

DRIVING FORWARD RESUME GUIDE



Overview

Your resume is the summary of your skills, experiences and accomplishments. An effective resume is written and formatted to be scanned by the reader in 15 to 30 seconds. The reader is able to easily pick out the key highlights relevant to their hiring need.

The goal of your resume is to help get you an interview, with an emphasis on “help”. You should not depend solely on your resume to secure interviews. Research, networking, and independent projects are activities that significantly contribute to moving your resume to the top of the stack!

Resume Format

Using a standard format makes it easy for the reader to scan for relevant information. Employers do not like graphics, visuals, and headshots.

- Length: One page for college students and entry-level professionals. Up to two pages for professionals with five or more years of experience.
- Font and Size: Professional fonts (e.g., Arial, Times New Roman) and size (11-12 pt).
- Margins: Standard margins (1 inch on all sides).

Resume Structure

Sections in your resume should follow this structure to meet the reader’s expectations (From top to bottom)

- Contact
- Education
- Experience
- Leadership and Activities
- Skills and Interests

Contact

Make it easy and clear how to contact you

- Full Name - if you think it would be helpful, providing the phonetic pronunciation can help live discussions get off to a smooth start.
- Phone Number - ensure you have a professional voicemail
- Email Address - use an email address that you check every day
- LinkedIn Profile - ensure the link is active. If you do not have a LinkedIn account, use our LinkedIn guide to get it set up in 10 minutes!
- Portfolio or Personal Website, if available - ensure the link is active
- Your physical mailing address is optional. Include it if you are signaling a particular market that you must work in or prefer.

Education

What to Include:

- College Name, Location
- Degree, e.g., Bachelor of Arts in English
- Graduation Date or expected graduation date
- GPA is optional, but definitely include if above 3.5
- Relevant Coursework is optional and should be applicable to an applied function relevant to your interests like accounting, statistics or lab work
- Honors, Scholarships, or Awards including Dean's List and scholarships

Formatting Tips:

- List the most recent education first.
- Remove your high school education by your junior year of college if not sooner
- Include study abroad or significant educational experiences such as certificate programs at other universities

Experience

This section is for paid roles only. All paid roles are relevant for your resume. Typically, you have more content about your most recent or current paid role. If you have not held a paid role, do not include this section.

What to Include:

- Job Title, Company Name, Location
- Dates of Employment (Month, Year)
- Bullet points describing responsibilities and achievements.

Types of Experience:

- Internships
- Part-time jobs
- Full-time jobs

Formatting Tips:

- Make it clear what the company or organization does and the focus of your role if it is not self-evident. It will already be clear to readers if you have a recognizable company name or job title, e.g., waiter, sales rep, or accounting intern.
- Begin each bullet point with an action verb. Download our action verbs guide for suggestions
- Include a result in the bullet point. If you are having difficulty describing an outcome, include relevant numbers like
 - the number of participants supported
 - the number of customers served per shift
 - the size of the audience addressed by marketing activity

Leadership and Activities

This section is for any unpaid roles. This is a great opportunity to demonstrate soft skills like leadership, communication, teamwork, coaching, and mentoring.

What to Include:

What to Include:

- Role, Organization, Location
- Dates of Participation (Month, Year)
- Bullet points describing responsibilities and achievements (focus on action verbs)

Types of Experience:

- Student organizations
- Volunteer work
- Research projects
- Relevant class projects (for those with limited work experience)

Leadership and Activities (continued)

Formatting Tips:

- Make it clear what the organization does and the focus of your role if it is not self-evident. It will already be clear to readers if you have a recognizable organizational name or role, e.g., treasurer, head of marketing, mentor
- Begin each bullet point with an action verb. Download our action verbs guide for suggestions
- Include a result in the bullet point. If you are having difficulty describing an outcome, include relevant numbers like
 - the number of people who were engaged in the organization's activities
 - the growth of the organization through member growth or fundraising
 - the size of the audience participating in a signature event
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Skills and Interests

This section summarizes additional skills and a little bit about yourself outside of your professional profile. The very last bullet on your resume, Interests, is a often used by interviewers as an icebreaker to start the conversation.

What to Include:

- Technical Skills including programming languages, software proficiency, certifications, and training. Software should include popular software like the Microsoft suite, Canva, and Salesforce.
- Language Skills including status ranging from beginner to fluent
- Interests like hobbies, sports, and favorite media.



Do Not Include!!

Here is a list of common mistakes to avoid. These mistakes at a minimum waste space and in worst cases prevent your candidacy from being considered

Headshot: Employers will skip resumes with a headshot to avoid implications of bias

References: The use of references is not relevant until you receive an offer. Worst case is the employer's ATS system reads the emails and contacts your references who are not prepared to respond

Listing soft skills under Skills and Interests: direct listing of soft skills waste space because you are making claims that cannot be evaluated.

Final Tips

This section summarizes additional skills and a little bit about yourself outside of your professional

Proofreading: Double-check for spelling and grammatical errors.

Consistency: Ensure consistent formatting including the layout of your bullet points and dates

Reverse chronological order: each section should start with the most recent entry by date

File format: Save the resume as a PDF to preserve formatting.

Reach Out For questions and coaching on your resume, email us at info@drivingforward.org and include "Resume Advice" in the email subject line. We are here to help!