How to write a competitive professional resume

The primary job of a resume is to get you an interview! It is basically your personal highlight reel and an opportunity to show your attention-to-detail. Thus it needs to be clear, concise and compelling in order to catch an employer's attention and interest them in talking to you.

Essential content of a resume

Employers are interested in skills you've honed in a variety of settings, not only in the paid workplace. This includes community service/volunteerism, internships, academic projects/research, part-time jobs that may have given you skills employers seek. Think about what you did in every experience you have had and then think about potential outcomes for the work you performed. Your resume should contain the following:

- Contact information: Name, address (current and permanent), phone, email address (preferably the one you check most often).
- Education: Starting with your college (most recent first) including any study abroad experience. Relevant course work, tailored to each opportunity to which you are applying, can help the employer identify your interests. Inclusion of High School is optional.
- Relevant Experience: Include any work, volunteer, or project experience that is relevant to the job for which you're applying. It does not matter whether the experience you want to include is a paid position! Note: this category could also be named according to its contents, i.e. Research Experience, Writing Experience, etc.
- Other experience: For valuable experience that is not particularly relevant to your current job search. Can be titled "Additional Experience" as a catch-all.
- Skills: Include Computer, Foreign Language (specify language proficiency), and specialise (i.e. Lab) skills.
- Note about GPA: If you choose to calculate your GPA, you may include it on your RESUME, however in most cases it is not required.

On the other hand, the following should not be on your resume.

- Personal information (height, weight, marital status, age, etc.)
- First person references, e.g. "I represented my DUG at the Brown Activities Fair"
- References or tag line "References available upon request"
- Entries starting with "responsibilities (or duties) included"
- Acronyms that are not spelt out
- An objective: It takes up valuable space so remove it

The right format

Your resume is the employer's first impression of you! The overall look and feel of the document can make a difference with regards to getting an interview. The resume you used to apply to university may be quite different from the resume you will use to apply to internships and jobs. Rather than a laundry list of accomplishments, your professional resume should be a focused document with specific information divided into appropriate categories.

- Experiences should be listed in reverse chronological order within each section, i.e. most current is first.
- While you are still at university, you should list education first.
- If mailing, use bonded paper (white or off white). Use for both your resume and cover letter.
- Be consistent in format and content.
- Use a standard, easy to read font (Times New Roman, Garamond, Veranda, Helvetica, Arial, etc.) between 10-12 point in size.
- Use spacing, underlines, italics, bullets, bold, capitalisation, etc. for effects (don't overdo it!)
- Make sure your resume includes "white space" and is visually balanced on a page.

There are many different resume formats and no layout is the "right" format. Please check with your ACN associate if you have any questions or would like feedback on your resume. Check out the examples given in this packet, as well as the resume samples on our webpage, and in the Career Library for ideas.

Describing your experiences

- <u>Begin each sentence with an action verb</u> (see this list for ideas) to highlight the impact you made in each project.
- <u>Emphasise accomplishments</u> and think about skills you acquired (transferable skills!) in each experience. Include goals of particular tasks and results (outcomes) where applicable. A major trap many people fall for is listing their job descriptions. Instead, craft an accomplishment statement using the X-Y-Z format (*Accomplished [X] as measured by [Y], by doing [Z]*). The Y enables you to quantify your results and the Z allows you demonstrate a different skill set of yours with each bullet point
- <u>Tailor your experience to each job listing</u> (i.e. if the job listing to which you are applying mentions a specific skill that you honed in a particular experience, make sure to include it). Whatever format you decide to use, make it READABLE to the employer.
- <u>Finally, keep it brief</u>: Use short-sentences, eliminate unnecessary details & technical terms. Each bullet should NOT exceed 2 lines and overall your resume should fit within 1 page.

The right way to submit your resume

- If you are submitting to your ACN associate you should submit it as a word document attached to an email. That way they can easily make any necessary edits. They will seal it in PDF before sending it to any partner organisations.
- If you are submitting directly to an organisation then you should always submit it as a PDF. That way no one can edit or change your work.