A guide to perfecting your résumé.

Résumés

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Monday, Thursday, Friday

8:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Wednesday

8:00 a.m.—7:00 p.m.

INDIANA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

1875

CAREER
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Creating your Blueprint

As you plan your résumé, keep in mind an employer may only spend thirty seconds reviewing it. Your goal is to communicate your qualifications, skills, and experiences in a manner that will make you stand out from the rest. The steps listed below will assist you in making some basic decisions on how to begin.

Step 1: Gaining Experience

Ask yourself, "How would I like my résumé to look in its finished form? Will there be a significant amount of information to fill in the page?" Experiences such as internships, jobs, volunteer work, extracurricular activities, involvement in organizations, and memberships in professional groups are all good résumé builders. Involvement in activities outside the classroom will provide employers with a more complete picture of you. Initiative, motivation, and leadership are qualities many employers look for. Start now! It's never too late to get involved!

Step 2: Gathering Information

To begin, make a list of any experiences you have had. Identify material (skills and abilities) you may want to use in creating different parts of your résumé. Each category should be detailed and concise. Stay away from long sentences or wordy phrases. They mask key words that describe your abilities. Deciding on résumé style should come later. It is not wise to try and write your resume in its final version at the same time you are trying to create it!

Step 3: Types of Résumés

The format you choose for your resume will depend upon how you want to present your information. The following two styles, chronological and functional, are used most frequently. A third option would be a combination of the two.

Chronological

This is the easier and more popular style. It is generally used by individuals who have a stable work history, and by new graduates. Beginning with your most recent experiences and going back in time, this format provides the employer with detailed descriptions of your education and experiences.

Functional

Skills and qualifications are the primary focus of this style. Categories are defined by what you would like to highlight. This format may not relate specific experiences to specific jobs, or include the names of organizations or dates of your work experiences. Instead, this resume focuses on what you have accomplished rather than where and when. Individuals use this format when they have had large gaps in their employment records, are concerned about their age, or are changing careers.

Step 4: Choosing a Style

If you handed your résumé to five different people, each would probably have a different idea on how to present your information. With the exception of a few basic guidelines, résumé style is a unique choice made by each individual. When creating your résumé, leave a sufficient amount of white space so that it does not appear over crowded. Most important, check and double-check for errors! Proofreading and editing are critical.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long should my résumé be?
The answer to this often depends on your audience and on your own life experiences. While the "one page" rule may apply to most traditional students, students who have a significant amount of experiences (e.g., students in nursing or education, non-traditional students, graduate students, or campus leaders) may need to use two or more pages. Generally, undergraduates' résumés should be no more than two pages in length.

Must I list my GPA?
Students who have an overall or major grade point average of 3.0 or above should include it! Showing that you have done well academically will enhance your résumé.

Do I need to have my resume typed and printed professionally?
Résumés should always be printed on high-quality bond paper using a laser printer. Avoid dot matrix printers! You can produce your own résumé using word processing, or you can choose to have someone assist you. Contact local copying and word processing businesses for prices.

What type of personal information should I include?
Generally, stay away from information indicating your age, gender, marital status, religion, height, or weight. This information does not tell an employer about your skills or abilities, and can be used to discriminate against you. Only include hobbies if they are related to your career.

Will creativity on my résumé make it stand out?
Stay away from fancy formats or designs that will focus the employer's attention on your résumé presentation style rather than on its content. For the most part, employers are not impressed with gimmicks. Be conservative in your need to be creative.

The Do's and Don'ts

Do
List a page number and your name on each
    additional page
Be clear, concise, and precise
Use fully understood abbreviations, i.e., PA, B.S.
Include a cover letter when mailing your résumé
Proofread
Use good bond paper in a conservative color such as ivory or gray

Don't
Lie or exaggerate about your accomplishments (this can be grounds for dismissal)
Use personal pronouns like "I" or "my"
Staple or paper-clip pages
Use big words or professional jargon
Round off your grade point average
Write long paragraphs or sentences
List high school activities
Include a photograph

NAME
E-mail Address

Campus/local address   Permanent address
City, State, Zip   City, State, Zip
Phone Number   Phone Number

Career Objective: Stated in terms of what you can offer the employee

Education: Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP)
                          B.A. or B.S. in Major expected May 2008
                          Minor (if any)

                          (List other colleges attended using same format)

Related Experience: Job Title   Dates (From – To)
                          Employing Organization, City, State
                          Describe what you did using bullet statements
                          Begin phrases with active words
                          Use number to quantify your experience
                          List positions in reverse chronological order
                          Use same format to list additional related positions

Other Experience: Use same format as above to list unrelated work experience

Skills: List:
                          Skills that relate to your career goal(s), or
                          Skills that would be valued by employers in your field

Honors: List those which relate most closely to your career objective

Activities: Include:
                          Professional memberships
                          Election to honoraries
                          Others that relate to your career goals
                          Do not list political or religious organizations
                          Highlight leadership positions

References: Available on request (This is optional)