



# Writing an Effective Resume

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# Writing an Effective Resume

Your resume is your greatest marketing tool. A well-written resume enables you to present your qualifications to potential employers, and get an interview.

Three types of resumes are outlined below. Each format serves a distinct purpose.

Choose the format that fits with the position you are applying for, the amount of relevant experiences you have, and the employer's preference.

## Chronological

Professional interviewers are most familiar with this format.  
Easiest to prepare since content is structured by familiar dates, titles, and companies.  
Used where you have had a steady employment record (without much job hopping)  
Provides interviewer with a guide for discussing your work experience.

## Functional

Stresses selected skill areas which are marketable or in demand.  
Helps camouflage a spotty employment record.  
Allows the applicant to emphasize professional growth.

## Combination

Can emphasize most relevant skills and abilities.  
Gaps in employment can be de-emphasized.  
Format can be varied to highlight functional descriptions and play down chronology.

## Functional Resume Disadvantages

Starkly reveals unemployment gaps.

If you don't have a consistent employment record, you may wish to use another format. It may put undesired emphasis on job areas that you want to minimize.

Skill areas are difficult to highlight.

Makes some employers suspicious. They may want additional work history.

Doesn't allow you to highlight companies or organizations for which you have worked.

This format takes longer to read, and an employer can lose interest unless it is succinctly written and attractively designed.

## ***Chronological Resume***

This is the most widely accepted resume format and the easiest to write. This format illustrates your work experience by listing your job titles and responsibilities from your most recent position to your first job. It is sometimes appropriate to list only positions directly related to the desired job. If you have many years of experience, you need only list the last ten years of employment history. Individuals with substantial, progressively responsible work histories often prefer this type of resume.

## Sample - TARGETED CHRONOLOGICAL FORMAT

RAY I. COPPER

7600 Glover Road  
Langley, BC V1Y 1T1  
604-888-7511

youremail@email.com

EDUCATION BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, 2004  
2000-2004 The University, Somewhere, ON  
GPA: 3.62

Relevant Courses:

XX

XX

FINANCIAL EXPERIENCE  
2003-present TAX PREPARER  
H&R Block, Toronto, ON

Prepared individual income tax returns for a highly diverse clientele, including the economically disadvantaged.  
Acquired substantial knowledge of tax laws and Revenue Canada procedures.

2002-2003  
ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT  
Custodial Trust Company, Surrey, BC

Analyzed financial statements, reconciled bank and general ledger accounts, and investment funds.  
Collaborated on the design of a new billing system.  
Billed clients, and accurately maintained their accounts.  
Computed net equity reports and trading funds.

2001-2002  
BANK TELLER  
Royal Bank, Abbotsford, BC

Efficiently and courteously satisfied customers' banking needs in this heavy-volume, high-pressure environment.

Diplomatically handled account inquired and expeditiously resolved discrepancies.

Handled a high volume of requests for cash disbursements, cash receipts, certified checks, opening and closing accounts, and vault and draw audits.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

2003-2004

##### OFFICE ASSISTANT

The Career Centre, ABC Company, Vancouver, BC

Provide administrative support to the Centre  
Maintain and update various databases  
Oversee alumni billing.

#### COMPUTER SKILLS

Excel, Lotus 1-2-3, Q&A, Filemaker Pro 2.0, Paradox, DOS, BMDP, Statistix, WordPerfect 5.1, Microsoft Word 5.1

## ***Functional Resume***

This resume is organized to highlight your qualifications,, with little emphasis on specific dates. This resume style is useful if you do not have a lot of experience, you are changing jobs, or if you have been out of the workforce for an extended period of time.

## Sample - FUNCTIONAL RESUME

### John Brown

1234 Glover Road, Toronto, ON M5W 1E6 416-888-7777

e-mail: position@youremail.com

### SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

16 years accounting experience

15 years volunteer experience in 4 philanthropic organizations

5 years grant writing experience

### NON-PROFIT SKILLS

Managed finances of provincial non-profit BC Accounting Association

Created and submitted grant for operating expenses on behalf of Scoops snow shoveling for the elderly.

