

# Resume Guidelines

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**Your resume and cover letter have a single purpose: to obtain an interview.** The resume is an advertising tool; it is an organized summary about your qualifications as a potential employee. Start the career planning process by taking a personal inventory of your skills, interests, accomplishments, and experiences. The DU Career Center can assist you with this process.

Since employers may spend as little as 30 seconds reviewing a resume, you must quickly convey a positive vision of who you are and what you can do for the employer. The resume must catch the reader's attention with an attractive, powerful summary.

## STYLE

Although there is no absolutely "correct" way to present information on your resume, these guidelines will enhance your making the best impression possible:

- Put your most important information near the **top** and **left** to attract the reader's attention.
- List dates of employment on the **right** or after the job title, employer name, and location of job.
- Create a resume using key words that describe your skills, traits, and knowledge since some employers now scan resumes into their databases.
- If you have both related and unrelated experience, consider having two experience sections. For example, someone in the environmental field may have two sections, one labeled Environmental Experience and another labeled Other Experience.
- Choose the resume style that best suits the position you seek. Sample resumes for both chronological and functional styles are available at the end of this handout as well as on the DU Career Center website at [www.du.edu/career](http://www.du.edu/career).

## **Chronological**

Best used by people whose work experience and history (internships or jobs) is clearly relevant to their job target and by people in fields where the chronological resume is very traditional.

- An outline of relevant information listed in reverse chronological order (most recent first).
- The easiest resume to prepare and often preferred by employers.

## **Functional**

Best used by individuals without related paid work experience, career changers, and for people entering or re-entering the job market.

- Contains a work history section but emphasizes concrete (verifiable) skills where outcomes or quantifications (\$, %) may strengthen the accomplishments listed.
- Skills that are transferred from past experience (not limited to paid work experience) to a future job.
- What you actually can do, such as organizing, communicating, analyzing, and managing.
- Select those skill areas that most apply to the position you are seeking and then briefly describe the experiences that developed those skills. It is not enough just to say you have "strong analytical ability" without providing proof. Communicate what distinguishes you from other applicants with similar skills.

## RESUME SECTIONS:

### Contact Information

- Always placed at the top of the page since electronic databases scan for this information within the first few lines of the resume.
- Include your name, street address, city, state, zip code, home telephone number and an email address.
- If you feel comfortable, you may include your business telephone number.

### Career Objective

*Convince the employer to interview you by relating everything on your resume to the job objective.*

- Use in most situations.
- Provide a concise statement of the position and/or the industry or field desired.
- If you do not include a job objective, be sure to describe your objective in the cover letter.
- Specifically name the job title and industry you want to target.
- Describe the skills you offer that relate to the position; focus on the **employer's** needs.

### Education

- Any education-related information that enhances the employer's view of you.
- High school information is usually excluded unless it significantly contributes to the vision.
- May be listed before the Experience section if it is more relevant to the employer than your jobs.

*Include the following information:*

- Your degree (e.g. BS or Bachelor of Science), major, and minor. If you have more than one degree, list your most recent and relevant degree first. You may spell out the degree (Bachelor of Arts) or use abbreviations (BA) if commonly understood.
- The name of the college or university, city, state, and graduation date.
- Similar information for any past degrees.

*Optional items:*

- A short list of relevant classes or projects completed.
- High GPA, honors, awards, scholarships, special projects, and certifications.

### Experience

- Include your most recent job title, employer, city, state, beginning and end dates of employment (month and year), a description of job accomplishments, and outcomes.
- Quantify accomplishments using numbers, percentages, time frames, and other specific details.
- Describe your accomplishments and outcomes using bullets and action verbs (see page 5).
- If you lack paid job experience, include relevant unpaid experience (internship or volunteer).

