

#34) Developing an Effective Résumé

Writing an effective résumé is critical to your job search. In the space of one or two pages, a good résumé shows a prospective employer your qualifications for an opening. Accordingly, your résumé needs to be a carefully developed, polished document. Remember, the purpose of the résumé and cover letter you send to a prospective employer is to get you an interview.

Research

Researching the company and the position you are applying for can improve your chances of being called in for an interview. The information gathered will help you to tailor your résumé to grab the attention of each specific company. Consider the following research approaches:

- Search the company's website, annual report, brochures, or other publications for keywords the company uses to describe itself, its mission, and its goals. Sometimes you can learn more about a company from the language it produces.
- Contact the company's human resources department or a company representative to ask more about the company's identity and goals and to pose specific questions about the position.
- Once you have ideas about what the company may want to see on your résumé, **generate ideas** for ways to present yourself on paper that appeal to the company's needs.
- Network with family, friends, and acquaintances to find contacts at the company. Personal connections can do more than provide you with a recommendation; they can help you style your résumé with language to hook the attention of employers.

Generating Ideas

Sometimes we do not realize the strengths we possess that would be attractive to an employer. Brainstorming the full range of our assets can be an important step in the shaping of an attention-grabbing résumé.

- List all accomplishments or awards you have attained.
- List any projects you have participated in or completed (volunteer work, research studies, etc.).
- List the qualities the company is looking for; ask yourself how you have demonstrated those qualities.
- Review your academic and vocational history; highlight elements that the company values.

While you won't use everything you brainstorm, try to look at familiar aspects of your background and experience in a fresh way, imagining how you might present these aspects so that they appeal to the employer's needs.

Choosing a Format

Résumé templates are available in Word and on the Web. Whether or not you use a template, you should tailor your résumé to suit the position and company to which you are applying. Two types of résumés typically appear on employers' desks:

- **Chronological Résumé: Items arranged from most recent to least recent.**
Education or *Employment* appears first, followed by categories such as *Qualifications*, *Organizations*, and *Honors*. The chronological résumé is often used by those who have been in the workforce for a long time.

Example:

- *Consistent formatting and spacing of headings*
- *Details and dates are separated into columns*

Active verbs help describe job responsibilities

Be sure to fill up the space at the bottom in order to ensure "completeness." If there is blank space at the bottom, add references or change formatting so the whole page is full.

Anna Karenina									
123 Tolstoy Lane (315) 555-3434 Moscow, Georgia 62348 annak@yahoo.com									
OBJECTIVE	To apply communication and planning skills to a position in a fast-paced and forward-looking advertising firm.								
EDUCATION	<table border="0"><tr><td>MA Communications Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia Thesis: "The Run Around: Marital Discourse"</td><td style="text-align: right;">May 2007</td></tr><tr><td>BA Russian Literature Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia GPA: 3.85</td><td style="text-align: right;">May 2005</td></tr></table>	MA Communications Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia Thesis: "The Run Around: Marital Discourse"	May 2007	BA Russian Literature Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia GPA: 3.85	May 2005				
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WORK EXPERIENCE	<table border="0"><tr><td>Intern, WTST News 456 Communications Square, Atlanta Georgia 65869</td><td style="text-align: right;">(2007-present)</td></tr><tr><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Assist</u> news anchors• <u>Attend</u> to public inquiries• <u>Coordinate</u> deliveries of daily supplies to studio</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Floor Manager, Old Navy Retail Store Park Plaza Mall, Atlanta, Georgia 65869</td><td style="text-align: right;">(2005-2007)</td></tr><tr><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Administrated</u> daily business activities• <u>Oversaw</u> store employees• <u>Wrote</u> weekly financial summaries</td><td></td></tr></table>	Intern, WTST News 456 Communications Square, Atlanta Georgia 65869	(2007-present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Assist</u> news anchors• <u>Attend</u> to public inquiries• <u>Coordinate</u> deliveries of daily supplies to studio		Floor Manager, Old Navy Retail Store Park Plaza Mall, Atlanta, Georgia 65869	(2005-2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Administrated</u> daily business activities• <u>Oversaw</u> store employees• <u>Wrote</u> weekly financial summaries	
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SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dreamweaver website publishing• Microsoft Word• Microsoft Excel• Proficient in French Language								

Items are listed from most recent to least recent.

