

Creating and Developing Your Resume

Resumes are used to present and showcase your skills and background to potential employers. They are most often accompanied by a cover letter, or letter of application, which is an expansion of the details listed on your resume.

Along with the cover letter, your resume serves as a first impression to an employer; therefore, it must be formatted professionally, free from errors, and easy to read. An employer has the potential to put a resume in the “no” pile for the slightest reason so make sure to proofread and edit multiple times.

A strong resume is concise, but it also contains enough detail to demonstrate that you are the right candidate for the job. Your resume should be customized to the job you are applying for, so you may end up with several versions. Keep a master document of all of your work experience, relevant coursework, achievements, and skills so it will be easy to select material for each resume you create.

Sometimes you will hear that a resume should be only one page. A good rule of thumb is that you should have a one-page resume ready for career fairs. When applying for a job, however, a two-page resume is fine. The more experience you gain, the longer your resume will be; however, you may have to start cutting dated information or non-relevant experience. For instance, now that you are in college, many of your high school experiences are too far in the past or may not be relevant to jobs you apply for now, so you will cut out most of that information.

Tips for Building Your Resume

When you apply for a job, you will be up against many people applying for the same position; consequently, it is imperative that your resume stands out from the crowd. Using templates in processors such as Microsoft Word can be difficult to navigate and do not allow for much creativity. Starting from scratch to make your own template may be tedious, but after you create your first resume, it will be easy to insert information quickly.

Generally, resumes include many or all of the following contents:

Full Contact Information. Your contact information includes your name, address, phone number, and email address.

Employment Objective. This is a brief statement that informs the reader of your objectives and goals for the position being applied for. This can range from one statement to a brief paragraph. An employment objective is optional. If you choose to include one on your resume, customize the message for the position you are applying for.

Example¹:

I am interested in working as a developmental editor, mentoring authors through the book writing process and editing their work for adherence to established guidelines and contract

¹ Examples are taken [and modified] from Martinez, D., Peterson, T., Wells, C., Hannigan, C., & Stevenson, C. (2008). *Technical writing: A comprehensive resource for technical writers at all levels*. New York: Kaplan Publishing, Inc.

specifications. I am also open to cross-training or assisting in other editorial areas as, eventually, I would like to expand my career and work as a production or acquisitions editor.

Education. For current students, put your degree along with your major and include “expected [year].”

Example:

Bachelor of Arts, English: Professional Writing

Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC, expected May 2017

Relevant Coursework. Select only courses relevant to the job you are applying for. You can also provide a very brief description.

Example:

Authoring Multimedia: worked with various multimedia formats including Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Dreamweaver, and podcast creators to produce functional products for client use.

Skills. Abilities can include those acquired through coursework or during a related experience such as an internship. If you are proficient in a second language, it is advisable to list that under the skills section.

Example:

Proficient in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint) and Adobe (Photoshop, Dreamweaver, Illustrator, and InDesign)

Job Experience and Internships. List the most recent work experience first and work backwards. Include paid and unpaid work experience. Spend plenty of time on this part of your resume. Think through all of the work you do on your job now and how it may relate to the job you are applying for. Do not short-change yourself. Let employers know all that you can do. Include the position title, the company name, location, and dates. Also include a short description or bullet points of the job responsibilities.

Example:

Cashier, Tom’s Grocery, Aberdeen, CA, July 2015-August 2016.

- Assisted customers with checkout, special behind-the-counter items, and price checks.
- Managed money drawer; responsible for overages and shortages.
- Assisted with stocking shelves.
- Covered shifts for other employees.
- Worked in other departments throughout the store as needed.

Publications and Presentations. A list of your publications or conference presentations can enhance your resume because it demonstrates your continual work in the professional writing field.

Professional Memberships. List organizations you are a member of along with your role and years active.

Awards. List any awards or achievements you’ve earned since you began college.

Volunteer Work. Volunteer work looks excellent on a resume as it shows your willingness to give back to your community and to go above and beyond what is asked of you. This section should detail your position and role during your volunteer experience.

Using Active Verbs

Active verbs are parts of speech used to express a physical or mental action. In the case of your resume, they are used to describe your duties on the job or during an internship.

The following are a few active verbs based on types of roles in the workplace²:

