



# RESUMES

*Your personal poster to connect you to the job*

In this tipsheet, you'll learn important tips, tricks and conventions to help you create an effective resume and we'll show you some important writing strategies to help you get started.

## What is a resume?

A resume is a brief document written to demonstrate a match between you and the position you want. Your resume should be written to help potential employers quickly and clearly see what skills you can contribute to the organization or company. An effective resume is a ticket to an interview.

## Top resume writing tips

- **Use the job description** or job posting as a reference to emphasize the most important experiences, skills and characteristics required for the position
- **Identify keywords** from the job description to create a positive impact and highlight your relevant traits. Be concise and make every word count
- **Provide hard evidence** (examples) of achievements so that the employer can picture you doing the work. Minimize space needed by using creative and precise wording
- **Choose action words** (verbs) to pinpoint your accomplishments. Don't just list your responsibilities: say what you did and how you did it
- **Look at resume templates** for ideas, but create your own to be distinctive and avoid formatting headaches
- **Proofread your resume:** first impressions are lasting impressions. Have someone proofread your resume for you. Employers will likely reject your resume for poor spelling and grammar
- **Talk to a career counsellor** at Career Services to make sure you are on the right track

## Formatting your resume

Resumes are reviewed differently by different employers, though there are some general considerations when thinking about your resume:

- There is no *perfect* resume or "right" way of writing a resume
- Employers might spend around 10-15 seconds in the first round of resume reviews
- Format your resume consistently in a simple way so it is easy to skim or scan
- Font size no smaller than 11. Margins no smaller than 0.5"
- Up to 2 pages in length. Some fields (Investment Banking for example) and organizations (Google) prefer 1 page resumes but the majority of the working world prefers 2 page resumes
- Avoid creative flair unless it's a relevant skill for the job (Marketing, graphic design)

In the following pages, you'll find a resume formula to describe common resume sections and some examples and considerations for writing some of these key sections.



## A RESUME FORMULA

### **Your Name**

Full address

Telephone & Email

**Objective:** Optional. If included it should be brief, logical and clearly stated. Match it to the job/program for which you are applying.

**Summary of Strengths:** A billboard, or personal profile that highlights your strengths. Targets essential skills of the job to which you are applying (see job description and company information). Gives reader a brief overview of your qualifications so they want to find out more.

*The first 20 seconds of your resume must catch the reader's attention.*

*Mention your most relevant skills and experience.*

**Education:** For after-grad jobs or those that are related to your studies, place education section after summary. High school is optional. Include clinical placements, thesis and/or relevant course work that is particularly suited to the employer's needs. Mention grades if noteworthy (80+, distinctions).

**Awards:** Include honours, citations, scholarships and other recognition you have received. Briefly describe criteria to receive award and include the \$ value if significant. If you are only including one or two awards consider putting them in the section with the education or experience to which they are related.

**Experience:** Organize your experience into separate sections indicated by headings. Relevancy of the experience and chronology are your two considerations in each section. You can list such things as employment, volunteer work, and extracurricular activities here, but ensure everything mentioned is relevant to the employer. In each experience section list entries in reverse chronological order. Use verbs to describe the work you did, highlighting the skills that you demonstrated or learned. Be consistent when formatting experience sections.

*Possible headings for these sections include: Employment, Related Experience, Community Service, Project Experience, Extra-Curricular Activities, etc. Also, consider a section to highlight experience using a skill (e.g. Leadership Experience) or in a field (e.g. Consulting Experience). Choose based on what will catch the employer's attention.*



**Interests:** This section can create a connection between you and the reader and provide information about the activities you engage in by choice. Note skills or accomplishments gained in the activity. Avoid abbreviations and acronyms. You may want to categorize interests for ease of reading (e.g. sports: baseball, hockey and soccer; arts: theatre, piano and sculpting). Keep this section short!

**References:** one line at the end of the resume: “Available on request” or “References attached”

*Additional headings:*

*Include additional sections such as publications, presentations, research, professional affiliations, certifications, and additional initiatives if they are relevant. For each section, list entries in **reverse chronological order** in point form, **consistent** with other parts of your resume. Ensure you only include relevant information.*

## **EXAMPLES**

Here are some examples from sections of resume from students. Details that you include in yours will vary based on your direction. Use your own judgment to decide what works best for you based on your knowledge of the work you want.

