

Developing a Graduate Resume

This article has been developed by the Careers and Cooperative Education team of the University of Western Sydney.

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This article and other articles in the series may be accessed from CareerHub by registered students and staff of UWS.

www.uws.edu.au/careers

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Everyone needs a resume, but few people know how to write one well. Your resume is your first chance to make a good impression although it is not enough on its own; you need an excellent cover letter, interview and more. This guide will help you to write a resume which will differ from the resume of someone with more experience focusing more on your potential which can be demonstrated through the career objective, academic achievements, projects or extracurricular activities.

You've probably heard the terms resume and Curriculum Vitae. Essentially, they mean the same thing and are interchangeable. Resume is from the French, meaning 'summary' and Curriculum Vitae is derived from Latin and means 'a brief account of one's life'. We use the word 'resume' in this guide. It is unnecessary to use either as a heading on your resume.

Most people think the purpose of the resume is to record your educational qualifications and work history, particularly for the purposes of seeking employment. While this is true, it can encourage the writer to put in unnecessary detail. Read the job advertisement carefully and provide the relevant attachments. Refocus your writing from your own perspective to that of the prospective employer. It should inspire the reader to want to know more about you.

Basic resume rules

While there are really no rules about writing a resume except to make it easier for the employer to read there are some very clear guidelines for writing an effective resume. You may receive different and sometimes conflicting advice from 'the experts' think of this as a good thing giving you flexibility to build a resume that suits your history and your style.

Do

- Make the job of the reader as easy as possible. Prospective employers are busy people, on average an employer will spend 30 seconds on a resume. Don't expect them to read between the lines - concentrate on clear and relevant information
- Tailor the resume for each position
- Be honest
- Attend a Resume workshop with UWS Careers & Cooperative Education

Don't

- Include salary details, marital or health status
- Include reasons for leaving previous positions
- Use words or phrases with a negative connotation
- Use acronyms and jargon, unless explained with the first usage
- Use 'etc' or 'etcetera' as it indicates you can't think of what else to say
- Break a section of information with a new page
- Overuse styles such as bold, italics, underlining and upper case
- Use coloured paper or printing, graphics, borders, your photo or gimmicks
- Have a single spelling, punctuation or grammatical error

Resume formats

Formatting do's

- Number each page. 2-3 pages for a graduate resume is sufficient
- Put your name on each page
- Bold important information
- Keep personal pronouns to a minimum such as I, we, my
- Address large gaps in your resume e.g. you may state that you travelled for 6 months
- Use bullet points where possible rather than long paragraphs
- Leave a left-hand margin e.g. 2.5cm and space between information
- Use a plain font of 10-12 in the body and 12-16 in the headings on plain white A4 paper
- Staple in the top left corner rather than binding
- Ask several people to check your resume for you including your family, friends, current employer or the UWS Careers & Cooperative Education staff
- Use Australian spelling and don't rely on the spellchecker!

Here are some basic formats, use what suits you best:

Reverse chronological

This is the most commonly used format and as the name implies, each position held is listed and described starting with your most recent job.

Functional

This format enables you to organise your experience into skill categories, irrespective of chronology. Focuses on demonstrated skills and achievements in relation to the position sought. This format is useful if you have limited professional work experience as you can combine your paid and unpaid work.

Combination

A mixture of chronological and functional formats, the focus is on a functional description of skills and achievements with a brief chronology of positions held.

On-line

Increasingly, applicants are asked to e-mail their resume, to send it as an attachment to an e-mail or to complete a prescribed electronic form.

Resume builder

You can login to CareerHub to use this service. It is also offered by many on-line recruitment agencies. Ensure they allow you control over the format. Check privacy issues if you post your resume with an agency on-line or on a website.

Common resume headings

As a guide on page one you may include:

- Your name and contact details
- Career objective / career statement
- Education / qualifications
- Skill summary

On page 2 you may include:

- Relevant experience
- Other experience

Name and contact details:

This does not require a separate heading. Use your name as the heading, make it big and bold. If your name does not indicate your gender you may want to include your title (Mr/Ms). List your address and contact details immediately under your name or in a footer, these can be smaller in size. Ensure you include an e-mail address (this is the time to move on from cute or provocative addresses that were a bit of fun at uni) and a telephone number. Make sure callers can leave a message if you are not available to take a call.

Personal information:

Personal information such as date of birth and marital status is optional, however it is not required and employers should not ask you for this on your resume as it may be against anti-discrimination legislation. You may want to put your Nationality or Citizenship status.

Career objective:

You may want to have this as a section but it is purely optional; often your cover letter is enough and it is not necessary. Briefly introduce yourself. Tell the reader what you are currently doing, your key skills, what you are looking for and when you are available. Be clear and concise and focus on what you can offer the employer.

