

Resume Review

As a form of professional communication, resumes are reader-centered—meaning they need to focus on what the audience needs to know to 1) take action or 2) make a decision and what the audience cares about. (For resumes the decision is: should we invite this person for an interview: yes/no?).

Resume Content: The resume should not exceed one page—why? Because readers don't want to read more than this. Get rid of any superfluous information that does not advance your purpose (and that readers don't care about):

- apply for an internship
- apply for a job

Organization: Based on your assessment of the audience, put your strongest selling point first, your second strongest point second, etc. (Readers start at the top and skim).

- Education
- Experience
- Skills (in pw jobs, this is often what employers care about the most—what you can actually do on the job)
- Volunteer experience or relevant non job-related activities

Conventions: Follow the 'rules' or conventions for how information should be presented. The following sections described below are required.

- *Full contact info* (include the address where you want readers to contact you)
- *Education:* include school name, school location, degree(s) earned, graduation dates. If you expect to graduate in the next year, list the degree and state "expected Spring 2015." If you will graduate later, indicate that you are "pursuing" the degree.

*'GPA' is optional. Grad schools care about GPA; internships care about GPA. Employers don't care as much; they care more that you have or will soon have 1) the required degree for the position, and 2) related experience. Don't devote an extra line to GPA if you are low on space and your GPA is not particularly impressive and/or you have stronger selling points such as directly related experience.

*'Minor' is also optional. Unless it's directly related to the job, employers probably don't care. Let's say you're getting a BA in English with a minor in Chemistry and you want to work in 'big Pharma'—then, yes, definitely put it on your resume. Delete if you're low on space or unless there's a compelling reason to include it.

- *Employment:* include position, employer name, employer location, dates (month and year). List in chronological order—newest first. List directly related experience (work related and internships) first. Include 2-3 bullet points per description—condense info where possible. Think about the skills the employer is seeking and include duties that highlight these. If possible, focus on accomplishments—measurable things that you did on the job. Delete older work experience that is not directly related as needed.

*Should you include information from high school? It depends. Were you valedictorian? Then, yes. (Is the information something that will persuade the audience to interview you?)

*Should you include that burger-flipping job you had freshman year? Maybe. Do you have enough other directly applicable experience? If not, then yes. Listing previous jobs demonstrates work ethic (that you can hold down a job), but if you've had two internships in your field or other-directly related experience, then you probably don't need non-related jobs.

*How far back should you go? Again, make decisions about how to represent yourself in the best possible light. If you have recent, directly-related experience in college, if you have the degree they are seeking, if you have directly-related volunteer experience and/or activities in college, focus on these more recent experiences.

Optional Sections

For each ask yourself: Does **the employer care about this**? Does this make you a stronger candidate? If the answer is no, then delete it.

**Objective Statement*—Some say yes, others say no. I say: "How much white space do you have?" If you have room and it's well targeted to the job and you think it's necessary to achieve some particular rhetorical purpose (show you understand the company and the job), fine. If not, delete it.

**Awards and Honors*—Will the employer see it and think "wow!" Then, yes. Definitely.

**Volunteer Activities*—Why are you including these? Because you are trying to demonstrate strong work ethic and good character? And because they are directly related and you don't have much related experience? Then, yes. If you're running low on white space, and you have other selling points that are stronger, delete or streamline. If you have done a lot of volunteer work, be selective.

**Software Proficiencies*—Most employers will expect candidates to know basic stuff like MS Office (listing these on your resume doesn't really add anything). PW jobs care about relevant software skills like InDesign and Photoshop and Framemaker (if you're going into technical communication). If you have specific skills, then yes. Be sure to include any specialized proficiencies that are listed as 'preferred' in the job ad.

**Foreign Languages*—Always. We live in an increasingly globalized culture. If you can read, write and speak another language fluently, put it down. Right now.

**Extra Curricular Activities*—Is it related to the job? Does it make you a more attractive candidate to the employer? Will the employer see it and think "wow!" Then, put it. Delete if there's not a compelling reason to include it.

**Hobbies and Personal Interests*—ditto.

Resume Design ONLY: After you've created your resume, evaluate it **only** in terms of the principles of design contrast, repetition, alignment and proximity:

- Contrast: Is there enough contrast among the title and the 1st and 2nd order headers?
 - Does the title look like a title? Do the 1st and 2nd order headers have enough contrast from the body copy? Are the typefaces contrastive enough (too similar?) Are the typefaces appropriate for a resume?
- Repetition: Are key design elements repeated? (same font for all 1st-order headers? And body copy? Use of bullets?)
- Alignment: Aim for no more than 2-3 alignments (otherwise visually it gets confusing). Does the resume use consistent alignment?
- Proximity: Is related information grouped together? Is it easy for your readers to determine what information is related? Are there any extra lines or spaces? Delete.
- White space—Good design uses white space effectively. Is there enough? Are there extra spaces that can be deleted? Is there info that needs to be grouped more closely together? Do you have too much info?

Finally, does your info create a visual 'hierarchy' of information? Is it easy to skim over your information and find your main sections?