



RESUMES

Your resume, along with a cover letter, is the most critical component of your job search. A well written resume should be an advertisement which sells its product – you. Because employers only spend about 20 seconds on each resume, you must effectively showcase your achievements in a way that grabs the employer’s attention. Don’t be overly modest. You have many achievements of which you should be proud.

A key point to remember is that resumes are **subjective** and vary according to each person, industry and job. Many specialists advocate “rules” for resumes (such as the infamous one page rule). Your resume should be appropriate to your situation so don’t be afraid to veer from conventional resume wisdom. Because they are so **subjective**, CSO can help you craft your resume in the best format for your job search. For further help, these Quick Tips provide links to online resources which offer more detail on points discussed below. CSO also has a sample resume packet for further formatting ideas.

Before you start

- Reflect on which skills, knowledge and experience would make an ideal candidate for your target career and make a list of your matching qualifications.
- Focus on your accomplishments that illustrate the above rather than your specific responsibilities. Accomplishments distinguish you as a top performer more than a description of how you fulfilled your basic job function. Answer these questions:
 - How did you set yourself apart from other employees?
 - How did you solve a problem that you or your organization faced?
 - How did the company benefit from your solution?
 - What did you do to impress your boss and get promoted?
 - Did you help your company make or save money, build relationships, make work easier, save time, etc.?
- Determine your key strengths and what about your background makes you unique.
- If you are changing careers or don’t have much experience, think of which transferable skills you possess that would be applicable for your new career.
- Decide if a chronological, functional or targeted resume is right for your situation. **Chronological** resumes work best when you are staying in the same field and when you have a long, solid history of progressively responsible employment. They are also preferred by human resources personnel. **Functional** resumes are useful when you are changing careers, reentering the job market or don’t have much professional work experience. **Hybrid** resumes combine both formats by strategically ordering your experience under several skill headings to highlight the most relevant information for the type of job you seek. CSO can help you decide which format works best for you.

Format (*Creating a visually appealing, easy-to-read resume*)

- Choose from the following typical resume components what makes sense for your resume: *summary of qualifications, experience, education, language/computer skills, professional memberships, presentations, leadership experience, interests.*
- Have as much white space between sections as possible and avoid long, dense paragraphs to make your resume reader-friendly.
- Create a professional looking resume that is not based on a Microsoft Word template, which can signal to employers a lack of imagination.
- Be uniform in your use of formatting.
- Generally, it’s a good idea to include job title and employer on the left-hand side and location and dates of employment on the right side.
- List your previous jobs in reverse chronological order if using a chronological resume.
- Include your name on subsequent pages of your resume.

- Proofread very carefully. Have at least 3 others (someone in the industry, someone who knows you well, and CSO) review your resume for typos and grammar errors.
- Be aware of how an employer would like you to submit your resume – whether it is emailed as an attachment or a text-only document, uploaded into an online application system, or sent in more traditional means such as mail or fax.

Content (*Identifying the correct information*)

- Be sure you note that, at Harvard, you are receiving an Ed.M., NOT a M.Ed.!
- Target your summary of qualifications for each type of job you apply for by mirroring the job description or researching key skills for that particular industry and position.
- Include your titles, numbers and names (well known companies, prominent figures in the industry with whom you worked) in your summary.
- Your evidence supporting your summary, namely skills, qualifications and specific accomplishments, will be presented in the descriptions of your previous jobs.
- Quantify your accomplishments with percentages and numbers.
- Never lie or exaggerate on your resume.
- Include information that is recent, relevant and marketable and promotes the skills you enjoy using most.
- Describe your accomplishments in simple but powerful statements in active voice that emphasize the benefit to your employer.
- List volunteer work or training that adds to your skill set.
- Write concisely and keep sentences short and direct. Eliminate extraneous words or information.
- Include your education first unless your previous experience is highly relevant to the position for which you are applying.
- If you have extensive experience, you can summarize your earliest jobs in one line or a short paragraph.
- Since many employers now use keyword-searchable databases to cull resumes from the applicant pool, utilize the most likely keywords throughout your resume. Be sure to include keywords in your summary of qualifications in case your resume is also reviewed by a real person. More on keywords can be found in the Additional Resources below.

Additional Resources

“How to Write a Masterpiece of a Resume”

<http://www.rockportinstitute.com/resumes.html>

Good list of action verbs

www.rockportinstitute.com/powerwords.html

Tips on resume content

<http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/yana.php>

Chronological vs. functional resumes

<http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/res-what.php>

Resume mistakes to avoid

www.quintcareers.com/resume_mistakes.html

<http://susanireland.com/resumeguide/format.html>

Tips to create summaries of qualifications and achievement statements

<http://susanireland.com/resumeguide/index.html>

Formatting and sending resumes electronically and as text-only documents

www.rileyguide.com/eresume.html

www.quintcareers.com/e-resumes.html

Keywords: how to ascertain them and why they are important

www.quintcareers.com/printable/resume_keywords.html

www.careerjournal.com/jobhunting/resumes/20060605-flesher.html

For more information, contact Career Services -

617.495.3427

cso@gse.harvard.edu

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/about/administration/careers/>

1 Longfellow Hall