Resume Writing Guidelines

http://www.students.vcu.edu/careers/

Resume Content

Core Content Areas – The basic information to include in your resume.

Name and Contact Information
- Start with your name at the top of the resume, and use a slightly larger font size, caps and/or bold.
- Under your name, include your address, phone number with area code, and e-mail address.
- Make sure your e-mail address is professional and remove the hyperlink by right-clicking on it.
- Do not include salary history or your sex, age, race, marital status or other similar personal information.
- Include your name and page number on the top of additional resume pages.

Objective
- Your objective should inform the employer of your immediate employment goal and may include relevant skills.
- Keep it brief and specific.
- Avoid generic, vague expressions like "a progressive organization with opportunities for growth and development."
- If you are seeking several different kinds of positions, create an objective for each one. You may also consider changing your objective for each position you apply for, in which case it is very important to proofread each resume and keep records of which resume you submit to which employer.

Education
- If you are a current student or recent graduate, education should follow the objective.
- For each degree pursued or received, include the full name of the school, city and state, degree, and date (or anticipated date) of graduation. Do not include high school.
- List degrees in reverse chronological order, beginning with the most recent degree.
- Include GPA if it is at least a 3.0. You may also include the GPA within your major.

Experience
- You may include paid or unpaid experience, volunteer work, internships and co-op positions.
- Just as with education, list this information in reverse chronological order, beginning with the most recent position.
- For each position, include the company or organization name, city and state, your title, and dates (months and years). For each entry, be consistent in the order this information is listed, and the line that it is listed on. Avoid wrapping text to the next line.

> **Example:**
> Virginia Housing Development Authority, Richmond, VA   June 2004–August 2004
> Accounting Intern
>
> **Avoid:**
> Virginia Housing Development Authority, Richmond, VA, Accounting Intern, June 2004–
> August 2004

Experience, continued...

- Include a descriptive narrative of your experience, focusing on qualifications, skills, leadership abilities, and accomplishments. State all information positively and relate your skills and background to the job you are seeking. Give specific examples of your accomplishments. Quantify when possible to strengthen the impact of your message (e.g.: "supervised 12 employees," "managed a $2,000 budget").
- Start each bullet point with a strong, descriptive action verb (see action verbs list).
- Avoid complete sentences and personal pronouns.
- Use past tense verbs for previous positions, and present tense verbs for current positions.
- Avoid phrases such as "duties included" or "I was responsible for..."

Example:	Avoid:
• Trained new staff members	• My duties included training new staff members

Additional Content Areas

You may choose to include some of the following information to supplement the core content areas. You may also use some of these headings in place of the core headings described above. Choose the headings that accurately describe your experience and qualifications, and that are geared toward your objective.

Summary	Professional Experience	Honors/Awards	Volunteer Experience
Profile	Teaching Experience	Honors and Activities	Volunteer Activities
Areas of Expertise	Research Experience	Honors & Organizations	Civic Activities
Summary of Qualifications	Relevant Experience	Special Honors	Community Service
Achievements	Experience Summary	College Distinctions	Extracurricular Activities
Accomplishments	Experience Highlights		College Activities
	Career Highlights	Publications	Activities & Distinctions
Educational Highlights	Professional Background	Exhibits	Organizations, Activities
Educational Background	Military Experience	Research Interests	and Honors
Educational Preparation	Military Service	Conferences Attended	
Academic Background	Work Experience	Poster Presentations	Memberships
Academic Training	Additional Experience	Presentations	Professional Memberships
Education and Training	Part-Time & Summer Work		Professional Affiliations
Related Coursework	Career-Related Experiences	Skills	Professional Organizations
Course Projects	Internship and Co-op	Areas of Knowledge	University Involvement
Certifications/Licensure	Experiences	Capabilities	Leadership Experience
Endorsements		Technical Skills	Organizations and Activities
Study Abroad		Computer Skills	Interests
Scholarships and		Laboratory Skills	Travel Abroad
Financial Support		Language Competencies	Travel

What Not To Say:

"Accomplishments: Completed 11 years of high school"	"Objection: To utilize my skills in sales."
"Education: College, August 1880 – May 1984"	"Here are my qualifications for you to overlook."
"I am very detail-oreinted."	"I vow to fulfill the goals of the company as long as I live."
"I have a bachelorette degree in computers."	"Experience: Dealing with customers' conflicts that arouse."
"I worked as a Corporate Lesion."	"I am a rabid typist"
	-taken from Speedygrl.com

Three Basic Resume Formats *– Chronological, functional, and combination. The type of format you use depends on your particular background and the type of work you are seeking.*

Chronological Resume Format

A chronological resume emphasizes your work and/or experiences and organizes your information around dates. Chronological resumes are easy to follow because they highlight career growth and the names of employers. You should use the chronological format when your work or activity experience is strong and relevant to your job objective, when previous job titles are impressive and job history shows growth, and when you want to emphasize your accomplishments. Disadvantages of this format—your skills may not be highlighted and gaps in your career path may be more visible. List jobs or experiences in reverse chronological order with your most recent position listed first. See the example on page 6.

