



The Key to an Effective Resume



Kristine Voth
Director of Career Services
Dakota County Technical College

Resume Writing Guide

Writing a good resume is important to the success of any job search. Think of your resume as your marketing brochure because it is often the first impression that any employer has of you. The following guidelines will help you create a great looking resume that will help you get interviews for the positions you want.

RESUME FORMATS

Different industries have different ideas of perfect format and style.

Research, if possible, the best fit for the field you want to enter.

Focus your material to demonstrate that you are qualified.

GENERAL RULES

Length	In general, limit your resume to two pages. People with work experience will find they need two pages to get their message across.
Categories	Win or lose in the first ten lines. The most relevant information should be placed so that it will be read within the first 10 seconds. Place your most related experience and/or education toward the top of your resume; don't let it get "buried" in your list of experience or work. Rule of Thumb: for very experienced applicants, go back three jobs or ten years, whichever makes more sense. Don't be afraid of gaps in your resume.
Objective Statement	Include an objective statement when you are pursuing a specific job goal or when you know the exact title of the position you are applying for. The objective helps to target your resume and allows employers a way to quickly understand the type of career you are seeking.
Reference Statement	"References Available Upon Request" is an unnecessary statement. It will be assumed that you can provide references and that they will be positive.
Customization	Know your audience! Use language that the employer will understand and is pertinent to the field without using too much jargon. If you have them, include a technical skills set.
Templates	Generic resumes often don't stand out. Resumes composed on templates are easy to spot and usually do not present you as well as a resume you create.
Proofread	Spelling errors, grammatical mistakes and misused words are the key reasons employers give for eliminating applicants from the hiring process. Carefully proofread several times, and ask others to do the same. EXAMPLE: Do not claim to be attentive to detail without proofreading for errors.
Readability	Check your resume to assure that it is easy to "scan" so that a reader will be drawn to the most important information first. Make sure that it is attractive and not sloppy. Have other people (e.g. professionals working in the field, career staff, professors) proof and check your resume.

Resume Writing Guide, Page Two

GENERAL RULES, continued

Content	Make sure that your resume demonstrates that you are a qualified candidate for the work you wish to do.
Checklist	Do not include personal information such as age, health, or marital status. Include a personal fax number or e-mail address. Do not include the fax number or e-mail address of your employer unless you are applying for another position within the company. Do not use free e-mail addresses.

FORMATTING AND PRINTING TIPS

Header	For printing or formatting, use a header that will also serve as your letterhead. Your name should be the most prominent component of your contact information. Do not abbreviate street, state or other place names. A line under your contact information tells the reader not to begin at the top of the page (because they can refer back to your contact information), but at your strongest qualification(s).
Personal Pronouns	Never use personal pronouns in a resume.
White Space	Balance written information with white space so you “fill-up” the page without crowding in too much information. Information should be dense, yet readable and visually appealing. Margins should be at least 1” on all sides. NEVER use a bottom margin that is noticeably larger than margins on the other three sides.
Font Size and Type	Use a font that is easy to read (10-14 point, usually 11 and 12 are best for the body), and not too stylish, unless you are looking for positions in the creative fields. Serif fonts are generally easier to read and often work better. Sample serif fonts are: CG Times, Bookman Old Style, Courier, Garamond, Perpetua , and Times New Roman. San serif fonts are more difficult to read and should be used sparingly. Examples of san serif fonts include: Arial, AvantGarde, Helvetica, Trebuchet MS, and Verdana. <u>TIP:</u> After your resume is done, experiment with font styles and sizes to see which best represent your resume and style. Use highlighting techniques (bolding, underlining, italicizing) to emphasize your experience and education.
Paper	Print your resume on high quality paper (white, light gray, ivory) using a laser printer for a crisp, clean type. The best white paper has a brightness rating of more than 90. Paper should be at least 24 lb. bond. Buy matching envelopes for a professional look. If possible, matching envelopes should be large enough to allow your resume to arrive flat.

Resume Writing Guide, Page Three

ADDITIONAL HINTS

Before Sending Your resume	Ask others who know your background and qualifications to read your resume for errors, for completeness of information, and for relevance to the position for which you are applying. Cover your name and re-read the job description asking yourself if you would hire the person applying for the position you seek.
Copyability	Once your resume is exactly the way you want it to look, print one copy on the paper you will use. Copy your resume. Copy the copy. Check the second generation copy for errors, ease in reading and general quality in order to see yourself the way others will see you.
E-mail and Fax	Since you cannot control the way your resume will look after it has been transmitted, try to avoid sending your resume via either of these methods unless you have no other contact information. If a mail address is available, follow up an e-mailed or faxed resume with a hard copy.

