

RESUME GUIDELINES AND FAQs

A detailed guide for improving your resume AND your chances in the job market.



THE OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES

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Resumes

Your resume is the first impression you will make on an employer. What kind of impression will your resume make at that ever important moment? Will it land you that interview or will it end up in the rejected pile? By following the resume format guidelines & content guidelines, you are increasing your chances of developing a quality resume that will not be overlooked.

Resume Format Guidelines

Avoid errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation:

This can be an indicator of the quality of your future work performance – i.e., errors suggest that you will be an unprofessional representative of the organization, and careless with your work.

Avoid resume templates:

Templates can unnecessarily force the resume onto two pages with a lot of unused “white space,” and create spacing that cannot be adjusted to condense the resume to one page. Instead, type your resume as a regular document in Word to keep it to one page.

NOTE: The employer may not be able to open an email attachment created in other programs.

Create a header for your resume:

A header includes: name, address, phone, and email address.

- DO NOT include the word “RESUME” as part of your header.
- DO NOT include personal information (such as age, marital status, health status, ethnicity, etc.)
- DO NOT use “cute” or “provocative” words in your email address – make sure it is professional.

A one page resume is recommended!

If your resume must be two pages, check the margins and the font size, as well as the amount of “white space.” These factors may be forcing it to two pages unnecessarily. Times New Roman or Arial fonts are suggested for professional appearance and easier “readability” by the employer.

- Margins can be adjusted to .7 inches all around.
- Reduce the font size to 10 or 11 point font.
- Major headings can be 11 or 12 point font.
- Your name may be from 14 to 18 point font.

If your resume must be two pages in length:

On the second page, put your name and phone number in the upper left corner, and “Page 2” in the upper right corner. Paper-clip rather than staple the pages. DO NOT include the same full header as you have on the first page of your resume on the second page.

Make sure your resume is “scannable.”

If the resume is sent via USPS mail, or handed to employers at a career fair, the employer may scan it and store it in a computer database.

- A “scannable resume” AVOIDS italics, underlining, shading, borders, and graphics.
- Acceptable formatting includes bold type and “ALL CAPS” to emphasize major headings, and bullets to emphasize SKILLS SUMMARY statements.
- Use quality resume paper, white or off-white, and a quality printer with black ink.

Do not fold resume, cover letter, or other application materials:

Use an 8 ½” x 11” manila envelope for mailing. If possible, use labels rather than typing or printing addresses directly on the envelope; or, if typing directly on the envelope, use a high-quality printer. DO NOT hand write addresses on envelopes.

Resume Content FAQ's by Category

OBJECTIVE

Do I need an objective? What should it say?

Although it is optional, an objective can demonstrate “focus” in terms of your career goal. It is also an excellent opportunity for you to emphasize your top skills.

Examples:

Skills-focused Objective

The opportunity to apply communication, leadership, and organizational skills to a professionally challenging environment.

Field and Skills-focused Objective

A career in sales with opportunity to contribute communication skills, leadership, and planning and organizational skills to company goals.

Can I mention that I'm willing to relocate in my objective?

Yes. Adding this statement, “Willing to relocate,” at the end of your objective, is appropriate.

EDUCATION

Is it important that my degree information is correct?

Absolutely! Errors on your resume are **not** acceptable. Check for the correct title of your degree in the Southeastern catalog, on your transcript, or on your academic department's website.

Examples:

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology
Bachelor of Science, Accounting
Bachelor of Arts, Marketing
Bachelor of Arts, Management
Bachelor of General Studies

Associate of Arts, Criminal Justice
Associate of Applied Science, Industrial Technology
Master of Business Administration
Master of Arts, Organizational Communications
Master of Science, Biology

[See a full list of the Degrees and Programs that Southeastern offers at www.selu.edu.](http://www.selu.edu)

Should I list my concentration area, or my minor(s)?

Yes.

Example:

Bachelor of Arts, Management; concentration in Human Resource Management

Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA May 2006 GPA 3.4

OR

Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA

Bachelor of Science, Accounting; minor in Management

Graduation Date: May 2006 Major GPA: 3.2

Should I list my GPA?

Only if 3.0 or above. However, if your Overall GPA is less than 3.0, but the GPA in your major is above 3.0, you can list your Major GPA only, and as follows:

Major GPA: 3.0

If both GPA's are above 3.0, you can list both:

Overall GPA: 3.2 Major GPA: 3.5

Should I list courses I completed?

Although optional, it can enhance your resume to list those courses that support your career goals. If you do decide to list courses, list course titles only – not course numbers. Also, list from six to ten courses only, and those that are either requirements for your major, and/or even some electives that support your career goals.

Example:

Major Coursework Included: Principles of Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Business to Business Marketing, Advertising, Sales Management, Marketing Research, International Marketing, Management of Organizations, Business Finance, and Public Speaking.

Should I list class projects?

Yes, if they support your career goals, and/or if they highlight some special knowledge or skills you developed in working on the projects.

Example:

Bachelor of Arts, Marketing; minor in Management

Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA December 2010

Special Course Projects: Participated in marketing class projects, including developing marketing plan for local restaurant, and an international marketing strategy simulation.

Could I list my Special Course Projects in another section of my resume?

Yes – you may list the **Special Course Projects** statement as one of the bulleted statements in your **Skills Summary**. This would, in fact, be a more appropriate location if you're listing a **Major Coursework Included** section under **Education**, in that listing both "subcategories" under **Education** may be too much information for that one section.

NOTE:

- Accounting majors who have completed, or will complete, the 150-hour CPA exam requirement should state "Completed 150-hour CPA exam requirement".
- Education majors who have completed the Praxis Exam should state, "Praxis Exam Completed".