Compare the following examples. Which one gives a clearer picture of the applicant?

- ✘ *I seek a challenging position in a progressive company that will allow me to use my skills and experience, grow in my career and contribute to the goals of the company.*

- ✔ *I am a marketing graduate with a strong academic record and demonstrated sales and customer service skills. I have had six months part-time experience with my local newspaper in the advertising sales department as a Marketing Assistant. I am enthusiastic, creative and keen to enter the retail industry as a Marketing Assistant. I am available for full-time employment.*

Education / qualifications:

Make sure you state your degree title (bold this so it stands out) and the university correctly. We suggest that you highlight your academic achievements by providing some detail about your course major, key subjects and any good results or substantial projects you completed. List 4 to 6 main subjects only which may be your most recent subjects, the ones for which you achieved best results, the ones most relevant to the position/s applied or the ones you enjoyed most. Do not send or attach your transcript unless asked to do so.

This section could also include membership of professional associations (students often join at a reduced rate)

Skills summary:

You may want to highlight your relevant skills. It is not the job of the reader to go through every job you've had to figure out your likely skills. Tailor it to the job and tell them straight!

You may want to prepare a Skills Audit to help you determine your skills. Ask family, friends and employers to help you identify your strengths, often our own strengths are taken for granted. List your key professional skills (prepare strategic business plans), a few generic skills (communication, teamwork) and your IT skills (advanced excel skills). Don't underplay transferable skills gained at university, casual jobs, volunteer / community service, sporting roles and customer service positions or your language skills.

Employment history:

You may divide this into professional experience (work experience / placements) and other employment (casual jobs such as a retail position).

Use reverse date order (current job first). The first line should be the position title (in bold), the second line gives the name and location of the company. An address is not necessary;

simply state the suburb (if in Sydney) or the city or town. Provide a brief description of the company e.g. multinational import/export company with a turnover of \$50m (AUD) or small family-owned catering business employing 10 staff. Indicate the basis on which you worked such as full-time, part-time or casual. List the dates e.g. April 2009 – December 2009.

List responsibilities and achievements separately in bullet point format. Some tips are:

- Begin each responsibility with a strong verb e.g. trained, analysed, organised
- Use past tense for all but your current position
- Don't copy your position description, rather, list the main duties and tasks you performed and put the most important or relevant ones first

Referees

Referees are the people you nominate for the employer to contact for reference. List 2 referees unless otherwise specified. Ensure that those you list are aware that they may be contacted. If you are unsure who you will use as a referee or do not wish to notify your current employer yet that you have applied for another job you can state that 'referees will be provided upon request'. Work referees are ideal otherwise use academic or personal references.

Other headings

You should use headings relevant to your situation. Some ideas are:

- Volunteer Work
- Awards, Publications/Papers/Research/Conferences/Grants
- Interests or extracurricular activities (explain your level of commitment and include any achievements, may include hobbies)

Resources

Jim Bright and Joanne Earl
McCarthy

Resumes that Get Shortlisted
Australian Resumes for Dummies

Use Australian websites and graduate resume samples where possible
www.uws.edu.au/careers, www.myfuture.edu.au, www.seek.com.au

Sample resume

Jo Smith

2 Kingswood Road
0402 000 000
josmith@smith.com.au

Career Objective

I am a Bachelor of Business and Commerce, Accounting major graduate looking to work as a graduate accountant in a global and highly reputable company such as X. My previous accounting experience would be a valuable asset and has assisted me in developing excellent attention to detail and organisation skills. I am available to work full time immediately.

Education / Qualifications

Bachelor of Business and Commerce, Accounting major

University of Western Sydney
Completed 2009

Key subjects

Accounting Information Systems - distinction
Auditing and Assurance Services - credit
Taxation Law - credit
Advanced Accounting - credit

Major Projects

Finalist in the Management Association Competition in 2009

Skills Summary

- Excellent communication skills
Demonstrated in being a finalist for the Management Association Competition in 2009

(List the skills in your professional area, generic skills, and IT skills).

Experience

Accounting Clerk

Accountants Corporation

Sydney

Small accounting firm of approximately 20 people servicing private clients

June 2009 - current

Part time position

Key Responsibilities

(Bullet point, begin each point with a verb, use past except for current position. List what YOU did, not what appears on the position description.)

- Organised client files
- Coordinated filing system
- Researched archived files for specific information
- Liaised with customers on the phone and by email

Achievements

- Positive customer feedback
- Won an award for staff member of the month

Awards / Achievements

UWS award for student assistance

Captain of the cricket team

Coached an under 12 cricket team

Scholarship for excellent academic results

Speak fluent German

Referees

Jane Thomas

Accountants Corporation

Manager

02 – 999 0000

Jane.Thomas@accounts.com.au