Supervised volunteer as site supervisor for Habitat for Humanity

### SUPERVISORY SKILLS

Managed team of 8 junior accountants, including daily work assignments and annual performance reviews

Conducted all hiring, promotions, salary adjustments, terminations as needed

Facilitated team development and conflict resolution when needed

### COMPUTER/PROJECT MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Successfully completed implementation of new accounting software system two months ahead of schedule

Consulted with Benefits Group to streamline operations, saving \$10,000 annually

Revised voucher forms, resulting in a 2-day reduction in processing payments

Worked in purchasing as substitute for vacationing employees

Learned NASS computerized accounting software package

### EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Accounting, The University, Somewhere, BC

### ACTIVITIES

Toastmasters: Administrative Vice President

Habitat for Humanity, Family Selection Committee,

Scoops, Volunteer Snow Shoveler for the elderly,

Cross-country skiing, Managing Investments, Gourmet Cooking

### REFERENCES

Available Upon Request

## ***Combination Resume***

This resume style combines the Chronological and the Functional Resume. You may want to use this format if you have experience and skills and would like to effectively emphasize both. The combination format allows you to emphasize the preferred and most relevant skill areas.

## Sample - COMBINATION RESUME

### YOUR NAME

1234 Glover Road, Toronto, ON M5W 1E6  
416-888-1234; e-mail: position@yourmail.com

### HIGHLIGHTS

- “ University Graduate
- “ 3 years of student leadership experience
- “ Completed Co-operative Education Program

### ACCOUNTING SKILLS

- “ Oversaw the Students Association's finances, 2003-2004
- “ Personally responsible for completing all tax documents, 2002-2003
- “ Prepared weekly profit and loss statements, 2002-2003
- “ Submitted tax documents on a monthly basis, 2001-2002

### SUPERVISORY SKILLS

Managed team of assistants for Students Association's finance department,  
Conducted all hiring and terminations as needed, 2003-2004  
Facilitated team development and conflict resolution when needed, 2003-2004

### COMPUTER/PROJECT MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Successfully completed implementation of new accounting software system two months ahead of schedule, 2001-2002  
Consulted with Benefit Group to streamline operations, saving \$10,000 annually, 2002-2004  
Revised voucher forms, resulting in a 2-day reduction in processing payments, 2001-2002

### EXPERIENCE

#### FINANCE OFFICER

University Students Association, Toronto, ON 2003-2004

#### ARTICLING CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION STUDENT

JONF Chartered Accountants, Toronto, ON 2002-2004

### EDUCATION

#### BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION 2002-2004

The University, Waterloo, ON

Co-operative Education Certificate

## **RESUME TIPS**

### *1. Make your first impression count.*

Not only is your resume the first thing an employer sees from you—it is what the employer will use to decide whether you are selected to interview for the position you are interested in.

Target your resume to the job that you are applying. One size does not fit all.

### *2. Be concise.*

It is acceptable to go to 3 pages if you have 3 pages worth of information. However, try not to go over two except in certain cases. Often you are able to concisely write a 1 page resume if you are looking for summer employment or your first entry-level job.

### *3. Find others to help proofread.*

Have at least two other people proofread your resume.

### *4. Use the active voice.*

Do not use phrases such as “Responsible for...”, “Duties included...”, etc. Write strong accomplishment statements starting with an action verb.

5. Do not use first person and possessive pronouns. The words “I”, “me”, “my”, “mine”, or “our” should never, ever appear in a resume.

### *6. Avoid using resume templates.*

Gives a cookie-cutter appearance (your resume will look like every other person’s that used that template), lack of flexibility for individual needs, out-of-date formats, and lack of flexibility in editing/layout changes.

### *7. Do not include irrelevant information.*

Do not include any information that will not in some way directly contribute to getting an interview.

### *8. Only use white or cream colored paper.*

## What Not to Include in your resume

Salary history or salary requirements. Including such information is a lose-lose proposition. Naming a salary requirement that is too high may eliminate you from consideration; naming a low figure may indicate to the employers that you will work for less than they will otherwise would have offered.

Leave out any references to age, race, health, religion, sex, and national origin. Photographs have no place on the resume except for actors, models or other entertainment personalities.

Do not use headings such as RESUME, FACT SHEET or CURRICULUM VITAE.

Do not state your availability for employment or the reason you left your last job, as these topics are covered during the interview.