RESUME SECTION HEADINGS: USE WHAT WORKS!

You may use a variety of heading labels to help sort and highlight your information to show a “fit” between you and the career for which you are looking. Since you are composing your resume, you determine and use the categories that work best for you. Here are some suggestions and possible areas. People choose these or other headings. Close alternatives are listed in parenthesis.

OBJECTIVE

Identifies the field, job, or career you are pursuing

EDUCATION

Highlights your college, professional training and certificates; foreign study

SKILLS

Identifies overall skill clusters needed in a profession or special skills (e.g. computer, languages, competencies such as carpentry, woodworking, mechanical).

COMPUTER SKILLS

Identifies skills specific to the computer field and may be a separate category if your experience is extensive.

COMPUTER/TECHNICAL SKILLS

Includes computer and other technical skills that you may want to highlight.

PROFESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS (ACCOMPLISHMENTS)

Lists your skills, achievements, accomplishments, and/or awards

EXPERIENCE

Identifies your work, volunteer, internship, and community experience

Resume Writing Guide, Page Four

CAREER RELATED EXPERIENCE (PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE)

Highlights your work and other experience related to the career

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

A separate category for experience that is not related to the position for which you are applying, but that you would like a prospective employer to know

WORK HISTORY

Lists work experience listed in reverse chronological order

ASSOCIATIONS

Identifies professional associations, community clubs, or organizations

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE)

Includes volunteer or non-paid community experience that relates to the position for which you are applying

AWARDS (HONORS, RECOGNITION)

Shows distinctions, scholarships, work, or community awards

WORDS TO USE

To make your experience sound dynamic and interesting, use the present tense of action verbs to begin your descriptions on your resume and in your cover letter. Here are some suggestions:

act as liaison	develop	mediate	reorganize
administer	devise	monitor	repair
analyze	direct	motivate	research
appraise	divert	negotiate	resolve
assist	economize	operate	revise
attain	ensure	orchestrate	schedule
budget	establish	organize	select
build	evaluate	originate	start
communicate	execute	overhaul	streamline
compare	facilitate	oversee	supervise
compose	generate	persuade	synthesize
compile	guide	plan	tabulate
compute	implement	practice	teach
conceive	increase	precision work	test
conduct	initiated	prepare	train
consolidate	install	prioritize	translate
contribute	instruct	problem solve	troubleshoot
coordinate	interpret	produce	understand
create	invent	promote	utilize
delegate	lead	provide	write
demonstrate	manage	purchase	
design	maximize	reconcile	

SCANNABLE RESUME FORMAT

How it Works: Your resume is scanned into the computer as an image. Optical character recognition (OCR) software examines the image to distinguish every character and creates a text file (ASCII). Artificial intelligence then “reads” the text and extracts important information about you.

A scannable resume is fact and skill based, so that the more skills and facts you provide, the more opportunities you’ll have for your skills to match available positions.

Like the traditional style resume, focus on format and content.

FORMAT

Provide the cleanest original and use a standard style resume. The computer can extract skills from many styles of resumes such as chronological, achievement, functional and combinations.

TIPS FOR MAXIMIZING SCANNABILITY:

Color, size	Use white or light colored 8½” paper, printed on one side only.
Printer type	Provide a laser printed original if possible. A typewritten original, high quality jet printed or photocopy is acceptable. Avoid dot matrix printouts and low quality copies.
Folding, stapling	Do not fold or staple.
Font types	Use standard typefaces such as Helvetica , Garamond, Bookman, Courier, Arial, New Century Schoolbook, or Times New Roman.
Font size	Use a font size of 10 to 14 points. Avoid Times 10 point.
Condensed spacing	Do not use condensed spacing between letters.
Special lettering	Use boldface and/or all capital letter for category headings as long as the letters do not touch each other. Do not use italics, underlining, shadows and reverses.
Lines and graphics	Avoid vertical and horizontal lines, graphics, and boxes.
Columns	Avoid two-column format or resumes that look like newspapers or newsletters.
Name placement	Place your name at the tope of the page on its own line.
Address format	Use standard address format below your name.
Phone numbers	List each phone number on its own line.

CONTENT

Information is accessed in many different ways. Key words detail specific experience, such as writer, Bachelor of Arts, marketing collateral, Society of Technical Communication, Spanish, St. Paul, etc.

