

How to Organize a Résumé

BOTTOM LINE:

- Keep the résumé relevant and on one page
- Make the sections easy to find and read; graphics and color are fine so long as they are not distracting
- Use skill and action words
- Know your audience and what s/he is looking for

DETERMINE YOUR AUDIENCE – Who is going to be reading this résumé? What are you applying for? An internship? A specific job? In order to make your résumé work effectively for you, you **MUST** know your audience. Avoid “generic,” unfocused resumes that list everything you have ever done. Don’t assume your audience will pull out the relevant information: Highlight your skills/experience that most relate to the posting.

CREATE A “WORD BANK.” - The word bank is a compilation of all your experiences: paid, unpaid, volunteer, extracurricular, class work and projects, etc. Write down a brief description of all your duties during this experience. You will not be including everything on your résumé, only relevant information. Office work, customer service and administrative experience should also be included. This is a helpful exercise to determine what you’ve done.

SELECT A FORMAT - **a. REVERSE CHRONOLOGICAL** – Most recent experience first, **b. FUNCTIONAL** - Experiences grouped by skills, **c. COMBINATION OF BOTH OF THESE FORMATS** – Tends to be best fit for most communications students; starts with reverse chronological format but then takes relevance into account, “bumping up” those experiences that are most relevant

WHAT TO INCLUDE: All resumes should include contact information (name, email, phone and address) and at least three sections – “Experience”, “Skills” and “Education”.

- 1) **“EXPERIENCE”** – The most important part of the résumé: Any time you are building skills that’s experience! Use phrases rather than full sentences (think “sound bites”). Begin each phrase with an action word. List your most relevant experiences first regardless of chronology. **QUALIFY** experiences: Were you selected from a pool of 100, for example? Convey skill through action words, don’t simply list tasks you completed. **QUANTIFY** experiences: How many feature articles did you write? How many people did you supervise?

Types of experience are: paid or unpaid work/ internships, relevant course work & projects and extracurricular activities.

A) PAID OR UNPAID WORK OR INTERNSHIP

- List what you did, skills used, decision-making, team/group work, etc.

EXAMPLE:

Intern, Red Wagon Entertainment
Culver City, CA

Aug. – Dec 2005

- Read screenplays and books and wrote coverage
- Took calls and covered the Front Desk
- Performed research
- Performed office duties such as photo copying, distributing mail, and stocking kitchen and office supplies

B) RELEVANT COURSEWORK & PROJECTS

- Include a Course Title (no numbers) that is relevant (i.e. ADVANCED SCREENWRITING or TELEVISION PRODUCTION Course)
- List what you did, skills used, decision-making, team/group work, etc.
- Format similarly to other entries in the Experience section.
- Give yourself a title that sums up what you did; the course title sits where you would usually list the company.

EXAMPLE:

Producer/Director, Multimedia Production Course Fall 2006

S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University

- Worked with team of three to produce three-minute short film
- Conceived and created treatment for short
- Coordinated shooting on location with local authorities
- Responsible for more than \$3000 worth of equipment and its protection
- Stayed under budget and within shoot deadline

C) EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- Activities belong in the “Experience” section if you can show relevant skills sets being used or learned

EXAMPLE:

Public Relations Director, Society of Professional Journalists Spring 2005

S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University

- Responsible for marketing and publicizing two to three group events each semester
- Worked with other offices to create and conceive speaker and event topics
- Handle website updates and write content for various publications
- Designed posters using Adobe InDesign to post on campus
- Liaison with faculty and administration to encourage participation in events
- Responsible for \$1500 marketing budget and allocation of funding

2) **“SKILLS”** - List computer programs, technical equipment, research skills (LexisNexis, MRI+) and any language skills you have. Specific social media platforms should also be listed.

3) **EDUCATION** - Include Syracuse University, college(s), degree(s), year and major(s) – keep it simple as it won’t be your most compelling selling point. Education is best listed after your experience section, unless you have minimal experience (though this should be a temporary problem!) and education is the most relevant thing on your résumé

OPTIONAL SECTIONS –

HONORS or AWARDS - Keep it short and explain (briefly) what the award is for

EXAMPLE:

- Phi Beta Kappa Award – Essay written on student activism (May 2007)
- Jim Smith Memorial Award- Academic achievement in history (May 2006)

ACTIVITIES/INTERESTS – Create a separate “Activities” section for activities that are relevant in topic but in which your role is more passive or observational OR the activity was non-career related

EXAMPLE of activity in Activities section:

- Public Relations Student Society of America, member

SUMMARY – At the top of your resume. MUCH more effective than a vague objective. Summaries or highlights of specific skills, experiences or qualities you have for the reader. A very effective tool (page filler) for those with little experience.

GPA – If over 3.5 or if an application requests it, include it; if not, omit.

DON'T BOTHER WITH -

OBJECTIVE – Usually trite and vague such as “a position in tv/film that will allow me to use my skills.” Doesn't add value.

“REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST” – Ted Bundy had references, which goes to show that *ANYONE* can get a reference. Don't bother with this tired, overused line. Besides, it is assumed that you have references, so to note this is redundant.