- **Skills and Education Résumé: Qualities other than work experience emphasized.**
This kind of résumé, useful for students without much work experience, highlights the applicant's strengths and communicates to the employer that the applicant possesses skills qualifying him or her for consideration.

Sections and Their Importance

Successful résumés contain most or all of the following sections:

- **Name and Contact Information:** Full name, address, phone number and email. Use a formal email address rather than a playful one (i.e., akarenina@yahoo.com is better than sexichik398@yahoo.com).
- **Objective:** Not all résumés include this section, but many do. It generally appears at the top of the page under contact information, and it describes, in a line or two, the applicant's professional aims.

Some people discuss their goals in terms of the specific job sought (e.g., “Objective: To contribute my skills and experience to the dynamic marketing team at Wal-Mart”). Since résumés are usually accompanied by cover letters that make clear the applicant’s aim to secure a specific position, it can be more effective to use keywords in the objective that signal that you are a strong match for the employer but avoid direct linkage with the job at hand (e.g., “Objective: To contribute my skills and experience in copy-writing and graphic design to a dynamic marketing team”).

- **Education:** Highlight your academic accomplishments and minimize your challenges. List the post-secondary schools you have attended. If you have a high GPA, list it on your résumé. If you are not finished with school, include a phrase like “Expected graduation June 2005.”
- **Work Experience:** Let your employer know where you have worked, when you held these positions (list months but not days – e.g., “Proctor and Gamble, June 2001 through March 2002). List, in bullet points or in another format that is easy to read, your responsibilities on the job.
- **Skills/Qualifications:** Consider which of your skills will matter to your employer, and make sure to describe them in ways that will mesh with the company’s agenda and concerns. Do not list skills irrelevant to your job search (“bobsledder, speed-reader, ferret handler”).
- **Activities and Honors:** List any important public recognitions or awards you have received.
- **References:** If the employer wishes to contact your previous supervisors, he or she will ask for contact information. However, if you choose to make mention of references, you might attach a page with several professional and personal references, or include a note at the bottom of your résumé stating that “References are available upon request.”

Language is Key

Based on your research and brainstorming, make sure that the language you use throughout your résumé reflects the ethics and priorities of the company. If the company cares about “creativity” and “innovation,” make sure those ideas are listed in your skills and experiences. If the company puts “family” and “ethics” first, emphasize aspects of your background that reveal your own commitment to those concerns.

Style

Employers often have very little time to review job candidates. They form a first impression by spending just a few seconds scanning a résumé. This means, of course, that presentation is crucial. Provide an employer with a polished, flawless document, clear of mechanical errors.

Be concise. Include only relevant information in the clearest manner possible. On a résumé, you do not need to create complete sentences, just clear, precise statements. Unless you have many years of pertinent work history, your résumé should not be over one page. Potential employers want to get a picture of you at a glance, and they expect you to have the skill to put together an effective one-page résumé.

Evaluate your résumé visually. Vary font size and use bolding, italicizing, underlining, and bulleting functions for emphasis, but make sure that you use these devices consistently. If you bullet-point each of your duties in past positions, check through your résumé for consistency under each job heading. Also, do not vary fonts, point sizes, bolding and other formatting elements too much, or your document will look unprofessional.

Résumé Templates on Microsoft Word 2007

- Click the circular menu button at the top left of the screen.
- Click the first option entitled “New.”
- A separate screen will pop up, and there will be template options on the left.
- Scroll down and choose the “Resumes and CVs” option.
- There will be three résumé options: Basic, Job-specific, and Situation-specific.
- Choose the option that best fits your needs; skim the templates and choose one that works with the information you have and the look you desire.

Helpful Résumé Links

The University of Arkansas Career Development Center (CDC) offers information about many aspects of the job search process. They can be found in the Arkansas Union, room 607, or at

<http://career.uark.edu>

- Create your résumé with Optimal Résumé, the CDC’s online résumé builder. It will lead you through a step-by-step process to create your own personal, well-developed résumé.
<https://uark.optimalresume.com/>

Purdue University’s website has a number of useful ideas for résumé development:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw>

The non-profit organization Jobsmart offers suggestions for many aspects of résumé development, from structuring and editing a résumé to brainstorming the skills and gifts you can offer a prospective employer:

<http://jobsmart.org/tools/resume>

- What is the right résumé for me?
<http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/res-what.php>
- Examples of résumés:
<http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/samples.php>
- Information on cover letters:
<http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/clletters.php>
- Examples of cover letters:
<http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/cllet-ex.php>