Functional Resume Format

A functional resume organizes information under functional headings that highlight your major areas of accomplishment or strength. Experiences and skills are organized to support your job objective and are not bound by employment dates. Titles and work history are de-emphasized. You may draw upon all sources of experience (employment, volunteer work, college activities, and coursework) to describe your skills.

Since the functional resume emphasizes capabilities and skills, it can be useful when you want to enter a different career field or illustrate your transferable skills. Although the functional resume takes more time and thought to prepare, it may be more effective than the chronological format if your work experiences have been limited or you wish to focus on special skills and abilities.

*Note: Employers usually do not prefer this format because it is hard to decipher where the candidate received his or her skills. Also, this format is more appropriate for someone who is returning to the workforce after some time.

Combination Resume Format

The combination resume includes aspects of both the chronological and functional formats. Work history and skills or accomplishments are emphasized equally. This format allows you to include a section about prior work experiences and a section on your functional and transferable skills.

General Resume Format Guidelines:

- Be brief. A one-page resume is adequate. Use two pages only if you have had extensive relevant experience.
- Employers typically skim a resume for 3 seconds, which is why format is so critical.
- Key words are critical in the resume. Try and use specific key words from the job description throughout the document. This is extremely helpful, especially when so many resumes are scanned.
- Be consistent with font style and size-audience and purpose appropriate.
- Margins should be at least .75 all the way around.
- Bullets are easy to skim, but take up more space.
- If you use tabs, make sure they line up vertically down the page.
- Avoid using dashes; use bullets instead.
- Use a laser printer whenever possible for printing. Otherwise, your ink may smudge more easily.
- Use CAPITAL LETTERS, bold print, or italics to highlight parts of your resume, but don't use them all at once.
- Use simple graphics such as lines to create a border. If your major is in the School of the Arts, you may want to use your resume to display your design skills or logo.
- Create a well-organized and visually appealing resume—appearance is just as important as content.
- Use your horizontal space. Don't let your resume get too vertical, which may cause it to run to two pages.
- Print your resume on resume paper-audience and purpose appropriate.
- Use matching paper for your cover letter, especially when using a paper color other than white.
- Indicate the type of employee you will be by how you have prepared your resume.

Scannable Resumes

- The "Electronic Revolution" has made it possible for employers to find job applicants faster and easier. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) systems look at images (resumes) to distinguish characters (letters and numbers) and then create a text file (ASCII). Artificial intelligence then "reads" the text and extracts the important information about the applicant. The purpose of a scannable resume is to match employers' needs to applicants who fulfill those needs quickly and thoroughly. Scannable resumes allow employers to search a database of resumes by using keywords, buzzwords, or descriptors to find matches or "hits." Ultimately, a computer-friendly resume is one that maximizes the computer's ability to read the applicant's resume and obtain hits. Finally, it is a good idea to have two versions of your resume—a scannable version and a traditional version—to take with you to an interview.

Scannable Resume Content Guidelines

- Use common headings such as: Objective, Education, Employment, Work History, Positions Held, Skills, Accomplishments, Summary, Highlights, Summary/Highlights of Qualifications, Publications, Licenses, Certifications, and Honors.
- Incorporate important nouns. The scanner will search for descriptive words (keywords) such as: writer, BA, accounting, manager, Spanish (language fluency), Public Relations Society of America, Arlington, VA, etc.
- Use concrete words, for example, it is better to use "managed a team of software engineers" instead of "responsible for managing, training..."
- Use common keywords to define your skills, experience, education, professional affiliations, etc.
- Use industry-specific jargon and acronyms. Minimize abbreviations to common ones like BA or BS. When you use acronyms, also spell out their meanings.
- Include specifics such as names of software packages (word processing, spreadsheets, etc.).
- When faxing a resume to be scanned, set the fax to "fine mode" so that the recipient receives a better quality.