Accomplished	Determined	Incorporated	Oversaw	Reviewed
Achieved	Developed	Influenced	Participated	Revitalized
Administrated	Devised	Informed	Performed	Saved
Advanced	Directed	Initiated	Persuaded	Scheduled
Advised	Dispatched	Innovated	Planned	Screened
Allocated	Distinguished	Inspected	Predicted	Selected
Analyzed	Distributed	Installed	Prepared	Served
Applied	Documented	Instituted	Promoted	Serviced
Appointed	Doubled	Instructed	Provided	Set
Appraised	Drafted	Insured	Publicized	Shaped
Approved	Earned	Integrated	Published	Simplified
Assembled	Edited	Interpreted	Qualified	Sketched
Assessed	Educated	Interviewed	Quantified	Skilled
Assigned	Entered	Introduced	Raised	Solved
Assisted	Established	Invented	Rated	Sported
Attained	Evaluated	Investigated	Realized	Specified
Authored	Examined	Issued	Received	Spoke
Awarded	Executed	Launched	Recommended	Staffed
Chaired	Expanded	Learned	Reconciled	Started
Collected	Expedited	Lectured	Recorded	Simulated
Communicated	Experienced	Led	Recruited	Streamlined
Compiled	Experimented	Made	Redesigned	Strengthened
Compared	Extracted	Maintained	Reduced	Studied
Completed	Facilitated	Managed	Referred	Submitted
Composed	Fashioned	Mapped	Regulated	Substituted
Computed	Filled	Marketed	Rehabilitated	Succeeded
Condensed	Finalized	Mediated	Reinforced	Summarized
Conducted	Focused	Met	Related	Supervised
Consolidated	Forecast	Moderated	Remodeled	Surveyed
Constructed	Formulated	Modified	Reorganized	Systematized
Consulted	Founded	Monitored	Repaired	Taught
Contributed	Gathered	Motivated	Reported	Trained
Coordinated	Generated	Named	Represented	Translated
Corrected	Guided	Negotiated	Researched	Traveled
Corresponded	Handled	Observed	Resolved	Trimmed
Counseled	Helped	Obtained	Responded	Tutored
Created	Identified	Operated	Restored	Umpired
Critiqued	Illustrated	Ordered	Restructured	Updated
Delegated	Implemented	Organized	Retrieved	Upgraded
Demonstrated	Improved	Originated	Revamped	Validated
Designed	Increased	Overhauled	Reversed	Verified

² Examples of action verbs are taken [and modified] from Western Carolina University's Career Services website. <https://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-enrichment/ccpd/student-resources/resume-cover-letters.aspx>

An [example resume](#) is on the next page³. Note that resumes can be formatted in many different ways, and the following resume is only one representation.

For more information on building your resume, contact the director of the Professional Writing Program or WCU's [Career Services](#).

³ The example of a resume is taken from Martinez, D., Peterson, T., Wells, C., Hannigan, C., & Stevenson, C. (2008). *Technical writing: A comprehensive resource for technical writers at all levels*. New York: Kaplan Publishing, Inc.

MEGAN E. HENDRIX

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EMPLOYMENT OBJECTIVE

To work full-time as a developmental or substantive editor in a science or engineering textbook division of a major publishing company. ([Notice how the employment objective is geared to a particular position.](#))

EDUCATION

Master of Arts, English

New Mexico State University, 1993

Bachelor of Science, Science

New Mexico State University, 1991

PROFESSIONAL WORK HISTORY

Technical Writer, Northrop Grumman Mission Systems, Colorado Springs, CO, July 2001 to present

Managed all project documentation. Responsibilities included: technical editing, managing online collaborative writing projects, synthesizing information into one comprehensive document, reviewing all documentation for correctness in language, format, and standards. Aided in the design and implementation of an electronic document management system, and managed the collection and indexing of all project documentation; transferred information onto various media, and distributed to customers. Other duties included member of Change Control Board, a committee designed to track and document changes to computer laboratory baseline; composed process documentation to achieve CMMI Level III. Contributed to Northrop Grumman's Missile Defense Newsletter *Expressions*. ([Job descriptions can be in paragraphs or bullets.](#))

Media Specialist, New Mexico State University College of Engineering, Las Cruces, NM, June 1998 to July 2001

Responsible for writing and designing promotional literature for the College, such as brochures magazines, newsletters, legislative materials, fact sheets, and advertisements. Created and maintained the NMSU College of Engineering website (www.nmsu.edu/~coe). Other responsibilities included collaborating on research proposals and scholarly papers, contributing to a weekly research column in the local newspaper, and writing general college news releases.

English Teacher, Gadsden High School, Anthony, NM, 1993 to 1998

Taught developmental English course for English as a Second Language and academically at-risk freshman and sophomores. To facilitate reading, writing, and grammar skills, developed activities for the classroom and computer laboratory.

Instructor of Technical Writing, University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, TX, 1993 to 1998

Designed a series of assignments for practicing basic technical communication skills and preparing full-length proposals. Students were encouraged to choose community topics for a service-learning experience in this course.

PUBLICATIONS

I have been a book reviewer since 2005. During that time, I have written approximately 15 reviews. The following are examples of my most current reviews.

Hendrix, M. 2006. Beyond e-Learning: Approaches and technologies to enhance organizational knowledge, learning, and performance. [Review of the book *Beyond e-Learning: Approaches and Technologies to Enhance Organizational Knowledge, Learning, and Performance*]. *Technical Communication* 53(4), 486-87.

Hendrix, M. 2006. Successful writing at work [Review of the book *Successful Writing at Work*]. *Technical Communication* 42(1), 122-23.

Hendrix, M. 2005. Interviewing practices for technical writers. [Review of the book *Interviewing Practices for Technical Writers*]. *Technical Communication* 39(4), 657-58.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Society for Technical Communication (STC), Member, 2001 to present
Book review contributor, 2005 to present. See Publications for list of book reviews.