

# Writing a Resume

A resume is one of the key components of the job application process. It should paint a picture for the reader of your skills and suitability for the job, and any experiences you have gained that would be beneficial to the position. Your resume is a marketing tool that sells your skills, qualifications and achievements to a prospective employer.

Employers can often receive several hundred resumes and someone inevitably has the task of reading them all. It is highly likely that someone reading your resume will develop an impression of you within the first 20-30 seconds. It therefore needs to be informative, succinct and interesting to stand out from the crowd. The best way to do this is to clearly express how your skills and experiences match those that the employer is looking for.

## STARTING THE PROCESS

Take it seriously. Be prepared to spend time drafting and refining your resume so that it clearly demonstrates and markets your skills and suitability for a position. Approach your resume writing by using the following broad process:

- Gather information on yourself – use brainstorming, records of achievement or participation, work history, copies of transcripts etc to generate the raw material.
- Think about the audience for your resume and decide what is relevant to them.
- Select a format and specific section headings that best categorise you and your information.
- Draft the content of the resume and allow time for reflection and review.
- Revise again, approach resume writing like writing a university assignment – it takes time to research, write and revise – don't wait until the day the job application is due to write your resume!

## YOUR AUDIENCE

Your resume is not a static document: it should be re-evaluated and updated regularly, in light of a particular audience each time you use it. The emphasis on various skills and experiences will vary according to the job and the employer.

## RESUME FORMAT

All resumes should include core information about personal details, education, work experience and relevant skills/achievements; as well as information about interests (hobbies, sports, community service etc). However, there are various ways to structure the material in your resume in order to present your 'story' in the most effective way.

Common resume formats are:

- **Chronological** – is the most common resume format. Emphasises your past experiences from the most recent date and works backwards. Sometimes known as reverse chronological order, this format is easy for an employer to navigate and clearly identify what you have been doing, and when.
- **Functional** – describes functions or areas of skills you hold, with a lesser emphasis on positions previously held. This format may be useful for students with limited or no work experience, or people with significant gaps in career activity due to travel, raising children etc.
- **Combination / Hybrid** – includes elements of both the chronological and functional formats.

## SECTION HEADINGS

Once you have selected your preferred format, you can make some decisions about the information you want to include, and how to present it clearly and powerfully to the employer.

There is no set template or 'one' way to format a resume, but it should be visually clear, concise, and in a style you are comfortable with. Think about how an employer would view your information, and use strong 'active' words to describe tasks and responsibilities.

Employers like to see what experiences you may have aside from studies and paid work, as they want to employ people with diverse abilities and qualities. Your resume should therefore be a broad snapshot of you as a person – your education and work experiences, as well as your extracurricular interests and achievements.

For example, to describe contributions you have made in the community, you might choose '*Community Service*', or '*Voluntary Work*'. If you have exhibited your work you may choose '*Exhibitions*', or if you are a member of a society you may choose '*Professional Memberships*'.

Your resume is individual to you, and so you should include information under headings that reflect this.

## Sample headings you may like to use:

- Educational Background or Tertiary Education
- Employment or Work Experience
- Key Skills or Skills Summary
- Key Achievements
- Awards or Prizes
- Career Objective, Career Goal or Personal profile
- Voluntary or Community Service
- Computer or IT Skills
- Research
- Professional or Clinical Experience
- Publications or Conferences
- Language Skills
- Professional or Society Memberships
- Qualifications
- Extra-curricular activities or Hobbies & Interests
- Sporting Achievements
- Exhibitions
- Funding Grants
- University Projects
- Career Highlights or Achievements
- Referees (x2 minimum)

## RESUME DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do make sure your name and personal details stand out at top of page and keep to 2-4 pages maximum length.
- Don't include personal information – DOB / Marital Status / Health / Photo.
- Do use clean, simple font style and layout, with evenly spaced words and lines – Times New Roman, Arial, and Calibri are good fonts.
- Do not use the same resume for every job application.
- Do proof read – no typos or grammatical errors.
- Don't go back as far as primary school – keep information current & relevant.