Scannable Resume Format

- Use any standard resume format—chronological or combination.
- Format your name and address with your name on one line and the address on each line appearing below it.
- List multiple telephone numbers on separate lines.
- Use CAPITAL LETTERS for section headings.
- Do not use vertical or horizontal lines, shading, graphics, boxes, charts, or columns on your scannable resume.
- Use simple, non-decorative common fonts such as: Arial, Courier, Helvetica, Palatino, or Times New Roman.
- Use standard font sizes between 10 and 14 points. Avoid Times New Roman, 10 point.
- Do not use italics, underlining, shadows, or reverse (white letters on black background).
- Use white space, computers use it to recognize when one topic has ended and another has begun.
- Use one side of 8½ x 11" white paper.
- Use a laser printer or high-quality photocopier.
- Include your name on the top of each page if there are multiple pages of your scannable resume.
- Do not fold or staple.

When do you send a scannable resume?

If you:

- are applying to a large company
- are applying for an IT position
- know your resume will be scanned by a computer
- are applying to a company on-line through their website
- are e-mailing your resume
- are in doubt send both

Resume Outline

Name

Current Address: 1234 Street, Apt. B, City, St Zip, ( ) Telephone #
Permanent Address: 5678 Street, City, St Zip, ( ) Telephone #
Email Address, Cell Phone (be smart about this, have a professional message
& only answer it when you're ready to talk – not when you're running to class)

> Avoid having too much white space, but give the eye some room to rest.

OBJECTIVE:

Needs to be specific. You can have multiple copies of a resume where the only difference is your objective, but make sure you send the right one! Stress what skills and abilities you will bring to further the organization's mission (not what you will get out of it ... you'll definitely get something out of it, we just don't mention that).

EDUCATION:

Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
Bachelor of _____

Major: _____   Minor: _____   Graduation: _____ (Ex: May 2008 or December 2007)
Cumulative GPA: _____   Major GPA: _____   Minor GPA: _____ (only list GPA if it's above 3.0)

You can list another college you attended here, City, State
Major: _____   (Don't list high school. We know you're smart, you got into college.)

RELEVANT COURSEWORK:

• List class titles, not #s   • Bullets are easy on the eye   • If you can't fit 3 across, try 2 across
This is a great way to show what you've learned in class--esp. when you don't have work experience

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:

Organization, Title, City, State, MO/YR–MO/YR (or "present" if you're still doing this)
• Provide action verb: Always start with one
• Demonstrate different action verb: Vary your verbs, no "provided, provided, provided"
• Insert action verb: All past tense or all present tense for each section

Organization, Title, City, State, MO/YR–MO/YR (or "present" if you're still doing this)
• Use bullets: Allows the employer to read your resume faster
• Apply periods consistently: Put them at the end of each sentence or don't use them at all
• Give specific examples: Budgeted $1,000 for ...
• Quantify whenever possible: Supervised 12 employees ...

ACTIVITIES & HONORS:

• List organizations in which you have PARTICIPATED. Do not list activities for the sake of listing.
• Mention leadership positions. Employers want well-rounded students.
• Got an award? List the year
• Dean's List: Spring 2002, Spring 2003-Fall 2004
• Leave off high school unless it is INCREDIBLY relevant

COMPUTER SKILLS:

• Microsoft Word   • Excel   •PowerPoint

Remember, resumes are all about 1) Timeliness & 2) Relevance. You can adjust the order of your headings based on that. Always have someone proofread your resume. Print on resume paper. IF you go onto page 2 (and it better be for good reason) always put at least "Name, Page 2" in the top left corner so if page 2 gets separated, they know to whom it belongs.

Renita Ram

1234 Main Street • Richmond, VA 23228 • 804-555-1234
ramrr@vcu.edu • www.studentswebsite.com

Objective To obtain an internship in multimedia design/development to utilize and further develop my aesthetic sense and artistic skills.

Education **Bachelor of Science in Mass Communications**, expected May 2008
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
Major in Advertising   Minor in Media Studies
GPA: 3.4

Relevant Coursework: Multimedia for the Web, Interactive Media Authoring, Multimedia Writing, Web Communication, Multimedia Law, News Editing, Photojournalism, Scriptwriting, and Creative Nonfiction

Experience **Freelance Web Designer**, Siddall, Richmond, VA, 05/2001-Present
- Create engaging web presences for clients per their requests and requirements.
- Provide consulting services to evaluate and meet client needs.
- Forge and maintain client relationships.

Web Designer, Commonwealth Information Security Center, Richmond, VA, 05/2003-07/2004
- Designed and updated 3 corporate websites for nonprofit organization.
- Fabricated/manipulated web pages, graphics, & JavaScript in an office environment.
- Maintained organized documentation to ensure that application scripts and web pages were dynamic and readily updatable for future employees.
- Provided advice regarding graphic design and layout issues.
- Instructed people on use of Dreamweaver to edit HTML, as well as website organization.

