PennState Behrend Academic and Career Planning Center

Guide to Building Your Resume

Your resume is often the first contact that you have with an employer. The purpose of your resume is to provide a summary of the skills, abilities, accomplishments, and previous experiences that make you a qualified candidate for that position. If your resume is well written and organized, it can open the door for an interview, whereas a poorly written and disorganized resume will not. Review our sample resumes for inspiration.

RESUME SECTIONS

Resumes are extremely flexible and should be adapted to highlight your unique knowledge, skills, accomplishments, and abilities. Use the following headings as a guideline to customize your resume:

Contact Information

- Include formal name, phone number, address, and appropriate email at the top of your resume

Objective (Optional)

- If used, be sure to address the type of position and organization you are seeking as well as unique skills or experiences that you have

Summary of Qualifications (Optional)

- 1-3 concise statements that focus on significant accomplishments or skills gained in your field

Education

- List formal degree title, areas of emphasis, minor(s) and certification(s), and graduation month and year
- Penn State Behrend (used regionally) or The Pennsylvania State University, Erie, PA (used nationally)
- Include overall or major GPA if they are 2.70 or higher; use two decimals for GPA and do not round

Work/Internship Experience (Label with most relevant descriptor: Customer Service, Business or Engineering)

- Provide details of accomplishments, results, and responsibilities; not just a vague list of duties
- List your most relevant skills/abilities to the position you are seeking first
- Whenever possible, quantify accomplishments like attendance, percentages, and dollar amounts

Leadership & Campus/Community Involvement

- List your title/role and organization name
- Highlight college and professional organization memberships and leadership experiences

Relevant Coursework/Projects/Research Experience

- Focus on industry-related projects, higher level courses, and/or research project experiences
- Provide project/course name and description of skills you utilized and/or results that you accomplished

Honors & Scholarships

- Include scholarships, honors, and awards (combine with another section if you have limited honors)

Volunteer Experience

- Showcase volunteer experiences that relate to the position you are seeking; include dates and results

Skills

- Highlight software, language, and/or technical skills related to your industry; list in order of relevance

BULLET CONSTRUCTION

Provide details of your experiences to connect what you have previously done to what you want to do in your next position. Don't simply list what you have done; utilize the method below to display your knowledge, skills, abilities, and achievements in your bulleted sections.

Your bullets should answer the following questions:

- Why did you do this activity? What was the outcome?
- What did you learn/gain/improve while performing the activity?
- What specific role did you take within a group and what tasks did you perform?
- If the activity is common, what about your experience sets you apart from others?

When creating your bullets, use the formula: <u>ACTION + SKILL + CONTEXT.</u>

- Start each bullet with an action verb (i.e. coordinated, designed, implemented)
    - For experiences that have ended, use the past tense of the action verb
    - For current experiences, use the present tense
- Be specific with the skill that you implemented or cultivated in that activity
- Whenever possible, quantify your bullets by adding numerical outcomes and add results
- Incorporate context (background information) to give the employer a better understanding your accomplishments and skills in various activities or settings

Academic/Project Example:

Instead of this… • Worked with a team of five in a group

Try this… • Partnered with five teammates to analyze data and present findings to an audience of 20

Work Experience Example:

Instead of this… • Sold merchandise to customers

Try this… • Analyzed customers' needs and recommended products while bolstering sales by 15%

RESUME TIPS

1. Create a master resume (Resume-All). Track all work, volunteer, club, and academic experiences on one document. Update your master resume each semester as you complete new projects and experiences.

2. Your resume should be one full page. Use margins between ½ to 1 inch and a font size within 10-12 for the body of the resume. Make it clean and easy to read.

3. Tailor your resume for each position/company. Use the job description or company website to find keywords that the employer is most interested in; be sure to highlight the related skills you possess in your resume.

4. Consistency is key. Resumes are extremely flexible. In order to make your resume easy to read, make sure to format all sections consistently. Consider balancing text with white space to utilize the entire page.

5. Don't use a template. Create your own original formatting to make your resume standout.

6. Always send your resume with a cover letter. Just like a resume, cover letters should be customized for each position. They set you apart from other candidates and showcase your interest and relevant skills.

7. Don't use full sentences. Recruiters spend about 15 seconds scanning a resume for the first time. If your skills and experiences don't jump out, you might not be considered. Short phrases are easier to read and save space.

8. Proofread! Proofread! Proofread! Come to the ACPC to have your resume(s) reviewed.