### Accomplishments

Employers want to learn about your accomplishments and results in the following areas:

- |                         |                                  |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Saving time or money  | • Improving products or services |
| • Solving problems      | • Managing a crisis              |
| • Enhancing performance | • Increasing profits or services |

## References

- The names, addresses, and phone numbers of references are not listed on your resume.
- References are usually former employers who can speak about the quality of your work. College professors are appropriate to list if they can discuss your qualifications.
- Obtain permission from your potential references to use them as references.
- Give your references a resume and keep them informed of employers who may contact them.
- Consider coaching your references on your strengths as they relate to specific jobs.

## Additional Headings

You can create headings to fit the skills you want to highlight. Foreign languages, computer languages, and hardware/software are also often included in a special section. Include a heading if it is relevant in helping the employer get the best possible impression of you and if it relates to the job.

## Sample Headings

Leadership Experience	Professional Associations
Honors and Awards	Publications
Extracurricular Activities	Volunteer/Service Work
Computer Skills	Foreign Languages
International Experience	Presentations
Research Projects	Certifications and Licenses

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR THOSE WITH EXTENSIVE PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

A Summary of Qualifications section highlights your skills, relevant accomplishments, and educational background in either a paragraph or bulleted format at the top of the resume (below the contact information). The summary may be used in place of, or in addition to, a career objective.

#### **Sample of Summary of Qualification—in paragraph format:**

Over six years experience teaching young children. Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology. Certificate in Elementary Education. Successfully organized early childhood programs. Bilingual in Spanish and English.

#### **Sample of Summary of Qualifications—with bullets:**

- Sixteen years of CIS and Telecommunications consulting experience with Fortune 100 companies.
- Comprehensive expertise in frame relay fiber optics, computer networks, ATM's and telephony.
- Master in Telecommunications and Bachelor of Science in CIS from the University of Denver.
- Six years experience in Project Management with cross functional teams of up to 40 people.

### **SPECIAL SITUATIONS**

Some people have individual situations or concerns that may impact their resumes. If you are unsure of how to best present yourself on a resume, please schedule a meeting with a Career Counselor at the DU Career Center, 303-871-2150, to discuss your concerns.

#### **Special situations may include:**

- Gaps in employment history
- Being downsized or laid off
- Involvement in controversial organizations
- Termination from a job

## **AN ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITY: DU CAREERS ONLINE**

Upload and publish your resume to the DU Resume Referral Service to advertise yourself to employers.

1. If you have not already done so, go to [www.du.edu/career](http://www.du.edu/career) to register for DU Careers Online and complete *My Profile*.
2. After you complete your profile, go to *My Documents* and *Upload* your resume and then *Publish* your resume.
3. In addition, students and alumni can apply online for On-Campus Recruiting as well as search jobs, internships and employers.

## **KEYS TO AN EFFECTIVE RESUME**

- Customize:** If you are seeking more than one type of job, you may want several resumes with different career objectives or job targets.
- Length:** Unless you have extensive, relevant experience, limit yourself to one page.
- Specific:** Concise, detailed, results-oriented phrases get maximum interest, e.g., "Trained and managed three sales clerks in women's clothing section, averaging highest weekly sales out of six departments." Concisely describe your career objective, skills/qualifications, education, work history, and interests. Think of the job or internship as an unmet need of an employer. Research the key skills for the type of position you are applying for. Write statements that reflect these skills.
- Language:** When possible, use the terminology or jargon of the employer.
- Quantify:** Describe your duties and accomplishments with measurable data, e.g. dollars, percents, numbers, and frequency. Use adjectives and adverbs to describe your actions and results with detailed descriptions. Be specific about your skills and competencies; emphasize those skills most related to the position.
- Design:** Make the resume inviting to read with attractive headings, a good balance of black and white, wide margins, and a limited selection of font sizes and styles. Do not use less than 10-point font. Bullets and columns can make it easier for employers to quickly review your resume.
- Highlight:** The reader's eye goes first to the top, left side of the resume and this is where to place your most important information. Headings and important details can be given extra emphasis by careful use of indenting, italicizing, underlining, or bolding.
- Proofread:** Have your resume critiqued by several people, including a professional in your field and a Career Counselor at the DU Career Center. Grammar, spelling, or typographical errors are unacceptable.
- Consistency:** It is critical to provide information in a consistent format within each section of your resume. For example, present each of your jobs consistently with job titles, employer name, location, and dates in the same order.
- Printing:** Laser quality print on 24# weight laser-compatible paper is suggested. If you fax or scan your resume, always use white paper.

