

**School of International and Public Affairs  
Columbia University  
Office of Career Services**

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## **WRITING YOUR RESUME**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the resume is to describe who you are, where you have been and where you are heading. The skills and qualities presented should illustrate that you are appropriate for the position for which you are applying. If the resume gets you the interview, it has been successful.

The style, format and content of a resume are your decisions. Suggested guidelines are not rules. The resume is your personal calling card, and should reflect who you are. Since it is the employer's first impression of you, it should be written with a great deal of thought and care.

### **HOW TO GET STARTED**

Think about the skills you have and reflect on your career goals. Those interests should dictate what you emphasize in your resume. Then, make an outline of all your educational and work experiences. At this point, you can decide what to include and you can begin to focus your resume. Employers do not read resumes; they skim them. So be sure to organize your resume so it is easy for the employer to assess your strengths.

### **CONTENT**

The following sections should be included in your resume, in the order listed below.

***Name, Address, Phone, Email-*** So the employer can easily reach you.

***Education-*** Graduate school first, then undergraduate school. Include the name and location of the school, degree received ( e.g. Master of International Affairs), concentration, and relevant courses, scholarships, study abroad and activities.

***Experience-***This can include paid and non-paid positions. Include those experiences which are relevant to the positions for which you are applying. The positions should be listed in reverse chronological order, with the most recent experiences listed first. For each entry, include the following: name of the organization, department or division, dates of employment, location, position, and job description. Job descriptions should be about one paragraph long, using 3-5 phrases to describe your responsibilities and accomplishments. Present jobs should be in the present tense and previous jobs in the past tense. Avoid phrases like "responsibilities included." Use action-oriented verbs and numbers to make each description as specific and concise as possible.

***Languages-*** List languages and degree of fluency ( i.e. fluent or proficient in, working knowledge of, familiar with). Be prepared to be interviewed in a language in which you claim fluency.

**Computer Skills-** Include word processing and spreadsheet software knowledge. The following sections are optional, and should be used only if they enhance your resume:

**Interests/Activities-** List unusual activities, or interests relevant to your career, or that show leadership ability.

**Publications-** List articles that you have written, especially if applying for research-oriented or academic jobs.

**Memberships-** Include to demonstrate commitment to your chosen profession.

**Citizenship-** Include if it would not otherwise be apparent to an employer that you are authorized to work in that country.

**Honors/Awards-** These may be included in a separate category or in your Education section.

## **FORMAT/PRESENTATION**

It is very important that your resume be easy to read and look professional. The following factors should be considered.

**Margins-** Can vary, but should be a minimum of .5" on all sides so the resume does not look crowded.

**Font-** Times Roman, 12 pitch is easy to read.

**Dates of employment-** Can be in the body of the resume or in the margins.

**Name, Address-** Can be right justified, left justified or center on the top of the page.

**Length-** Preferably one page, but can be 2 pages if you have 7 or more years of experience. If two pages, put your name on top of the second page in case the two pages become separated.

**Proofread-** The resume carefully for spelling, grammar, typographical errors, and consistent formatting. Use spellcheck, but also have your resume reviewed by at least two other people.

**Paper-** Use heavy white or off-white bond paper for a professional appearance.

**Highlight-** Make the important points stand out by highlighting. Once you have decided what you want to highlight, maintain consistency throughout the resume (e.g. highlight all names of employers).

**Spacing-** Double space between categories, single space within categories so the resume will not look crowded.

**Abbreviations-** Should not be used. Write everything out in full so it is easy to read.