

Preparing a Résumé

If you're planning on job-hunting, you will almost certainly need a résumé. A résumé is just a written summary of what you have to offer to your potential employer—your education, work experience, and special skills. You should prepare a résumé before you make contact with a potential employer, so you have one ready to give if you're asked.

A résumé should be designed to achieve one goal: to motivate an employer to invite you to an interview. And once you're invited to an interview with an employer, your résumé should serve as a guide for both of you while you're discussing your qualifications and skills. To be successful, your résumé should be an organized, complete, clear, and accurate description of your life in the world of work.

Parts of a résumé

Although there are lots of different résumé styles to choose from, every résumé has certain basic components. Your résumé should provide answers to these questions:

Contact Information—Who are you and how can you be reached?

Include your name, address, phone number, and email address if you have one. If you're a student away from home, you should include both your school address and a permanent address so employers can reach you easily.

Objective—What do you want to do?

Including a "job objective" or "career goal" is optional, but it can be a good way to show the employer where you want to go in your career and the type of position you're looking for now. If you're looking for jobs in a number of different fields, you should have a different job objective for each position. Don't write an objective that's vague—if you can't write something specific, don't include one. Your job objective may include (1) the level of position you're looking for—such as entry level, internship, supervisory, or executive; (2) the skills you hope to bring to the position; (3) the actual title of the job you're applying for; and (4) the field or industry in which you hope to work—such as health care, education, or banking.

Education—What have you learned?

In this section, you should include any information about your degree(s), including when and where you graduated; your major, minor, or concentration; and any academic awards or honors you've earned. Make sure you use the official names for schools, degrees, and majors/minors.

Experience—What have you done and what can you do?

The way you structure your "experience" section will depend on what you're looking for and what you've done. This section lists the positions you've held, names and locations of employers, and dates you were employed. Include any volunteer work or independent study that you've done if it's relevant to the job you're seeking. You should list responsibilities and achievements for each position you've held. In some instances, you may want to divide your experience into sub-sections. For example, if you're seeking a teaching job, and you have had both a teaching and a business background, two separate headings—"Teaching Experience" and "Additional Experience" may have more impact than a single heading. Try to describe your experience in the most brief and interesting way possible. However, don't sacrifice important details just to be brief. Be hard on yourself, and if necessary, discard "good" material that won't have any meaning to an employer.

Descriptions don't need to be phrased in complete sentences. For example, instead of writing "My responsibilities included serving customers," you can write "served customers." Remember, the question in the employer's mind is "Why should I speak with this person? How is this person different from all the other applicants?" Try to answer those questions in each of your descriptions.

Tips for writing résumés

Use proper grammar and spelling. Double-check and triple-check your résumé for spelling and grammatical errors. Even if you're perfect for a job, small mistakes can make you look careless. Just one mistake could hurt your chances for a job.

Write clearly and concisely. Use simple terms to describe your experience and skills. Stay away from jargon that wouldn't mean anything to a potential employer.

Be specific. Instead of writing, "I have good computer skills," be more specific: "I have had over four years of experience with Microsoft Word, Excel, and Access." The second sentence gets the same point across, but shows the employer exactly what you can do.

Be professional. Don't include personal information or pictures, or discuss age, sex, weight, or height unless it is relevant to the job requirements. Don't put your résumé in a fancy binder or folder.

Make your résumé pleasing to the eye. Don't try to cram too much information on one page. Use ordinary font and high quality résumé paper (it's sold at office supply stores for less than \$10.00). Your paper should be a soft color such as off-white or light gray—avoid bright colors like orange or green. Print your résumé on a high-quality printer, and don't send photocopies of your résumé.

The one-page rule. Your résumé should go over one page only if absolutely necessary. Don't include "fluff" or extra information—especially if it means you'll go over one page.

Include your references on a separate sheet of paper. Never include your references right on your résumé, but always have a list of references ready to provide a prospective employer. Be sure to ask your references for permission before giving out their names!

Keep your audience in mind. It's perfectly fine to customize your résumé for each job for which you apply. You may have had a variety of different types of work experience—try to emphasize the right skills when you send out a résumé.

GPA: To include or not to include?

You aren't required to include your GPA on your résumé, but a general rule of thumb is that if your GPA is 3.0 or above, include it. Remember, your GPA should appear just as it does on your transcript.

Résumé formats

1 Chronological résumé. This type of résumé is organized around your work history, with your most recent job listed first. Chronological is the traditional format, and some employers prefer this type since it's so predictable and easy to read. However, because it emphasizes previous experience, it works best for people who have been working for a while. It's not always the best choice for students, or for people who are thinking of changing careers and have little experience in their new field.

2 Functional résumé. This type of résumé emphasizes skills and abilities more than work experience. You'll still need to list your employment history, but a functional résumé allows you to highlight your skills and specific accomplishments rather than just where you've worked. This is a good format for students, career-changers, and people who have gaps in their employment history.

3 Combination résumé. A combination résumé is a mix of the chronological and functional résumé styles. If you have some relevant experience, but also wish to emphasize particular skills and abilities that you have, this might be a good style for you.

