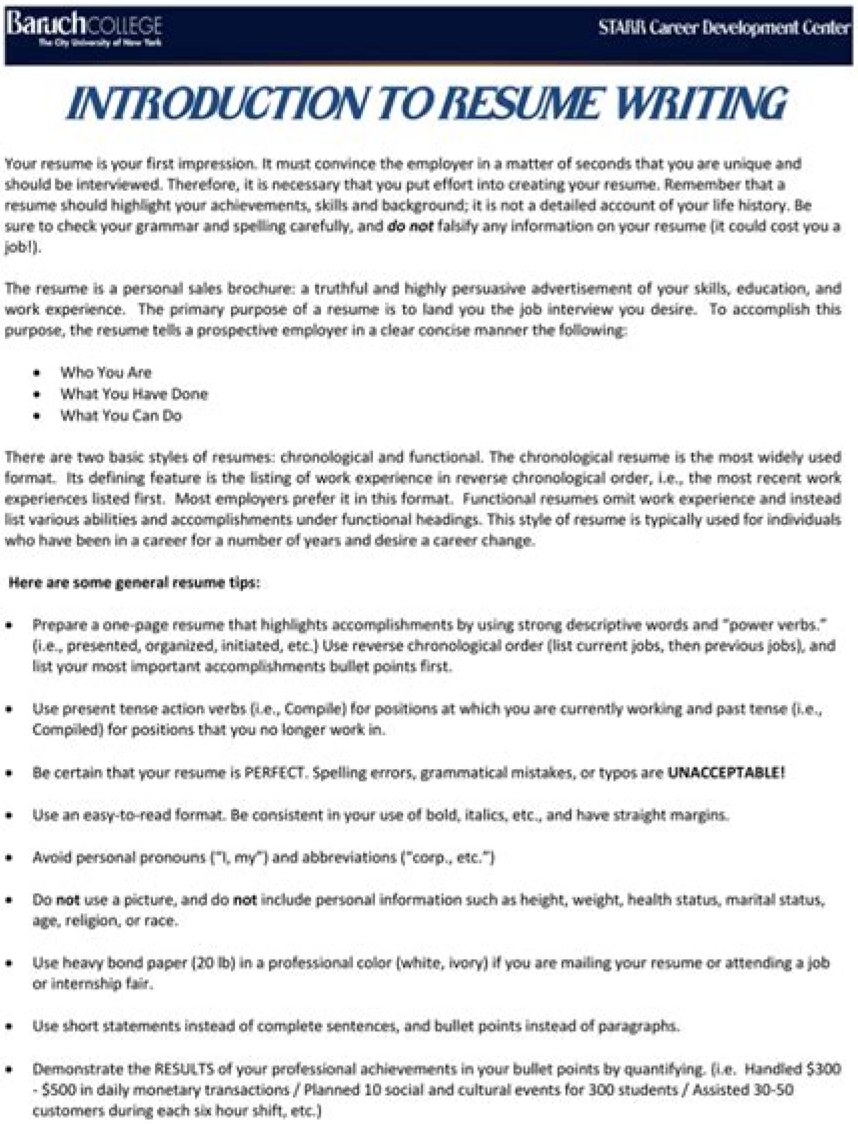
Introduction To Resume Writing



Baruch COLLEGE
The City University of New York

STARR Career Development Center

INTRODUCTION TO RESUME WRITING

Your resume is your first impression. It must convince the employer in a matter of seconds that you are unique and should be interviewed. Therefore, it is necessary that you put effort into creating your resume. Remember that a resume should highlight your achievements, skills and background; it is not a detailed account of your life history. Be sure to check your grammar and spelling carefully, and ***do not*** falsify any information on your resume (it could cost you a job!).

The resume is a personal sales brochure: a truthful and highly persuasive advertisement of your skills, education, and work experience. The primary purpose of a resume is to land you the job interview you desire. To accomplish this purpose, the resume tells a prospective employer in a clear concise manner the following:

- Who You Are
- What You Have Done
- What You Can Do

There are two basic styles of resumes: chronological and functional. The chronological resume is the most widely used format. Its defining feature is the listing of work experience in reverse chronological order, i.e., the most recent work experiences listed first. Most employers prefer it in this format. Functional resumes omit work experience and instead list various abilities and accomplishments under functional headings. This style of resume is typically used for individuals who have been in a career for a number of years and desire a career change.

Here are some general resume tips:

- Prepare a one-page resume that highlights accomplishments by using strong descriptive words and "power verbs." (i.e., presented, organized, initiated, etc.) Use reverse chronological order (list current jobs, then previous jobs), and list your most important accomplishments bullet points first.
- Use present tense action verbs (i.e., Compile) for positions at which you are currently working and past tense (i.e., Compiled) for positions that you no longer work in.
- Be certain that your resume is PERFECT. Spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, or typos are **UNACCEPTABLE!**
- Use an easy-to-read format. Be consistent in your use of bold, italics, etc., and have straight margins.
- Avoid personal pronouns ("I, my") and abbreviations ("corp., etc.")
- Do **not** use a picture, and do **not** include personal information such as height, weight, health status, marital status, age, religion, or race.
- Use heavy bond paper (20 lb) in a professional color (white, ivory) if you are mailing your resume or attending a job or internship fair.
- Use short statements instead of complete sentences, and bullet points instead of paragraphs.
- Demonstrate the RESULTS of your professional achievements in your bullet points by quantifying. (i.e. Handled $300 - $500 in daily monetary transactions / Planned 10 social and cultural events for 300 students / Assisted 30-50 customers during each six hour shift, etc.)

