced	monitored	secured	
completed	explained	motivated	selected	
complied	explored	multiplied	served	
composed	expressed	negotiated	set in motion	
computed	extended	nominated	settled	
conceived	extracted	observed	shaped	
conceptualize	extrapolated	obtained	situated	
d	fabricated	operated	sketched	
conciliated	facilitated	optimized	sold	
conducted	familiarized	orchestrated	solved	
confirmed	fashioned	organized	sorted	
confronted	followed	originated	specialized	
connected	followed	overhauled	specified	
considered	through	oversaw	spoke	
consolidated	forecasted	participated	sponsored	
constructed	formalized	perceived	sponsored	
consulted	formed	performed	staffed	
contracted	formulated	persisted	standardized	
contrasted	fortified	persuaded	steered	
controlled	fostered	piloted	steered	
conversed	found	pioneered	stimulated	

