

Frequently Asked Questions regarding Resume's

1. Do I need a resume?
 - a. A resume is important for any position that depends on prior education or experience beyond simple employment history. Unskilled jobs, even those with benefits that pay well, may not require anything beyond a paper or online application. However, keeping a chronological record of your employment, education, and references - which are key components of a basic resume - will still help in completing those applications. Building a basic resume ensures that you get the information correct, and also gives you the ability to respond quickly if asked to produce one.
2. What type of resume should I use?
 - a. There are several different types of resume, each used for different purposes.
 - i. Reverse Chronological – This is the most common type of resume, and is shaped around the individuals work history, listing positions held from current or most recent, and working backward in time. For most jobs requiring resume's, this is the standard. Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other attributes (KSAO's) are incorporated into each position as applicable.
 - ii. Functional – A functional resume focuses on KSAO's, and is generally used when switching careers or career areas, or when there is a lack of work history, but you have education and experience that support your ability to perform the position being applied for.
 - iii. Hybrid – A combination of the Functional and Reverse Chronological, it highlights the relevant KSAO's before getting into the work history. The danger here is that the KSAO's become separated from the positions where they were demonstrated, and so the resume may seem disconnected. This one is most relevant when switching career fields to show that the skills used in previous positions are transferable to the new position, and is generally best when backed up by some form of education supporting the move to the new career field.
 - iv. Curriculum Vitae (CV) – This is a highly detailed document that is often used for positions which require significant levels of education, research, or to support higher level academic

placements. Unless specifically asked for, this very long form resume is generally unnecessary for the majority of positions.

3. What should I include on my resume?
 - a. Key elements include your work history, with applicable duties and responsibilities; KSAO's and accomplishments; education and training; specialized licenses, accreditations, and certifications; awards and recognitions; volunteer work; any other factors which directly support your qualifications for the position.
4. What should I leave off?
 - a. Personal details that have nothing to do with your ability to do the job should be left off. Examples may include age, religion, nationality or ethnicity, family information, political affiliations, etc.
 - b. Obsolete information and skills. Being an expert in a system or set of skills that is no longer relevant adds nothing to your resume in most instances.
 - c. Irrelevant personal information. Hobbies may make for interesting color in an interview, but on a resume, unless they relate to the field to which you are applying, they only serve to distract from the rest of your resume.
5. How long should my resume be?
 - a. For those just starting out, with little work history and primarily only formal education, a single page would be sufficient. Further into your career, 2 pages are the norm, with the generally accepted maximum being 3 pages.
6. Should I include references?
 - a. References do not have to be included unless specifically asked for, but a candidate may wish to include them up front as a convenience to the selecting official. However, having the resume simply state "References can be provided upon request" would be more than acceptable when not specifically required in the job announcement. Be sure to keep your references up to date, ensure they are willing to provide a reference for you, and notify them anytime you submit them as a reference to a perspective employer, so they are not surprised when someone calls them. Further, make sure your references are suitable and appropriate to the level of employment you are seeking. A family friend may be appropriate for someone just entering the job market, but the most valuable references are former employers who will endorse you, and professionals with whom you have worked who can attest to your particular skills in the field in which you work.
7. What is the purpose of a cover letter?

- a. The cover letter is a way to target your resume to a prospective employer. Even if you do not tailor your resume to a position, your cover letter should be unique to every position you apply for. It is your way of introducing yourself to the hiring manager, and helps to focus their interest on key skills you wish to highlight. The overall purpose is to convert your resume submission into an interview for the position. It also provides a great opportunity for you to demonstrate your written communication skills in a way that a resume cannot. If you know the name of the hiring manager, address it directly to them, otherwise, simply send it to “Hiring Manager” with the company name and address information. Don’t use “to whom it may concern”, as this completely defeats the purpose of customizing the cover letter.
8. How should I handle employment gaps?
- a. First, be honest about it. At one time or another, nearly everyone will experience an extended gap in employment. Trying to stretch dates from the positions before or after in any way will most likely be caught and automatically disqualify you due to dishonesty. One way to deal with this might be to use a functional resume, but most employers are going to be curious about your work history, so you will end up having to deal with it in the interview eventually. The best way to deal with it is by highlighting it in your cover letter, and turning it into a positive. How did you make that time productive? Did you work on acquiring new skills during that time? Did you do any freelance work? Did you research new trends in your industry? Anything that does not say “sat on the couch watching “Ellen” and eating Cheetoh’s will likely be acceptable to the hiring manager. Remember, they have probably had a gap in their resume, too!
9. What if I have no experience directly related to the job?
- a. This is where that functional or hybrid resume comes into play. Do an Inventory of the KSAO’s you have, and then highlight the ones that match the KSAO’s identified in the position you are applying for. Remember, every job change involves firsts for everyone. Show how your skill set matches the skill set required of the job, even if you have not used them in combination in that way before.
 - b. The cover letter is key here also. This is your chance to directly address why you would be an outstanding candidate for the position, despite the lack of prior direct experience. Research the new position, and give examples of how you would apply your KSAO’s to key tasks in that position.
10. Is it necessary to include an objective on my resume?

- a. For most job seekers, the answer is no. What are you going to say that is not already blindingly apparent by the fact that you are applying for these jobs in the first place? It does not really matter whether this is about advancement, or a lateral move for other reasons. If the employer is really interested in your career objectives, it will almost certainly be covered in the interview, where they can ask probing questions.