TIPS FOR MAXIMIZING “HITS”:

Key Words	Use enough key words to define your skills, experience, education, Professional affiliations, etc.
Descriptions	Use concrete words. For example, “managed a team of software engineers” is better than “responsible for managing, training, etc.” Be concise.
Number of pages	Most resumes should not be longer than two pages.
Jargon, acronyms	Use jargon and acronyms specific to your industry. With few exceptions, include the complete name with the acronym in parentheses the first time it appears on your resume. Use the acronym after that.
Headings	Use common headings such as Objective, Experience, Employment, Work History, Accomplishments, Education, Affiliations, Publications, Professional Affiliations, Honors, etc.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Maximum Number of Hits	Most scanning systems have a maximum number of hits possible per resume. In order to maximize your opportunities, place the most relevant information that is most likely to be hit close to the top of your resume.
Faxing for Scanning	When faxing, set the fax so that the recipient will receive the best possible quality copy.
Versions	Some people may want to have two versions of their resume; One for the computer to read, with a scannable format and detailed information. Send this version if you know your resume will be scanned. The other version of your resume is for people to read. Carry both versions to the interview.

The Cover Letter

The cover letter, or letter of application, is an opportunity to introduce yourself to an employer and to draw connections between the position you seek and the skills and experience you have to offer. It should be brief and specifically focused. Always include a cover letter when sending a resume so that the recipient knows s/he has received your resume. Proofread your letter. Typographical errors, misspellings and grammatical errors leave the reader with a negative impression. Always have your cover letter reflect your resume. Do not add important information about your qualifications in the cover letter only.

Below is a sample format. For further ideas see the many books in your local library or ask one of the Career Services staff for other resources or assistance.

(Top and bottom margins should be approximately equal.)

(Be sure to address the letter to the correct person and to spell his/her title correctly. If you do not know the name of the person responsible for filling the position for which you are applying, you may omit the salutation.)

Opening paragraph

Middle paragraph(s)
Do not discuss anything here you have not listed on your resume

Alternative middle paragraph format

Closing paragraph

Always sign your name

(When enclosing a resume, type "Enclosure" below your typing name.)

Your street address
City, State, Zip
(Double space)

Date
(4 spaces)

Ms. Sandra Smith, Director
Marketing Division
American Industrial Corporation
1111 American Avenue
America, MN 50005
(Double space)

Dear Ms. Smith:
(Double space)

State the reason you are writing, identify the position for which you would like to be considered, and indicate how you heard of the position. (If you are sending a letter of introduction, simply indicate the type of work you are seeking.) Be specific. If you were referred by a current or former employee or a colleague, include this information in this paragraph.

(Double space)

Describe the strengths you have to offer this employer. This is a summary of the most relevant information you have described on your resume. Include related work experience, training or education, and information about your work style. Do not be concerned about seeming to duplicate information on the resume. Highlight any accomplishments that show you have experience related to the job.

OR

My qualifications include:

- List three or four of the most relevant qualifications on your resume
(Double space)

End your letter with information on how you can be contacted (phone numbers and the best time to reach you). If you have voice mail or an answering service, indicate that you return calls promptly. (Option—include a statement that you will contact them the week of _____ to answer questions they have or to schedule an interview.)

(Double space)

Sincerely,
(4 spaces)

Type your whole name beneath your signature
(Double space)

Enclosure

Targeted Cover Letter (May be used when qualifications are exact match)

Sally Jobseeker
1234 Fountain Street
Rosemount, MN 55068

September 18, 2004

Ms. Jane Smith, (Title)
Work Incorporated
123 Kelly Street
Minneapolis, MN 12345

Dear Ms. Smith,

I am very interested in the position of Administrative Assistant listed in the Daily Tribune on September 14, 2004. The skills and qualifications you mention closely match my experience in this career field.

Your Needs	My Qualifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Detail-oriented, experienced Administrative Assistant▪ Assist Customer Relations Manager▪ Corporate experience with major clients a must▪ PC knowledge a plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Four years Administrative Assistant experience with responsibility for numerous detailed reports▪ Assisted Customer Relations Manager for two years▪ Regularly served purchasing agents at Fortune 500 companies▪ Hands-on experience with working with Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint

Enclosed is my resume for your review and consideration. I believe I am an excellent candidate for this position and look forward to meeting with you to discuss it in greater detail. I will plan to call you on September 25, 2004 to determine when an interview might be possible. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Signature
Sally Jobseeker

Enclosure

Cold Cover Letter (Not responding to an advertised position)