### ACTION VERB SAMPLE LIST

Accomplished	Completed	Equipped	Maintained	Qualified
Achieved	Conceptualized	Established	Managed	Questioned
Administered	Conducted	Evaluated	Modified	Raised profits
Advised	Consolidated	Examined	Monitored	Recommended
Analyzed	Constructed	Expanded	Negotiated	Recorded
Appraised	Controlled	Financed	Observed	Reduced
Arbitrated	Coordinated	Forecast	Obtained	Researched
Arranged	Counseled	Formulated	Organized	Reviewed
Assessed	Created	Founded	Oversaw	Selected
Assisted	Critiqued	Generated	Participated	Solved
Audited	Delivered	Governed	Performed	Specified
Bought	Demonstrated	Graded	Persuaded	Structured
Briefed	Designed	Guided	Piloted	Summarized
Brought	Determined	Handled	Prepared	Supervised
Budgeted	Developed	Hypothesized	Presented	Systematized
Built	Devised	Implemented	Produced	Tested
Calculated	Directed	Improved	Programmed	Trained
Changed	Discovered	Initiated	Projected	Translated
Chaired	Edited	Instituted	Promoted	Wrote
Collected	Eliminated	Introduced	Publicized	
Communicated	Ensured	Investigated	Purchased	

### RESUME CHECKLIST

#### **General:**

- Always include a cover letter. A well-written cover letter can only increase your chance for an interview.
- Write your resume yourself. If you cannot effectively write about yourself, you may be ineffective in selling yourself during an interview.
- Proofread for typographical, spelling, and grammar errors.
- Ask a DU Career Counselor to critique your resume.
- Use quality paper and a quality laser printer.
- Understand the impact of potentially controversial information such as inclusion of your religious or political affiliations, your sexual orientation, or detailed, personal information. Is there a compelling reason for including the information? Does it relate to the job?
- Keep your resume focused and targeted to a specific job.
- Prioritize experience and education sections depending upon the employer's needs.
- Focus on higher level and transferable skills.
- Include specific examples of significant accomplishments and results.

**Language:**

- Avoid vague objectives such as "Seeking a challenging position."
- Find appropriate synonyms rather than using the same words repeatedly.
- Describe the positive results or outcomes of your actions or duties.
- Exclude abbreviations that the employer is not likely to understand.
- Speak positively about your background and skills, persuasively relating them to your job objective.
- Be consistent with verb tenses. Use past tense verbs with jobs in the past, and present tense verbs for current positions.
- Use action verbs to start the phrases in the experience section of your resume.
- Use key words (nouns and short phrases) when you know your resume will be scanned into a database.
- Eliminate extraneous information.

**SPECIAL CAUTIONS FOR AN ONLINE JOB SEARCH**

In the age of identity theft, there are steps you can take to protect yourself during an online job search.

- Select the option to post an "identity-suppressed resume" that are available on reputable job posting sites.
- Set up a separate, anonymous email address just for your job search.
- Read the job posting site's privacy statement and your ability to delete your resume after you find a job. Find out if your resume will be shared with other job sites. Avoid using sites that do not give you information on how your data will be used, shared, or stored.
- Be wary of employer's requests for copies of driver's licenses or other personal information. Call the employer directly (find the number on your own) and verify the information they are seeking.
- Keep track of everything you post online to make it easier to delete and prove exactly what you posted and where you posted it.
- If it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is!