Introduction to resume writing is a crucial step for anyone entering or re-entering the job market. A well-crafted resume serves as a personal marketing tool that highlights your skills, experiences, and accomplishments to prospective employers. In today's competitive job landscape, understanding the fundamentals of effective resume writing can give you a significant edge. This article will explore the essential components of a resume, common mistakes to avoid, and tips for tailoring your resume to specific job opportunities.

Understanding the Purpose of a Resume

A resume is more than just a list of your previous jobs; it is a strategic document designed to showcase your qualifications and persuade hiring managers to consider you for a position. Here are some key purposes of a resume:

- **Highlighting Skills and Experiences:** Your resume should clearly outline your professional skills and relevant experiences that align with the job you are applying for.
- **Providing a Snapshot:** A resume offers a quick overview of your career history, allowing employers to assess your suitability for a role at a glance.
- **Creating First Impressions:** A well-organized and visually appealing resume can create a positive first impression, setting the tone for the rest of your application process.

Key Components of a Resume

Understanding the essential components of a resume is crucial to creating a document that effectively communicates your qualifications. Here are the main sections that should be included:

1. Contact Information

Your resume should start with your name and contact information, including:

- Full name
- Phone number
- Email address
- LinkedIn profile URL (optional)
- City and state (optional)

2. Professional Summary or Objective

This section provides a brief overview of your career goals and what you bring to the table. A professional summary is generally recommended for those with experience, while a career objective may be more appropriate for entry-level candidates.

3. Work Experience

The work experience section is often the most critical part of your resume. Here’s how to structure it:

- **Job Title:** Clearly state your position.
- **Company Name:** Include the name of the organization you worked for.
- **Dates of Employment:** Specify the duration of your employment.
- **Responsibilities and Achievements:** Use bullet points to describe your key responsibilities and achievements in each role, quantifying your accomplishments when possible.

4. Education

Your education section should include:

- The degree you obtained
- The institution you attended
- Graduation date (or expected graduation date)
- Relevant coursework or honors (if applicable)

5. Skills

List relevant skills that are applicable to the role you are seeking. This can include technical skills, soft skills, and any certifications you may have earned.

6. Additional Sections

Depending on your background, you may want to include additional sections such as:

- Certifications and licenses
- Volunteer experience
- Professional affiliations
- Languages spoken

Common Resume Writing Mistakes to Avoid

Even the most experienced job seekers can make mistakes when writing their resumes. Here are some common pitfalls to avoid:

1. Using a Generic Template

While templates can provide a helpful starting point, avoid using a one-size-fits-all approach. Tailor your resume to match the specific job description and company culture.

2. Including Irrelevant Information

Focus on including information that is relevant to the position you are applying for. Avoid adding unrelated job experiences, hobbies, or personal information that does not contribute to your qualifications.

3. Overloading with Jargon

While it's essential to demonstrate your expertise, using excessive industry jargon can alienate hiring managers who may not be familiar with specific terms. Keep language clear and accessible.

4. Making It Too Long

Most hiring managers prefer concise resumes. Aim for one page if you have less than ten years of experience, and no more than two pages for more extensive work histories.

5. Neglecting Formatting

A visually appealing and well-organized resume is easier to read. Use consistent formatting, including font size and style, bullet points, and spacing. Avoid overly elaborate designs that may distract from the content.

Tips for Tailoring Your Resume

To stand out in a crowded job market, customizing your resume for each application is vital. Here are some effective strategies:

1. Analyze the Job Description

Carefully read the job posting and identify the key skills and qualifications the employer is seeking. Highlight these in your resume to demonstrate your fit for the role.

2. Use Keywords

Incorporate relevant keywords from the job description into your resume. Many companies use applicant tracking systems (ATS) to screen resumes, and using the right keywords can improve your chances of being selected for an interview.

3. Showcase Relevant Achievements

Emphasize accomplishments that align with the job you’re applying for. Use metrics or specific examples to illustrate your impact in previous roles.

4. Keep It Updated

Regularly update your resume to reflect new skills, experiences, or accomplishments. An up-to-date resume ensures that you are always prepared for new opportunities.

Conclusion

Introduction to resume writing is a foundational step in navigating the job market successfully. By understanding the key components of a resume, avoiding common pitfalls, and tailoring your document to specific job opportunities, you can enhance your chances of landing interviews and securing job offers. Whether you are a seasoned professional or just starting, investing time in crafting a compelling resume is essential for your career advancement. Take the time to refine your resume, and you will find yourself better positioned in the competitive job landscape.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of a resume?

The purpose of a resume is to summarize your skills, experience, and qualifications to potential employers, helping you secure an interview.

What are the key components of a resume?

Key components of a resume include contact information, a summary or objective statement, work experience, education, skills, and sometimes additional sections like certifications or volunteer work.

How long should a resume be?

A resume should typically be one page long for early career professionals and can extend to two pages for those with extensive experience or relevant qualifications.

What format should a resume follow?

Resumes can follow various formats, including chronological, functional, or combination formats, depending on your work history and the job you are applying for.

How do I tailor my resume for a specific job?

To tailor your resume, carefully read the job description, highlight relevant experiences and skills, and use keywords from the posting to align your resume with the employer's needs.

Should I include a summary statement on my resume?

Including a summary statement is beneficial as it provides a brief overview of your qualifications and career goals, helping to capture the employer's attention quickly.

What common mistakes should I avoid in resume writing?

Common mistakes to avoid include typos or grammatical errors, using an unprofessional email address, including irrelevant information, and failing to quantify achievements.

Is it necessary to include references on my resume?

It's generally not necessary to include references on your resume. Instead, you can state 'References available upon request' and provide them later in the hiring process.

How often should I update my resume?

You should update your resume regularly, ideally every six months or whenever you acquire new skills, experiences, or accomplishments that are relevant to your career goals.

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Introduction To Resume Writing

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