How to Construct and Format a Resume

*What is a resume?*

A resume is a strategically ordered document that highlights your suitability for a desired position, internship, scholarship, or other opportunity. Your resume is often your first communication—your “foot in the door”—with an organization or a potential employer.

*How should I format my resume?*

There are *endless* ways to format a resume. Depending on what job you’re going for in what field, your resume may be more traditional or more creative. Most employers expect a resume that is all black and white with easy-to-read fonts. Some employers may be receptive to a small amount of color in the heading, and for some fields, like advertising or web design, a full color resume with a variety of fonts may be appropriate. That being said, some things are consistent for all resumes:

* Unless specified by the employers, you resume *must* be one page
* Sections should be obviously distinct from one another
* Use consistent font type. Your name should appear at the top of your resume in 14-point font. Write the rest of your resume in 11 or 12-point font.
* Utilize the space as efficiently as possible. 0.5 or 1 inch margins are acceptable. Should you have many items to feature, consider adjusting your page margins to 0.5 inches.

*What belongs in a resume?*

Although creating a resume often involves racking your brain, it should comfort you to know that a resume is a flexible document—there is no “right” way to do it. What is important, however, is that you evaluate your audience and tailor your resume to that audience. Additionally, you should arrange your resume so that your strengths are displayed prominently. What strengths you choose to highlight may change based on what the employer is looking for. Similarly, if you have an arsenal of great items to list on your resume, choose those that will be of interest to the target audience. Applicants are encouraged to reconfigure their resumes for each employer if necessary.

* Heading
  + This is the contact information listed at the top of your resume. Include your name, full mailing address, telephone number with area code, and a professional-sounding email address.
* Education
  + State the full name of your university, the type of degree(s) obtained, academic major(s), minor concentration(s), expected graduation date, and GPA. Only include your GPA if it is a 3.0 or above. If your departmental (for your major) GPA is *higher* than your cumulative, feel free to list that as well.
* Experience
  + This section should showcase work and/or internship experience. For each entry include your employer’s full name (this is the name of your company), your job title, where the job was based, the range of dates that you worked, and a brief description of your responsibilities and achievements. Descriptions should begin with an *action verb* and focus on what you did or achieved rather than just what your responsibilities were. Use numbers (e.g. percent increase) to support your achievements when possible.
  + Order items chronologically or functionally.
    - To organize chronologically, list the most recent positions held first. This approach is useful for most college students as your work experience may or may not be limited to a particular industry.
    - To organize functionally, highlight your most relevant achievements first rather than listing them in chronological order. These types of resumes work best if there are particular areas of accomplishment that you want to call to your audience’s attention.
* Leadership Experience and Activities
  + This section should feature extracurricular and volunteer organizations you participated in as well as officer positions you may have held. For each entry include your organization’s full name, your position title, the range of dates that you worked, and a brief description of your responsibilities and achievements. Descriptions should begin with an *action verb* and focus on what you did or achieved rather than just what your responsibilities were. Use numbers (e.g. percent increase) to support your achievements when possible.
* Honors
  + This section is *optional*. If you do not have honors to list, do not include this section on your resume. List all scholarships, honors (including Dean’s List status), and awards you have received, as well as any honor society memberships.
* Academic Projects
  + This section is *optional*. If you do not have projects to feature, do not include this section on your resume. If you are not applying to an academic field, this may not be appropriate. A senior/honors thesis or a research project may be listed here. Projects completed as a research assistant should be discussed in the “Experience” section.
* Additional Information
  + Computer skills
    - List whatever programs or codes you are competent with.
  + Miscellaneous skills
    - Are you a certified lifeguard? Have you completed specialized training for your field? List relevant certifications here.
  + Language skills
    - What language(s) do you speak? What is your skill level?
    - Examples: Fluent in English, Conversational French, Elementary Spanish
  + Interests
    - List about three interests. Select interests that would be easy for you to talk about in an interview or at a job fair. Do NOT make interests up to seem more interesting; employers will talk to you about them.
    - Bonus tip: Pick an interest that could appeal to a large number of people, e.g. jogging, and an interest that is unique and may spark conversation, e.g. barrel racing.
  + Work status
    - Do you have a green card? Do you have work restrictions in the US? List them here.