

A resume is a common and essential document for professional applications. It is also a living document: a writer constantly updates both its content and its format when applying for new positions or documenting additional education and experience. Although there is no strict formula for creating resumes, this handout provides basic principles to help writers produce effective professional documents.

## Purpose

Resumes are brief overviews of your education, skills, and experience that provide a first impression to potential employers and help you gain an interview. The best resumes highlight your individual strengths and connect them to a specific position or program. They are typically no more than 1-2 pages in length.

## Audience

The single best thing you can do in writing your resume is to **learn about your audience**. The more you know about what employers are looking for, the better you can grab their attention by showcasing the skills and experience they want to see. Familiarize yourself with resumes from your field to mirror standard conventions for content and document design and tailor your resume accordingly.

## Content and Organization

At the top of the first page, provide your contact information, including a professional email address. Your education or experience should also feature prominently near the beginning of your resume. In your education section, include the schools you have attended and the dates you earned or anticipate earning degrees. In your experience section, consider including all relevant experience, which includes both paid and unpaid work.

The remainder of the document should be divided into sections that help categorize your qualifications and experience. Be sure to provide applicable details like venues, dates, titles, and responsibilities. Consider briefly describing any awards or organizations that may be unfamiliar to readers. Depending on your field, your resume may include some combination of sections like these:

- Education
- Work Experience
- Honors and Awards
- Scholarships
- Professional Affiliations
- Software Skills
- Language Skills
- Volunteer Experience
- Publications

While many documents provide information in reverse chronological order, remember that the order of your content matters—the closer to the beginning, the more emphasis. As you gain experience and your resume grows longer, edit your resume to include only the most relevant information. As your resume develops, you might also choose to add an *executive summary* (an introductory section that highlights your greatest or most relevant accomplishments).

As you consider what content to add to your resume, generally avoid information that indicates your political or religious affiliations or explicitly reveals age, race, ethnicity, or marital or family status. Avoid including outdated experiences, including high school experience, unless it is the only experience you have or is very applicable.

As you finalize the content of your resume, have others review your work and provide feedback. Proofread to ensure consistency and avoid small errors. Before submitting a tailored copy of your resume, save it as a PDF to keep the format from changing, and use an appropriate, identifying title.

## Formatting

The format of your resume is critical and should enhance the visual appeal of the document as well as the readability. While templates exist, customize your work to make sure you present yourself most effectively and set yourself apart from other applicants or professionals.

**Font:** Choose fonts that are easy to read, whether they be **sans-serif** (like Arial, Helvetica) or **serif** (like Verdana, Times). For cohesion and clarity, do not use more than a couple different types of fonts. Your name is the most important information on your resume and should be in the largest font.

**Margins:** Remember, you can adjust the margins to conserve space, shape the text, or maintain desired length.

**Consistency:** Be consistent in spacing, format, and content. Remember to make sure verbs are parallel. (Use present tense for current experience and past tense for past experience.)

**Bullets:** Use bullets in subsections, especially with lists. Be concise, avoid complete sentences, and use active verbs to start phrases in bulleted sections and include measurable outcomes.

**Spacing:** Use lines or spaces to separate sections from each other and to provide white space: this makes your document more visually appealing. Use indentations to create space around the body text. Make your information look complete without appearing crowded.

**Headings:** Use headings to separate the sections of your document and increase the readability of your document. Be sure headings visually stand out from the text by varying font size and style (**bold**, CAPS, *italics*, font size). Limit the number of sections by carefully categorizing content.

**Bold:** Use boldface sparingly, only to make headings more visually distinct, or, even more rarely, to emphasize things of paramount importance.

**Optional:** When appropriate, consider using readable color to make your document more appealing. Additional design elements or formats may be acceptable (or even expected) in creative fields.

*For more resume examples, visit the University Career Services website.*

**Anthony Smith**  
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**EDUCATION**  
Brigham Young University, Provo, UT *Apr 2020*  
Bachelor of Arts, Political Science  
Major GPA: 3.84

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**EXPERIENCE**

**RESEARCH ASSISTANT** *Jan 2019–Present*  
BYU Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy *Provo, UT*

- Design and propose team research projects for faculty approval
- Gather, organize, and analyze data sets to address demographic voting trends
- Compile findings and co-author papers with research professionals

**LAW-RELATED EDUCATION INTERN** *Aug 2018–Dec 2018*  
The Constitutional Sources Project (ConSource) *Washington, D.C.*

- Researched Supreme Court cases, archival records, and relevant case law
- Simplified and integrated complex legal principles into high school educational materials
- Conducted innovative data-gathering, resulting in a 100% increase in affiliate database entries

**MEDIA WRITER** *Jan 2018–Present*  
The American Land Council *South Jordan, UT*

- Create weekly opinion editorials intended for national publication
- Manage schedule for public relations interactions with political supporters
- Conduct interviews to gather narrative content for future publications

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**PUBLICATIONS**  
“Evening the Scales: Truly Representative Voting Districts.” Manuscript in Preparation.  
“Voter Gender Identification and Caucus Turnout.” *Political Science in America*. Ed. Ron Stevenson. 60.3 (2016): 649-63.

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**PRESENTATIONS**  
“University Involvement in Local Elections.” Poli Sci Student Leadership Retreat, Las Vegas, NV. USA, 2017.

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**AWARDS**  
Academic Grant. College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences, Brigham Young University. 2018.  
Second Place Prize for Student Submissions. *BYU Political Review*. 2017.

*Annotations:* Lines connect the text on the left to the corresponding sections in the resume: 'Font' points to the name; 'Margins' points to the contact info; 'Consistency' points to the Education section; 'Bullets' points to the Research Assistant section; 'Spacing' points to the Media Writer section; 'Headings' points to the Education section; 'Bold' points to the name; 'Optional' points to the Research Assistant section.