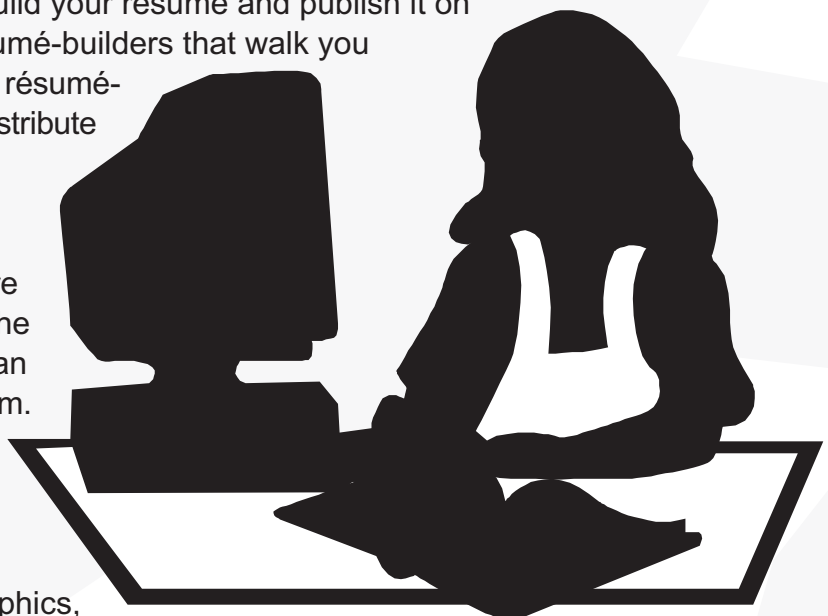
On the next few pages, you'll find examples of chronological and functional résumés. These examples should help you to see that not only are different formats okay, but lots of different styles are okay, too.

Cyber résumés!

Did you know that you can post your résumé on-line? Today, many progressive job seekers and employers are using the Internet to hook up. Most job search web sites, like www.LAWORKS.net and America's Job Bank, make it easy for you to build your résumé and publish it on the Internet. In fact, many web sites have résumé-builders that walk you through the process. All the traditional rules for résumé-writing still apply. In general, if you're going to distribute your résumé electronically, you can create a **plain text** or a **hypertext** résumé.

Plain text résumés are appropriate if you're sending your résumé to someone via e-mail. The advantage of plain text formats are that they can be read by almost any type of computer program. The disadvantage is that you can't use fancy formatting, like bold or italics.

Hypertext résumés take advantage of the features of the Internet. They may include graphics, videos, sound, hypertext links and direct e-mail.



Chronological résumé example

Darlene's chronological résumé highlights her previous work experience in the traditional format.

DARLENE MILLS

404 West 3rd Street • Phoenix, AZ 39468 • (217) 555-5555 • Darlenes_email@yahoo.com

PROFESSIONAL OBJECTIVE

To obtain a paralegal position requiring expertise in employment law

WORK EXPERIENCE

May, 1998 to Present: Paralegal for Basche and Stevens, Attorneys at Law, Phoenix, Arizona

Perform legal research, focusing primarily on employment law.

Summarize depositions and legal documents, and prepare and manage databases for attorneys.

March, 1996 to May, 1998: Office Manager/Legal Secretary for Law, Inc., Phoenix, Arizona

Drafted legal correspondence, managed intake interviews, scheduled depositions, performed minor legal research, and performed clerical work such as typing, filing, mailing, and dealing with clients on the telephone.

March, 1995 to March, 1996: Receptionist for Pinewood Apartment Complex, Phoenix, Arizona

Drafted correspondence, managed leasing database, scheduled site visits and maintenance checks with residents, performed clerical work, and ran errands.

January, 1994 to March, 1995: Hostess for Baker's Square Restaurant, Phoenix, Arizona

Performed a variety of tasks, including greeting and seating customers, waiting on tables, and serving food when needed; cashiering; bussing tables; and generally attending to customers' needs.

EDUCATION

December, 1998: Certificate in Paralegal Studies, Arizona State University

December, 1996: B.A., Philosophy, with a minor in Spanish, Arizona State University

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

1998-Present: National Association of Paralegal Associates

1997-1998: Alpha Beta Gamma International Honor Society

References Available upon Request

Combination résumé example

Lauren begins by listing her special skills and experience, but also includes a detailed work and volunteer history section below. Notice that although Lauren has little paid work experience, she highlights her relevant volunteer experiences.

LAUREN GREEN
208 South Ashton Street
New Orleans, LA 70183
Home: (504) 555-5555
email: Laurens_email@yahoo.com

Objective

To obtain an entry-level research position in a non-profit housing development organization

Education

2001: M.S. Economics, Louisiana State University, GPA: 3.88
1998: B.A. Economics and Psychology, Tulane University, GPA: 3.56

Relevant Non-Profit Skills and Experience

- Over two years of experience conducting research for a non-profit agency
- Helped organize an urban Limited Equity Housing Co-op convention for a non-profit agency
- Co-chaired the Louisiana Task Force for Hunger Outreach

Project Management Skills

- Extensive experience with database management software, including Access and FaxPro
- Designed and implemented a plan for long-term social planning for a residential community of 60
- Extensive experience in writing grant applications and research reports

Relevant Work and Volunteer Experience

1997-2001 **Research Assistant** for the Department of Economics, Louisiana State University. Managed research projects focusing on the Fair Housing Act, economic development, and urban renewal initiatives.

1993-1996 **Co-Chair** for the Louisiana Task Force for Hunger Outreach (Volunteer Position). Coordinated the activities of over 15 volunteers, organized can food drives, prepared community outreach activities and helped to staff local food pantry.

1993-1994 **Researcher** for Louisiana Home Network (Volunteer Position). Researched local housing prices and prepared a special report for a local task force on affordable housing.

References Available Upon Request