## Power Verbs

Demonstrate Leadership, Decision Making, or Management Skills:

Allocated determined directed elected enlisted formed  
founded governed hired initiated inspired instituted  
led managed moderated motivated operated oversaw  
pioneered presided produced recruited represented selected  
spearheaded sponsored staged started supervised

Demonstrate Administrative, Organizational and Follow-Through Skills:

arranged assembled collected centralized coordinated catalogued  
distributed disseminated enforced executed formalized implemented  
installed maintained organized planned prepared processed  
routed recorded reorganized scheduled updated

Demonstrate Communication Skills:

acquainted apprised answered briefed conducted contacted  
demonstrated drafted educated explained familiarized handled  
informed instructed introduced lectured listened presented  
reported responded spoke summarized taught trained  
translated wrote

Demonstrate Analytical or Research Skills:

Analyzed assessed audited compiled consulted detected  
discovered documented edited evaluated examined gathered

identified interpreted interviewed researched searched surveyed tested

Demonstrate the Ability to Create or Innovate

Authored conceived conceptualized created composed designed devised established invented originated revolutionized

Demonstrate Counseling, Helping, or Mediating Skills

aided attended assisted collaborated contributed counseled comforted facilitated fostered guided helped instilled mentored provided settled supported tutored treated

Demonstrate the Ability to Convince or Sell

arbitrated convinced dissuaded encouraged marketed mediated negotiated persuaded promoted publicized resolved sold secured solicited

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## **COVER LETTERS**

*Do I always have to send a cover letter?*

YES

Think of a cover letter as “holding the hand” of the resume. It guides it to the correct person, introduces you, and directs the resume to the correct objective.

*Do I have to send it to a certain person?*

YES

If at all possible, find out who the DECISION-MAKER is that will be hiring for the job and address the cover letter to that person. Try to avoid the Human Resources department since they only handle the logistics of hiring-they don't make the decisions to hire.

OR

For advertised positions, make reference to the file number and the position title, how you heard of the opening or what type of work for which you are applying. If no position has been advertised, indicate that you are investigating career possibilities in the field.

*How do I find out to whom to send the resume and cover letter?*

ASK

Do a little research. It is easier to find out who would be making the decision in smaller companies than in larger companies. The simplest method is usually the one most overlooked—calling the company and asking. If that doesn't work, however, do some homework. If it's a publicly held company, you may be able to find out from the company report who would be over the department to which you would be applying. Talk to an employee of the company. Google the company.

*Do I staple the cover letter to the resume?*

NO!

Staples are never used in a resume package. Neither do you fold your cover letter and resume and send it in a standard number 10 envelope—mail them flat in a 9x12 envelope.

*Must I include a cover letter when faxing my resume?*

YES.

Format the cover letter with matching the heading from the resume, then instead of using a standard business letter format for the address, use a fax cover sheet format for To: Date: Fax Number: Number of Pages: RE: Message: In the "Message" section, write the body of the cover letter. Be sure to sign your Fax Cover sheet; it's easy to forget.

*Do I need to write a cover letter when emailing my resume?*

YES

Simply start your email as you would a cover letter then at the end state something like "Resume attached in Word" .

What do I say in a cover letter?

Why you are corresponding with them and what position that you are applying. to.  
What makes you UNIQUELY qualified for this position.

Your availability, flexibility, and contact info.

## Sample - COVER LETTER

Date

Your Name

Address

Telephone Number

Email address

Mr. John Doe

Human Resources Manager

Do-Re-Mi Incorporated

456 Any Street ,City, Province

Postal Code

Dear Mr. Doe:

*Opening Paragraph: Why Are You Writing*

While attending the December Meeting of the International Trade Council, I met a colleague of yours, Mr. Bill Knowseveryone. Following an interesting and informative conversation, he suggested that I write to you concerning the Sales Training position now available in your organization.

*Second Paragraph: What You Have to Offer*

My varied experiences include sales and marketing of widgets and extensive experience as the Training Manager for ABCD Company.

*Add a very brief statement about your skills, experience and accomplishments that will arouse the employer's curiosity.*

I am an initiator and an achiever. I have designed and delivered training programs that have received recognition as outstanding.

*Third Paragraph: Why This Company*

I am interested in working for an International Marketing Firm.

*Closing Paragraph: Follow-Up*

*Request an interview and indicate you are available for an interview .*

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my qualifications for the position. I am available anytime for an interview.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

*Handwritten signature*

*Name Typed Here*