

Choosing the right resume format

Resume is like an advertisement of a product or service. It is the first point of contact you have with a recruiter/potential employer and you want to be sure you present yourself in the best possible light and leave a good impression. It is your responsibility to grab the employer's attention, entice them enough to secure an interview and hopefully, land the job.

The first thing you need to do is find the resume format that suits you best. Just like you would follow a recipe to bring the best out from a new dish, you should follow a specific format to write your resume. It is important to select the type of resume that best highlights your accomplishments, strengths and skills.

There are three different resume types being used today: reverse chronological, functional and combination (hybrid). Each resume format brings to the table its own set of advantages and disadvantages.

Reverse Chronological Resume Format

A chronological resume lists your job employment and experience in time sequence starting with the most recent one first. This format works best for people with work experience and a steady job history. Recruiters/potential employers tend to prefer a chronological resume for its ease of reading and efficiency in providing past work experience.

Advantages

- Easy to read and understand
- Emphasize the companies you have worked for and the job position held (especially when the company is well-known)
- Describes your job duties, responsibilities and achievements
- Highlights your strengths when seeking a career in the same field

Disadvantages

- Clearly reflects any employment gaps as work experience is listed in reverse chronological order
- Job hopping is easily figured out by potential employers
- Details of unrelated positions may be more than desired

Functional Resume Format

A functional resume highlights your skills and accomplishments with less emphasis on specific dates. This format works best when you want to have a diverse scope of work experiences that may be unrelated to one another or apply for a position, in which your type of experience is not relevant but your skills and capabilities are. For fresh graduates, a functional resume helps to highlight what you know, not where you have worked.

Advantages

- Emphasises the skills and accomplishments that are more relevant to the job you are applying for
- Covers gaps in work history
- Shows your strengths and capabilities
- Eliminates repetitive job duties

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- Allows for flexibility
- Highlights volunteer and training experience

Disadvantages

- More difficult to read
- Career growth is not clear
- Does not highlight the names of the companies for which you have worked in

Combination Resume Format (Hybrid)

A combination resume, also known as a hybrid resume, puts together the chronological resume and functional resume. It maps out your qualifications, skills, accomplishments and work experiences. This format works best for people who have amassed several years of work experience under their belt and looking for a career change. A combination resume can be arranged either to emphasize on skills set or work history, whichever is most appropriate for your career objective.

Advantages

- Reflects the skills you have accumulated in your career
- Highlights key successes while showing when and where they occurred, so as not to appear as a disguise
- Target your resume to fit specific job requirements while displaying your track of work experience

Disadvantages

- May downplay your work experiences
- May become too lengthy
- May contain redundant or irrelevant information