Alexander Appraiser
222 South Street
Apple Valley, MN 55068

July 8, 2004

Mr. Robert Smith
Smith Appraisals, Inc.
10555 145th St
Lakeville, MN 55044

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing to inquire about a position in real estate appraisal at Smith Appraisals, Inc. I hold an A.A.S. degree in Real Estate and Property Management and recently passed the state real estate appraisal exam. I am seeking a reputable company to begin my new career. I feel my years of hard work and dedication make me an ideal employee for your company. My skills and experiences include:

- Education includes Real Estate Appraisal
- Construction background and building knowledge
- Self-motivated and ability to work independently or with a team
- Strong organizational and leadership skills
- Years of experience in customer service and public relations
- Knowledgeable on MS Office products

I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss what I can bring to your appraisal company in further detail. I look forward to speaking with you and will contact you sometime next week. If you would like to get in touch with me, I may be reached at 555-555-5555. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Signature
Alexander Appraiser

Enclosure

Felicia Finance

1000 Money Ave. N.
Minneapolis, MN 55555
612-000-0000
ffinance@email.com

OBJECTIVE: To secure a position in finance

WORK EXPERIENCE

- General Manager, Vision World Inc. 2000 - Current
- Maintained personal sales to be within top 15% nationwide for six consecutive months
 - Received bonus two consecutive months for reducing remakes 2% over last year month-to-date
 - Work with team to reach individual monthly sales and customer service goals
 - Communicate effectively everyday with very diverse customers
 - Keep expenses within an already set monthly plan by adjust payroll and other spending based on our sales-to-plan
 - Provide exceptional customer service, while staying within the forecasted hours
 - Continue duties of all other store positions
- Assistant Manager, Vision World, Inc. 1998 - 2000
- Resolved customer issues level by finding mutually satisfactory solution
 - Ensured smooth operation of office, including ordering supplies, keeping store clean, and assisting employees when necessary
 - Ensured a smooth transition to a new parent company without hurting customer service and employee morale, while General Manager was on leave of absence
- Optician/Contact Lens Technician, Vision World Inc. 1991 - 1998
- Helped patients choose the correct eyewear to suit their lifestyle needs and fashion
 - Adjusted glasses to fit each unique head structure
 - Ensured successful fit of contact lenses, problem solving to determine appropriate lens brands and materials

EDUCATION

- Associate in Applied Science, Accounting** December 2003
Dakota County Technical College, Rosemount, MN
- Full time student achieving a 3.3/4.0 G.P.A. while working full time

American Board of Opticianry Certification, May 1998

COMPUTER SKILLS

- Competent in Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
Used Microsoft Project in order to complete a group assignment as project lead

Charlie Computer

555 Techie Drive
Burnsville, MN 55306
Home: 952-423-4567 Cell: 952-432-1111
ccomputer@email.com

Objective: Desktop Support Internship

Qualifications Summary

- Ability to install, test, configure and troubleshoot computers for both Macintosh and IBM compatible systems
- Experienced in designing a network layout and managing servers and workstations
- Familiar with protocols for network servers

Education

A.A.S. Degree, Computer Networking, December 2003
Dakota County Technical College, Rosemount, MN
3.5/4.0 G.P.A.

Highlight of Computer Coursework

- AS400
- Unix
- Windows Operation Systems
- Cisco Routers
- NT Workstation Servers
- Novel Netware
- 2000 Servers
- Active Directory Serve

Experience

Dakota County Technical College Financial Aid Office, Rosemount, MN 2003-Present
Help Desk Support

- Organize Filing system to maintain student records
- Monitor and troubleshoot problems with computers and printers
- Answer phones and direct questions to appropriate financial aid staff member

Dakota County Technical College Library, Rosemount, MN 2001-2002
Library Assistant

- Edited library records and sent documents to the Webpals system
- Designed database to keep records on audio visual equipment and new books received by
- Troubleshot problems with library computers and reported finding to the MIS Department.