### **SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS**

- Strong engineering background including heavy equipment operation and machine shop experience
- Recognized for dedication to the promotion of health and physical activity – CAPHERD Award
- Competitive drive earned stroke position on rowing team
- Ability to communicate well one-on-one and in small group settings demonstrated in telephone sales work and public speaking activities
- Goal oriented and patient; follow through with directives efficiently in teams

*Why it Works: Shows essential connection between the candidate and the work.*

*Highlights the most notable themes contained in the rest of the resume.*

*Tips:*

- *Include a combination of the most relevant skills, qualities, knowledge, qualifications and accomplishments based on the job description and company profile*
- *Each skill, quality or accomplishment should be listed with examples or evidence of how you it was developed, demonstrated or recognized*



Work specific – skills, knowledge, proficiency with equipment/software, terminology, or naming the rules and regulations that are critical to understanding and doing your targeted work.

Transferable skills – skills and qualities that can be applied in a number of different settings on your resume such as leadership, communication, and teamwork.

Personal management – combination of attitudes and behaviours evident in the way you manage your daily living (e.g. attentive to details, motivated).

## EDUCATION

### **Bachelor of Science (Honours), Major: Biology**

2006 - Present

Queen's University, Kingston, ON

- Relevant courses completed: Community and Ecosystem Ecology, Evolutionary and Population Genetics
- Dean's Honour List with Distinction for overall average in top 3% of Biology Program (2008), graduation expected April 2010

#### *Tip:*

- *Highlight your education and the experiences that are related to the position and include how you gained it through relevant projects, awards, courses, research, and seminars.*

## RELATED EXPERIENCE

### **Peer Mentor (Volunteer)**

Sept. – Apr. 2008/09

Health, Counselling and Disability Services, Queen's University, Kingston, ON

- Coached and answered questions one-on-one with peers on organizing and managing time, study strategies and university life
- Demonstrated effective listening skills to gather information and determine needs
- Commended regularly for cheerful attitude; peers reported increased confidence and academic performance after interactions

#### *Tips:*

- *Use key words that create a positive impact and describe your strengths and values; describe what you did and how you did it. Every word counts*
- *Start each statement with a verb (action word)*
- *Consider your Paid work, Unpaid work, Learning and Leisure (P-U-L-L)*
- *Consider Verb + Task + Result when writing accomplishment statements*

**For more resume examples check out Queen's Best Resume Magazine!**

<https://careers.queensu.ca/students/tipsheets-career-resources/queens-best-resumes-magazine>



## Resume vs Curriculum Vitae (CV)

A resume is a brief document; a CV is longer. A resume can target work in any sector; a CV generally aims at work in academic or research sectors. A resume may include a “Summary of Strengths” section; a CV often includes extensive information on research publications, conference presentations and fellowships. For more in-depth information check out these resources in our [Career Information Area](#):

- *CV Handbook: A Curriculum Vitae Owner’s Manual* by Will Coghill-Behrends & Rebecca Anthony
- *How to Prepare your Curriculum Vitae* by Acy Jackson & Kathleen Geckeis

## Submitting your resume

Ensure that you completely understand the employer’s expectations about how application documents such as your resume should be submitted. If you need clarification reach out to the contact e-mail or phone number often provided in the job description. Here are some considerations to keep in mind when submitting your resume:

- If there is the option to upload your resume or fill in text boxes for an online application – do both!
- The title of your resume should include your name, the position, and type of document (e.g. Jane Smith Resume - Engineering Consultant Position #2018-45).
- Send resume and cover letters as a PDF or Word document.
- Pay attention to employer preferences about receiving your resume as an attachment or in the text of an e-mail?
- When prospecting in person, consider offering electronic and hard copies of your resume

## Want to learn more?

Check out our [Ramp Up Your Resume](#) workshop to learn how to use key strategies in your resume/CV to effectively highlight and target relevant unique skills, knowledge and experience.

Our Career Services Peers program offers one-on-one [Resume Review Appointments](#) to help you start, improve, and complete your resume.

Career Services offers [Drop-in Career Advising](#) to answer quick questions related to all aspects of your career planning and job search - Monday to Thursday from 1:30pm to 3:30pm.

For more in-depth explanations check the following resources in our [Career Information Area](#):

- *Queen’s Best Resumes and Cover Letters* by Queen’s Career Services
- *Best Canadian Resumes* by Sharon Graham
- *How to Prepare Your Curriculum Vitae* by Acy L. Jackson
- *Vault Guide to Resumes, Cover Letters and Interviewing* by Howard Leifman & Marcy Lerner