- Do use succinct statements and appropriate use of bullet points.
- Don't forget to get permission from your referees.
- Do include page numbers and ensure email and mobile contacts are professional.
- Do put your most powerful, relevant information on the first page.

## THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Understand the purpose and audience of your resume.
- Select a style and format that presents you well.
- Include information that is current and relevant, and exclude information that isn't.

## FAQS

CareerHub is regularly updated with frequently asked questions and queries in relation to writing a resume. Examples of FAQs:

- How far back should my resume go?
- Should I include hobbies and interests?
- Does my resume need a cover page?
- Do I include details about jobs that aren't relevant to what I am studying?
- Is DOB relevant?
- Should I include written references?

For more information, log on to:

<https://careerhub.utas.edu.au>

## FURTHER READING

A simple internet search for 'resumes' will generate a wealth of information and resources. You may also like to look on social media sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, Google Circle and Whirlpool for online web chats and blogs that may help. The following are a few key resources that will help to start your resume research.

## Books

Bright, J. & Earl, J. 2004, *Resumes that Get Shortlisted: proven strategies to get the job you want*

Stevens, P. 2000, *Win that Job*

Villiers, A. 2005, *How to Write and Talk to Selection Criteria (Chapter 7)*

## Internet

[www.careerone.com.au](http://www.careerone.com.au)

(click on 'Resume' or 'Career Advice')

[www.seek.com.au](http://www.seek.com.au)

(click on 'Salary, Advice & Tips')

[www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com)

(click on Business & Careers then Careers)

For factsheets on other career related topics, please go to:

[www.utas.edu.au/students/fact-sheets](http://www.utas.edu.au/students/fact-sheets)

## CONTACT US

Career Development and Employment offer support across all UTAS campuses, and regularly hold resume skills workshops and appointments.

For more information or to register, go to:

<https://careerhub.utas.edu.au>

Why not submit your resume for feedback to:

[resume.link@utas.edu.au](mailto:resume.link@utas.edu.au)

You can contact us by email or phone.

Email: [Careers.Service@utas.edu.au](mailto:Careers.Service@utas.edu.au)

Phone: 03 6226 2511

Web: [www.utas.edu.au/students/careers](http://www.utas.edu.au/students/careers)

[www.facebook.com/UtasCareers](https://www.facebook.com/UtasCareers)



## RESUME – CHECKLIST

### LAYOUT

- Is resume visually clear with even spacing between words and lines?
- Have you used a clear font throughout (Times New Roman, Arial)?
- Are your name and contact details visible and professional at top of the page?
- Is resume 2-4 pages maximum?
- Are tabs / margins aligned throughout the document?
- Is layout gimmick free? – no coloured paper, fancy fonts, photos, cover page, borders.
- If using reverse chronological format, are most recent details first throughout the document?
- Appropriate use of BOLD or CAPITALS to highlight section headings?
- Good use of bullet points to keep information concise?
- Have you included page numbers as a footer? (especially important for online applications)

### CONTENT

- Is content relevant and up to date?
- Does resume clearly highlight your skills, achievements and knowledge?
- Is your resume tailored to the job / audience?
- Have you thought about explaining gaps in your employment?
- Are unpaid work / voluntary experiences listed as well as paid?
- Are referees listed clearly with full contact details, and did you get their permission?
- Is your personal information, e.g. age, gender, marital status, left off the resume?

### LANGUAGE

- Have you used strong, active words to describe your tasks / responsibilities?  
(i.e. organised, produced, developed)
- Is grammar, spelling and punctuation correct throughout? Proof read!
- Have you avoided long wordy paragraphs?
- Have you used language that reflects language of the Position Description?
- Is document jargon free? (except to explain technical terms the employer would understand)
- Have you made positive claims about your skills?