Pool Manager, Atlantic Pool Service, Springfield, VA, 04/2000-05/2003
- Used communication and management skills to oversee 400-member swimming facility.
- Maintained organized records.
- Communicated with Board of Directors to ensure that the members' needs were met.
- Utilized lifeguard training and CPR training to save two lives during the 2003 season.

Computer Skills **Software:** Macromedia Flash, Director, Dreamweaver, Fireworks; Adobe Photoshop, ImageReady, Illustrator, Premiere, After Effects, Audition; Corel Bryce 5; Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint); Apple Final Cut Pro, Quicktime Pro; Digidesign Pro Tools

Operating Systems: Mac OS 9, X; Windows 95-XP; Dos; Linux

Languages: HTML; SQL; CSS; ActionScript; JavaScript; Director Lingo; VBA

Awards/ Honors **Broadcast Education Association (BEA)**
Best of Festival 2004/King Foundation Award Winner, Fixed Media in the "To Instruct/Train" category; Won $1000 top prize and attended BEA Festival in Las Vegas, NV
Dean's List (Spring 2002, Fall 2002, Spring 2003, Fall 2003)

RAUL A. RAM

ramra@vcuedu

Permanent Address:
1223 McMannus Drive
Lake, VA 25607
(804) 555-4321

Current Address:
123 Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23228
(804) 555-3336

OBJECTIVE
Seeking a management trainee position with XYZ Advertising International

EDUCATION
Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)
Bachelor of Science in Business, Major in Business Administration and Management
International Management track, Minor: Spanish

Richmond, VA
May 2004

RELATED COURSES

International Trade	International Accounting	International Finance
International Relations	International Marketing	International Management
Business Spanish	International Business Law	International Economics

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE
International Fraternity of Delta Sigma Phi, VCU
Committee Head of Interchapter Relations

Richmond, VA
September 2003–present

- Coordinate committee meetings and facilitate discussions
- Serve as liaison between local and regional chapters
- Arrange annual social, fundraising, and consulting events
- Organize a social gathering of two chapters for 60 people

Committee Head of Alumni Activities

February 2002–September 2003

- Maintained and updated records for more than 500 chapter alumni
- Delegated responsibilities to a committee of 5 members
- Compiled and assembled newsletter for printing
- Distributed newsletter to 500 alumni 3 times per semester

International Business Club, VCU
Newsletter Committee Head

Richmond, VA
September 2003–present

- Develop activities and assignments for committee members
- Write articles relating to topics and activities concerning international management majors
- Design and send quarterly newsletters to all international management majors

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE
Greater University Fund
Student Assistant

Richmond, VA
September 2003–present

- Handle all special customer service complaints and requests
- Make 30-40 phone calls per night to solicit donations

Food Lion, Inc.
Assistant Manager/Deli Clerk

Fredericksburg, VA
Summers 2000–2003

- Supervised 6 employees on various functions in deli/bakery department
- Increased productivity of staff by 15% in July 2002
- Recommended duties pertaining to maintenance and productivity on a monthly basis
- Kept a daily roster of all duties and activities to be performed in deli/bakery
- Placed 20-30 written customer orders for deli/bakery products weekly

*Jamie T. Student
1234 Broad Street, Apt. A, Richmond, VA 23284
(804) 555-5678, studentjt@vcu.edu

References

**(Dr./Mr./Ms./Mrs.) Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State Zip
(Area Code) Telephone #
E-mail address (if he/she has one)
***Relationship

*Use the same header on your references as you do on your resume for continuity. Also, if your reference page gets separated from your resume, then the employer has your contact information. If you don't have room for all of that, at least put your "Name, References" in the top, left-hand corner so they know who the references belong to if separated.

**(Dr./Mr./Ms./Mrs.) Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State Zip
(Area Code) Telephone #
E-mail address (if he/she has one)
***Relationship

**Always put some sort of descriptor here. There is nothing more embarrassing for a reference checker than insulting the person they are about to have a conversation with. Ex: "Hi, is Ms. Knight there?" "This is DOCTOR Knight." Do your homework and find out if they have their doctorate or whether they are married (for women). If you do not know if a woman is married, Ms. is appropriate and professional.

**(Dr./Mr./Ms./Mrs.) Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State Zip
(Area Code) Telephone #
E-mail address (if he/she has one)
***Relationship

***Optional. This just gives the person checking your references a feel for who he or she is about to speak to when calling.
    Ex: Mr. Jones supervised me while I worked at #1 Sales Company.
    Ex: Dr. Smith taught me Chemistry 101 & Biology 302. He has known me for two years.

