



Building a Résumé

A solid résumé is the first step in conducting an effective job search. A résumé is a structured, written outline of your education, employment background and skills that identifies your qualifications for a position.

The goal is to highlight your skills and qualifications enough to catch an employer's attention for an interview. An effective résumé is brief, to the point, professional and helps the employer quickly identify what you can offer to them.

Your résumé is also a marketing tool and is often the first impression of you to an employer. It will "sell" you when you are not there in person and it can also be a talking point in an interview.

Be accurate! It doesn't take much for an employer to determine if you have elaborated a little too much about your skills. It is okay to leave off anything that may seem unfavorable, but honesty is essential. Keep in mind that you need to be prepared to answer any question an employer may have after reading your résumé.

Getting started on your résumé

- **Target your résumé.** Know what you are applying for so you can understand what the employer is looking for in a good candidate.
- **Identify your skills.** Brainstorm a list of the experiences you have had (paid and unpaid jobs, internships, education, classes, projects, etc.). From there, determine the skills and knowledge you have obtained to create a solid list of related or transferable content. Organize this information in such a way that clearly indicates how you meet the position qualifications. Keep in mind that it is sometimes just as important to identify your technical skills as it is your non-technical or soft skills. *See the end of this packet for an activity to create your skill statements.
- **Decide on a style.** Depending on how you meet the qualifications and your experience, there are different formats of résumés to write (chronological, functional, combination)

Résumé Styles

The style of your résumé may differ depending on your situation.

Chronological

This style is well known and very straightforward. Your employment and education history are listed in reverse chronological order. The best time to use chronological is for a position change within a field that you have substantial, related work experience. It also highlights the longevity you have in the field. The bulk of this style is focused on your employment history, so it is best to use a different format if you have unrelated experience or scattered employment.



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Functional / Skill Based

The functional format works well for students and recent graduates. Rather than focusing most of your résumé on past employment, a functional résumé highlights your skills, abilities, and accomplishments from a variety of sources. For example, you can draw upon your education, internships, volunteering, projects and other ways you have gained related and transferable skills. The best way to list these is in some kind of “Experience” section with bulleted skills. It can be helpful to categorize and break these down if you have several. By writing a functional resume, it is much easier for the employer to understand what you have to offer them by reading exactly what your skills are. Employment history is not a large section in this style.

Combination

This style of résumé is probably the most common as it combines elements of both chronological and functional résumés. You can include an experience section with skills, as well as provide some detail about previous positions you have had if they are somewhat related. This style can be helpful to employers because they can easily see your skills and learn more about the jobs you have had.

Résumé Sections

Contact Information / Heading.

This is like your letterhead so it should be the same on your résumé, cover letter and reference page.

1. Name should be slightly large text size and bold so it stands out.
2. Current address if you don't plan on moving soon.
3. Phone numbers including home and cell, if you have one.
4. Email address because many employers like to contact people this way and it also shows you are computer literate. Please make sure your email address is professional and that you consistently check it. Some people will create email accounts simply for job searching.

Objective.

An objective is a short, powerful statement located at the top of your résumé that tells the employer exactly what you are looking for. The goal is to immediately grab the employer's attention to read the rest of your résumé.

1. An objective is focused on how the company can benefit from your skills, not how you can benefit from the company.
2. Be specific with the position and/or industry.
3. The objective is optional, especially when you have a cover letter and have already communicated your goal to the employer in your cover letter.
4. Consider starting your objective with “Seeking a position...” or “To obtain a position...”
5. Example: “Seeking a position to utilize my education and skills to contribute to ABC Company.”



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Highlights of Qualifications / Skill Summary / Etc.

1. This is a brief bulleted section toward the top of your résumé which identifies for the employer how you meet the major qualifications of their job.
2. This is often a summary of major points used to catch the employer's attention.

Education.

1. Education should be listed in reverse chronological order, starting with your most recent.
2. Education should be located toward the top of your résumé when it is the most related experience you have to the position.
3. Spell out your degrees or certificates. "Welding Associate in Applied Science" or "Practical Nursing Certificate"
4. Make your degree or certificate stand out by listing it first.
5. Indicate the month and year of graduation or expected graduation. If you took classes or pre-requisites at another college and transferred them, it is not essential to list that initial college.
6. Consider listing the related/technical courses you have taken.
7. Include your GPA if it is 3.0 or above.
8. High school is not necessary unless it is required for the position in which you are applying. If you do include high school, the year is not necessary.