11. Should I tailor my resume to job I apply for?

- a. That depends. If the jobs you are applying for are all essentially the same (Floor Nurse in a skilled nursing facility), it is essentially the same job, just a different employer. You could even use the same cover letter, and simply customize it to the prospective employer and/or hiring manager. But for some people, the positions you are applying for vary, even though it is in the same general field. For example, a nurse applying to jobs in Hospitals, Clinics, Skilled Nursing Facilities, and Doctor's Offices may need to highlight different skills for each type of facility, and should certainly tailor their cover letter to each position. Do some positions require more management skills? Budgeting? Clerical? You could certainly blanket all of these with a common resume, but when you do that, you are leaving the hiring manager to sift through all of your experience and history to determine if you are the right fit. Most hiring managers do an initial scan of a resume, and make an initial decision whether to give it further consideration, or to move on to the next one. If your resume is too general purpose, it may get set aside in favor of one that highlighted the key KSAO's they were looking for right up front!

12. Should I include volunteer work on my resume?

- a. If you are short of work history, absolutely. As you go forward, the value of the volunteer work is in what unique KSAO's it can contribute to your overall experience base. While it may be admirable that you volunteer at a soup kitchen, if what you are doing is serving food and wiping tables, and those are not skills relevant to the job, is it worth taking up valuable real estate on the resume? On the other hand, if you are responsible for organizing and directing other volunteers, or you are involved with the operations and planning of the volunteer organization, those may be quite valuable to add. You can always figure out a way to bring it up in a positive way during an interview, but remember, your resume is about selling your potential value to a potential employer. Focus on items that are high payoff, and leave the rest for the interview.

13. Should I include my hobbies and interests on my resume?

- a. Generally, no, unless there are aspects about them that lend support to the job you are seeking. If you do include them, consider what the hobby

tells someone about you. Reading can signify an intellectual curiosity, but if your reading hobby is made up of low grade fiction, it may not be a selling point. Gardening can demonstrate a number of factors that an employer would find attractive, such as patience, perseverance, diligence, and the ability to work independently. However, how many hiring managers are going to make that connection? If you are fighting for space in your resume, this is likely the first area to go.

14. Should I put my GPA on my resume?

- a. Were you a good student? If so, then yes. Generally, anything 3.0 and above (on a 4.0 scale) would be listed, But beware – if you went to several schools, and did well at some, and not so well at another, it might be best to leave them off, altogether. Either way, be consistent. Either list them all, or don't list any of them.

15. What is an ATS Friendly resume?

- a. ATS stands for Applicant Tracking System, and is the software used by bigger organizations to receive and conduct a preliminary review of resume's received. It does this generally through a keyword match, where it looks for keywords of KSAO's required for the position within the resume. For the resume to be ATS friendly, the format must be neat and orderly, and generally free of spelling and grammar errors. Reviewing the job announcement and identifying the key KSAO's, and ensuring that you have those in your resume, helps to make sure that your resume makes it past the initial scan, and actually makes it into the hands of a human being. Just remember, if you say that you have a particular KSAO, you better be able to back it up in the interview.

16. How detailed should my resume be?

- a. As detailed as it can be, within the confines of the space you have. First and foremost, your name and contact information at the top. Other must have information includes your KSAO's: work experience; education; accomplishments; special qualifications, licenses, and certifications

17. What are key words, and how do I use them to my advantage?

- a. Key words represent the essential elements an employer is looking for in an applicant. These are generally related to the KSAO's of the position. For example, a corporate position may involve working with SAP software. If it is specified in the job announcement, then in this case the key words are "SAP Software".
- b. Review the job posting and highlight what you consider to be the key words that target the KSAO's the employer is demonstrating that they are

looking for. Then, see how well your resume reflects those same keywords. But be careful. Don't copy full sentences and phrases from the resume, and many resume software systems will reject the application if it looks like it was written from the job posting.

18. How do I make my resume stand apart from the others?

It is not about the paper, or the font, or graphics. The best resume's are clean, professional, grammatically correct, and clearly communicate your capabilities to the hiring manager. You can accentuate that with a well written cover letter, particularly by making the cover letter individualized to the position to which you are applying, such as by talking not only about yourself, but why you believe you are a good fit for the company and for the specific position. The more you demonstrate that you understand the functions and expectations for that position, the more confident the hiring manager will be in taking a chance on you.

19. Should I hire a professional to help develop my resume?

That depends on your confidence level in your own writing skills, and whether you have the budget for it. If you do your own, ask your peers and references if they would mind looking it over and providing you with constructive feedback. Getting different eyes on your resume can help you to identify issues to which you may be blind. If you choose to hire a professional, you need to interview and consider multiple people. This is not as simple as buying a gallon of milk. While price may be a factor, it should not be the sole factor in making your decision. Paying for a substandard product is just a waste of time and money.

20. What is a portfolio, and should I have one?

A portfolio is a collection of original work you have created previously. An architect may have a portfolio of building designs which have been built to demonstrate their skill and style. A Journalist or Photographer will have a selection of what they consider to be their better work to show a potential new employers or clients. Just be careful as to both ownership rights and corporate confidentiality issues with regard to what you include in a portfolio. A design for a fuel saving device on a vehicle may be a trade secret if it was developed while an employee of another enterprise. Including a schematic may cause a violation in a non-disclosure or non-compete agreement, and result in significant liability.