Seagate Technologies, Bloomington, MN 1997-2000
Material Handler

- Tested hard drives for quality assurance

WILLIAM N. JONES

123 Main Street Apartment 3B
Apple Valley, Minnesota
(123) 456-7890
wjones@email.com

Objective: Manufacturing Supervisor

Highlight of Qualifications

- Five plus years manufacturing experience
- Working knowledge of the manufacturing process
- Analytical abilities ideal for problem prevention
- Worked closely with accounts payable, cost account, traffic and purchasing department
- Extensive customer service experience
- Demanding, high volume management experience

Relevant Experience

Inventory Control

- Monitored flow of production materials in combination with plant reporting to uncover inaccuracies with inventory and direct labor efficiencies
- Continuously improved inventory accuracy through training and education of production personnel as well as cycle counting
- Issued material releases for raw material and purchased components (approximately 100 parts)

Production Scheduling

- Scheduled production and manpower for ten station assembly line
- Customer contact for related end items
- Ordered raw materials for production lines

General Accounting

- Performed adjustments to inventory accounts as a result of cycle counts, usage variances and testing
- Problem solver to Accounts Payable for direct material invoices with receiving discrepancies
- Issued customer billings and responded to credit inquiries
- Maintained order entry system
- Paid quarterly and annual fuel tax

Employment History

Production Scheduler/Coordinator	Pillsbury, St. Paul, MN	1997 – Present
Inventory Coordinator	Lamar Corp., Hastings, MN	1994 – 1996

Education

A.A.S. Degree, Supervisory Management Dakota County Technical College, Rosemount, MN	May 2004
--	----------

Technical Diploma, Machine Technology Saint Paul Technical College, Saint Paul, MN	May 1993
--	----------

Jane Coordinator

123 Street
Town, Minnesota 12345
(612) 123-4567

OBJECTIVE: Special Events Volunteer Coordinator

EXPERIENCE:

Area Coordinator

9/99 –present

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

State of Minnesota, Department of Revenue, St. Paul, Minnesota

- Analyzed demographics of eighty possible locations for tax assistant sites.
- Selected ten centers based on results of evaluations.
- Developed marketing plan for program using local media sources to recruit volunteers and program usage.
- Communicated with professional community and civic leaders to coordinate effective evening sites a three-month period.

Project Coordinator

3/91-3/92

Indochinese Refugee English as a Second Language (ESL) Tutorial Program

Hennepin County Community Services, Support Services Unit, Minneapolis, Minnesota

- Interviewed, recruited and supervised all prospective volunteers, increasing program participation by 200% in one year.
- Initiated and implemented support system by planning a follow-up training session—participant evaluations showed session effective in meeting expressed needs.
- Researched and investigated Immigration/Refugee Services and Resource Centers to design a materials file which facilitated volunteer support and effectiveness.

Support Staff Counselor

9/90 –9/91

Outreach Group Homes, Incorporated, Minneapolis, Minnesota

- Supervised six mentally handicapped adults to allow them to live within a residential setting in the community.
- Responsibilities included creative planning with residents to identify low cost and interesting resources within the community.
- Taught residents basic independent living skills.

WORKSHOPS: Participated in Volunteer Director Conference, ESL Tutor Training, Government Monitoring, Self-Esteem Workshop

EDUCATION:

Certificate, Meeting and Event Planning May 2004

Dakota County Technical College, Rosemount, MN

Bachelor of Arts, Sociology May 1999

Metropolitan State University, St. Paul, MN

SKILLS/INTERESTS: Outdoor activities, music, theater, dance and community events

BEFORE YOU SEND OUT YOUR RESUME

- ✓ Your name, address and phone number should be at the top of your resume and not the word “resume” or any other heading. The font for your name should be bolded and a larger font size (14) than the rest of the text (11-12).
- ✓ Your objective should clearly state what type of position you are seeking.
- ✓ Personal information should not be included in your resume. Avoid any mention of age, family, religion, appearance etc.
- ✓ List information first that closest relates to your objective. List your jobs starting with your most recent, moving backward.
- ✓ You do not need to list every job. Go back approximately 10 years if applicable or list your last three positions.
- ✓ Make sure to mention your applicable skills, including any languages you are fluent in other than English.
- ✓ Be sure to list volunteer or extra-curricular activities that relate to your goals.
- ✓ If your education has prepared you for the position you are looking for, emphasize that by listing the relevant courses taken and list your education directly below your objective. If you are proud of your GPA – display it.
- ✓ Try to avoid paragraphs in the resume. Bulleted sentences that start with an action verb are easiest to read.
- ✓ Most resumes should be able to fit onto one page or two pages without being too cluttered.
- ✓ Review your information to avoid repetitive information or words that appear too many times throughout the resume.
- ✓ Avoid fancy fonts and paper. This could detract from your resume. Faxing and copying resumes on decorative paper will be difficult.
- ✓ Check for spelling, grammatical or punctuation errors. Have someone else proofread it. A single misspelled word could cost you an important opportunity.