Work History / Employment / Professional Experience / Etc.

1. You can choose the title of this section to somehow reflect the work or experience you have gained in the working world. If you have done an internship, work-study or volunteer experience, "Professional Experience" can be a better term to use because it is more encompassing.
2. List positions or experiences in reverse chronological order.
3. Be sure to use past tense with jobs you had in the past and present tense for jobs you are currently working.
4. Include employer name, your job title, month and years of employment (or just years if it was extensive), city and state. Supervisor name, phone and address are not necessary, as these often are included in the application.
5. Try to highlight the transferable skills and tasks you did that relate to the position you are applying for. List these in order of importance and use bullets.
6. Use *action verbs* to strengthen what you did.

Related Knowledge and Skills / Related Experience and Skills / Etc.

1. This section is very important when writing a functional or skill based résumé because it lists your related skills and competencies.
2. This section can be general and draw out skills and knowledge from your education, internships, work experience, projects, etc. It tells the employer how you meet their qualifications in detail.



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Optional Categories.

- **Computer Skills.** Include a section on computer skills if you have several and they are essential for the job. If not, they can often be embedded in other sections.
- **Language Skills.** Include if applicable. Often employers like to know if applicants speak multiple languages and it can be a great qualification.
- **Honors / Awards / Accomplishments.** These are important to highlight because they show your successes.
- **Certification / Licenses.** Many fields require employees to have specific certifications or licenses.
- **Volunteer / Community Activities / College Involvement.** Even if these activities are unrelated to the position, they show your dedication, commitment, willingness, leadership, teamwork, communication and other skills.
- **Hobbies / Interests.** If related, these can show the employer you have a strong interest in the field.

References.

See References handout for details.

Formatting Tips

- Keep it simple and to the point with NO spelling or grammatical errors.
- Stay consistent with formatting: spacing, font size and type, tense, etc.
- Use 8.5" x 11" white or beige paper which will make your résumé stand out.
- Try to limit it to one page, unless you have extensive experience or education directly related to the position. If it goes onto two pages, be sure your name and page 2 are at the top of the second page.
- Use a paper clip instead of a staple to not damage the paper.
- If mailing, use a large envelope so you will not have to fold the paper.
- Use standard fonts of Arial or Times New Roman.
- Use font sizes 10-12 for main text and headings can be slightly larger to stand out.
- Avoid using graphics or photos to distract from your content.
- Keep your margins at a standard size (1" to 1.25").
- Use underlining and bolding to make headings stand out.

Final Recommendations

- Proofread! Have several people look over your résumé or access BTC Career Services for more help to ensure you have an error free document. You can't always rely on computer spell-check.
- Keep your information professional and omit personal information. For example, don't include your birth date, social security number, marital/parental status, etc.).
- Avoid using the word "I". Instead, start phrases and sentences with action verbs



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- If possible, use MS Word when typing your résumé so it is more compatible with other computers. Saving your document as a .pdf is also a good way to make sure the recipient will be able to open it successfully.
- Always keep a backup copy on a disk or USB drive.

Action Verbs

To strengthen your résumé content, it is good to use action verbs when explaining your experience. Below are some examples.

Accomplished	Achieved	Adapted	Administered	Analyzed
Arranged	Assembled	Built	Collected	Communicated
Complied	Completed	Conducted	Controlled	Contracted
Coordinated	Created	Demonstrated	Determined	Developed
Directed	Documented	Earned	Edited	Established
Evaluated	Expanded	Facilitated	Gained	Gathered
Generated	Hired	Increased	Influenced	Implemented
Improved	Installed	Led	Maintained	Managed
Operated	Ordered	Organized	Oversaw	Participated
Performed	Planned	Prepared	Produced	Programmed
Provided	Recorded	Researched	Reviewed	Scheduled
Served	Set up	Simplified	Solved	Spearheaded
Structured	Suggested	Supervised	Supported	Taught
Trained	Translated	Typed	Updated	Used

Tracking Your Résumé

Job searching can be an overwhelming process if you are applying for several jobs. To help you keep track of what you have applied for, keep a log of what action you have taken. This also provides a good tool for following up if you have not heard back from an employer yet about a job you applied for.

Company	Address/Phone	Contact Person	Date	Notes / Follow Up



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Creating Your Skill Statements

Your Skill _____

Describe the time/situation you used this skill _____

What were the results? What did you learn? _____

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