Should I list every college or university I've attended on my resume?

It depends upon the length of time you were enrolled. If you attended another college or university for only one or two semesters, it's not necessary to list this info. If you attended at least a year, or if you earned an Associate's Degree, then list the additional college or university (and degree information if applicable). However, it is optional – employers are primarily interested in the college at which you earned a degree.

In what order should I list my Education information, if I've attended more than one college? And, should I list courses I took at other colleges, if I didn't get a degree there?

List most recent educational experience first, and other colleges attended in reverse chronological order.

Examples:

Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA

Bachelor of Arts, Management; concentration in Human Resource Management

Graduation Date: May 2010

Delgado Community College, New Orleans, LA

Associate of Arts, Office Administration December 2005

Only list courses from other colleges – from which you did **NOT** get a degree – if they support or enhance your career goals. And, list only course titles only – not numbers.

Should I list high school diploma information?

No – this isn't necessary once you're a college graduate, unless you have some major accomplishments such as honors or officer positions in student organizations. However, we recommend you list high school accomplishments **ONLY** if you do not have many in college.

SKILLS SUMMARY

What is the purpose of a Skills Summary?

A **Skills Summary** may also be called: Professional Skills, Key Qualifications, Qualifications Highlights, or Summary of Qualifications. It is a great opportunity for you to direct the employer's attention to key points you should market on your resume – your abilities, personality characteristics, areas of knowledge and experience, computer skills, etc.

Is a Skills Summary optional?

Yes, but it is strongly recommended recent college graduates include one because it allows you to highlight those “transferable skills” you possess – that is, skills you've acquired in college through work experiences, internships, involvement in student organizations, course team projects, volunteer work, etc. For an alumnus with years of professional experience, it may be optional, as their experience often “speaks for itself.” Or, such an alumnus may want to replace the **Objective** and the **Skills Summary** with a **Profile** section at the top of the resume (after the header) instead. This **Profile** is a combination of one's summary of key skills, experience, and career goals.

Should I include a Skills Summary if I have no experience related to my career goals?

Absolutely! This section is especially appropriate in this case – use it to highlight your personal characteristics and computer skills, even if not able to include statements relevant to work experiences.

What is the best format for a Skills Summary?

Create bulleted statements which describe specific skills, abilities, personal characteristics, and areas of knowledge and/or experience. Use the Summary to tailor your resume to your career goal by describing your transferable skills if possible – i.e., those which apply to the type of work you're seeking.

EXPERIENCE

Should I list every job I've had?

For recent college graduates, we generally recommend that you list only those jobs held while in college. However, if you had some “seasonal employment” or other “short-term” jobs that didn't allow you to develop or apply relevant skills, you may omit these – you do **NOT** have to list every job you've held in college on your resume.

Should I list jobs held while in high school?

No; the exception is if you held a job in high school that supports or relates to your career goals, or illustrates something positive about you – such as: awards received, managing your own business (illustrates self-motivation, leadership skills, and responsibility), or even a customer service job (illustrates communication and interpersonal skills).

In what order/format should I list my work experience?

Begin with the most recent job first, and list others in reverse chronological order.

Examples:

Sales Associate, 2006 - present
JC Penney, Lakeside Mall, New Orleans, LA
[Put job description here]

Student Assistant, 2004 - 2006
Office of Career Services, University Name
[Put job description here]

What type of information should I include in my job descriptions?

Describe context of work environment (type of business/organization, its services, products, etc.), especially if the name of your employer doesn't illustrate this. Describe job duties, your contributions, skills and knowledge acquired, and results of your efforts, if possible. Include numbers of percentages, if possible (of staff for whom you worked, increase in sales, etc.). Avoid “I” - start sentences with action verbs instead. See [Action Verbs & Adverbs](#) on the Career Services website at www.selu.edu/resume.

Should I list my internship and/or volunteer work under the Experience category?

Yes! You may even create two **Experience** categories: **Related Experience** and **Additional Experience**. If you have experience through internships and/or volunteer activities, or even part-time jobs, that directly relates to your **Objective** (career goal), then you can list it under **Related Experience**. Other experience less relevant to your **Objective** can be listed under **Additional Experience**. However, the single **Experience** category will usually suffice.

ACTIVITIES & HONORS

What type of information should go in this category?

It is strongly recommended that you list extracurricular activities in which you participated while in college. Participation in activities gives you the opportunity to develop key skills employers look for, such as team work, communication, organization, and leadership skills. More specifically:

Student Organizations

Include sororities and fraternities, departmental clubs, honor societies, etc. If you have served as an officer in an organization, or served on a committee, indicate this. Also list any community service and/or fund raising activities you were involved in as a member.

Example: Society for Human Resource Management: President, 2004 - 2005; Vice President, 2003 - 2004.

Honors and Awards

These include honors such as “Dean’s List, multiple semesters,” “President’s List,” “Gamma Beta Phi honor and service society,” etc., and awards.

Example: African American Achievement Award, 2007.

Volunteer Experiences

These may also be listed in this category.

Example: Volunteer, North Oaks Hospital, Hammond, LA, 2004 - present. (You may list a brief “job description” for this experience as well, if related to your career goals.)

You need only have one category for all of the above, called: Honors & Activities, or Honors, or Activities, or Accomplishments, or Community Service, or Professional Activities, etc.

REFERENCES

Should I include the statement ‘References: Available Upon Request’?

Employers will expect you to eventually produce either a page listing your references, or possible letters of recommendation when they ask; therefore this statement is optional. DO NOT include a separate references page when submitting your resume; instead, bring copies of references page in a portfolio to the interview.

NOTE:

If an employer requires a References page as part of the application process, do not include this statement, but instead include a separate References page along with your resume.

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