Important Reminders about References:

1. Most organizations want 3-5 references. You would use the same outline for each reference as shown above.

2. Print your reference page on resume paper too. You want your cover letter, resume, references and an application (if applicable) all to match.

3. ALWAYS ask someone to be a reference ahead of time. If someone calls that person out of the blue, he or she may be upset with you and give you a poor reference. He or she could also be upset because he or she was not more prepared to speak about your skills and abilities. So always ask first.

4. Avoid using "character" references. These are people like a sports coach from high school, someone from your place of worship, a parent, or a family friend. These are okay if the organization needs to check out your character (Ex: The FBI, the police, law enforcement positions, etc.), but for the most part, organizations want professional references – people who can speak about what you are like at work or in class. So think of supervisors, co-workers, professors you have a good relationship with, etc.

5. After you have an updated copy of your resume, offer to send an e-copy or drop off a hard copy to each of your references. By sending them a copy of your resume, you enable them to stay up-to-date with what you've been up to and it also helps them to better speak to your abilities.

Resume Action Verbs

Management/ Leadership Skills				Organizational Skills		
administered	confronted	evaluated	explained	influenced	budgeted	listened
assigned	consulted	examined	facilitated	insured	calculated	logged
attained	contacted	extracted	guided	mentored	computed	manipulated
chaired	convinced	formulated	individualized	provided	developed	maximized
consolidated	cooperated	gathered	instructed	referred	estimated	merchandised
contracted	corresponded	identified	motivated	rehabilitated	forecasted	met
coordinated	defined	interpreted	set goals	simplified	managed	minimized
decided	directed	interviewed	stimulated	supplied	marked	modified
delegated	drafted	invented	taught	supported	planned	navigated
developed	drew up	investigated	trained	volunteered	projected	negotiated
directed	edited	located	transmitted		reconciled	obtained
eliminated	elicited	measured	tutored	**Organizational**	reduced	perceived
enhanced	explained	organized		**Skills**	researched	perfected
enforced	expressed	researched	**Creative Skills**	approved		pioneered
established	formulated	reviewed	acted	arranged	**More Verbs**	preserved
evaluated	influenced	solved	authored	cataloged	accomplished	printed
executed	interpreted	summarized	composed	categorized	achieved	promoted
generated	interviewed	surveyed	conceptualized	charted	acknowledged	proofread
headed	judged	systematized	created	classified	adjusted	proposed
hired	lectured	tested	decorated	coded	affected	protected
improved	marketed		designed	collected	anticipated	purchased
incorporated	mediated	**Technical**	directed	compiled	approached	quoted
increased	moderated	**Skills**	displayed	corresponded	asserted	ran
inspected	negotiated	applied	entertained	detailed	assessed	raised
instituted	observed	assembled	fashioned	distributed	assisted	read
led	participated	built	formulated	filed	attended	realized
managed	persuaded	calculated	founded	generated	conceived	received
motivated	presented	conserved	illustrated	implemented	conciliated	rectified
organized	promoted	constructed	introduced	inspected	contributed	redesigned
oversaw	publicized	designed	invented	maintained	controlled	reduced
planned	reconciled	determined	made	monitored	delivered	related
presided	recruited	developed	modeled	operated	detected	remodeled
prioritized	referred	installed	originated	organized	devised	rendered
produced	reported	maintained	performed	prepared	dispensed	renewed
recommended	resolved	operated	photographed	processed	effected	repaired
reorganized	responded	programmed	planned	provided	electrified	represented
reviewed	spoke	resolved	revised	recorded	endured	reserved
scheduled	suggested	specialized	shaped	reviewed	enlisted	resolved
strengthened	summarized	upgraded		scheduled	exchanged	scanned
supervised	synthesized		**Helping Skills**	sorted	expanded	screened
	talked	**Teaching**	advocated	submitted	expedited	selected
Communication	translated	**Skills**	aided	standardized	experienced	served
Skills	wrote	adapted	answered	systemized	explored	sketched
addressed		advised	cared for	updated	followed	sold
advertised	**Research**	arranged	clarified	validated	found	sparked
arranged	**Skills**	clarified	counseled	verified	governed	spearheaded
collaborated	analyzed	communicated	diagnosed		handled	staffed
communicated	clarified	conducted	educated	**Financial**	improved	studied
composed	collected	coordinated	encouraged	**Skills**	informed	succeeded
condensed	compared	critiqued	facilitated	analyzed	initiated	traveled
	conducted	developed	familiarized	appraised	innovated	treated
	determined	enabled	furthered	audited	integrated	unified
	disproved	evaluated	helped	balanced	learned	utilized