

Writing Effective Resumes

Resumes

- In the past the approach was to create a generic letter and resume and broadcast it to any potential employer.
 - This method is no longer recommended.
- The best method now is to target fewer employers, but spend more time tailoring your presentation to suit each one.
 - You want the right job, not just any job!

Resume as Argument

- Traditionally, the resume was simply a list of jobs you'd held in the past—a "chronicle" of employment.
- It's better to think of modern resumes as *rhetorical arguments*.
 - They assert your values and make arguments about your qualifications for a position.

Resumes: Goals

- You may get too anxious if you set your goals too wide.
 - “Small steps” can reduce anxiety and help you produce a better resume
- The goal of a resume, then, is not to win you a position, but rather to get your foot in the door.
 - The resume and application letter can help get you on a short list for interviews.
 - The resume is a “conversation opener” with a potential employer.

Resumes: Readers

- Who should you send your resume to?
 - Job ads typically tell you where to send them, but you may want to apply somewhere that isn’t advertising.
 - In this case, send it to someone in the organization who is in charge of projects that you’d like to work on.

Resumes: Arguments

- When you apply for a job, you’re asking your potential employers to take a considerable risk.
- They will ask themselves repeatedly whether you can do, want to do, and will do the work.
 - Use the descriptions of your past work experiences.
 - Try to demonstrate patterns—you want to show that you’ve been working toward a position like this for quite some time.

Arguments

- Can Do
 - Do you have the technical skills? Ability to work with others on large, challenging projects?
- Want to Do
 - Does your educational or work history show a sustained interest in a career? Or is it “random,” a jack-of-all-trades?

Arguments

- Will Do
 - Have you won awards based on character or service? Belong to prestigious organizations? Served on elected positions? Have good references?

Analytical Resumes

- Analytical resumes are based on a careful analysis of target companies
 - Analytical resumes are the opposite of “generic” resumes.
- Find out exactly what the target is looking for and make sure your resume reflects that kind of person.

Resumes: Conventions

- Conventionally, employers expect to see the following information on a resume:
 - Name, address, phone #, email
 - Employment Objective (position you're applying for)
 - Education History
 - Work Experience
 - Activities/Honors
- The order of these may change as you gain experience.

Resumes: Conventions
(continue)

- Education Sections:
 - Degree received
 - Major and/or minors
 - Graduation Date (Month and Year)
- Should you include GPA?
 - Only if you are a fresh graduate and think it adds ethos to your resume, and only if it is above a 3.0.
 - Awards like Cum Laude are always good to mention.
- Don't mention high school if you've graduated college.

Personal Information

- Avoid:
 - Photographs of yourself
 - Info about your body (height, etc.) or age
 - Religion, Politics, Race, Marital Status
- If you have significant experience with a religious or politically-oriented group (ex. Campus Democrats, Baptist Youth Group), calculate the risk before including it.

Work Experience

- Organize this section chronologically if
 - It's a very conservative, old-fashioned organization
 - You don't have gaps in employment that would be difficult to explain
 - Other jobs are similar to the prospective one
 - If your job history shows an upward progression (up the ladder)
- Always use reverse-order (recent to earliest)

Style

- Prefer action verbs to explanations
 - Created Power Point Presentations
 - not
 - I was a creator of Power Point Presentations.
- Avoid overblown descriptions for simple tasks:
 - I was totally responsible for burger patty rotation.
 - I manually transported cardboard containers via personal strength.

Skills Resumes

- Skills resumes are based on skills you want to emphasize to the employer.
 - What jobs or volunteer positions demonstrate you possess communication, coordination, leadership, or collaboration skills?
- This type of resume is helpful if
 - You haven't done much paid work, but volunteered often
 - You've just changed to a new career

Functional Approach

- You can also list your jobs according to how related or relevant they are to the prospect.
- Use a function approach if
 - Length of time you've worked at positions or when you worked there is less relevant
 - You have gaps in your history
 - Some jobs you've had aren't related to the prospect

Creative Resume

- A creative resume intentionally diverges from convention to show a potential employer your creativity.
 - An artist may want to make her resume a work of art—perhaps with illustrations, calligraphy, etc.
 - A web designer may want to create a brilliantly graphical or interactive resume to showcase her talent

Activities and Honors

- Remember that what you list as activities, honors, and memberships suggests what kind of person you are.
 - "President of Graduation Class"
 - "Miss Turkey Bowl of 2007"
 - "Chess Player"

References

- Ask people before listing them as references. If they sound non-committal or hesitant, say “No, thanks” and get someone else.
 - If I in doubt, ask for a copy yourself.
- Think about how your references will work together—will they say complementary as well as complimentary things about you?
- Think about how your choice of references makes an argument about you.

Document Design

- Use white space effectively
- Put headings on the side rather than center
- Prefer bulleted lists to paragraphs
- Use **bold**, *italics*, and underline, but don't get carried away.
- Also avoid *Fancy Fonts*
- Keep your resume limited to one page.

Document Design

- Don't abbreviate things like “street” or “avenue” in some places and write them out in others.
