Writing a Resume

An effective resume presents the specific experience and skills that make you a good fit for the position you're applying for. The experience and skills can come from previous employment but also from education, internships, volunteer work, and extracurricular experience.

PLAN YOUR RESUME

Resume types and which one to use

- **Currently, resumes are typically described as having three "types": functional, chronological (traditional), and combination.**

  Each type highlights different information by placing it at the beginning of the resume (after your contact information).

- **Decide which resume "type" to use by determining your "job search context."**

> ***What is a "curriculum vitae"?***
> You may have heard of a "vitae" or a "curriculum vitae" or "CV." A curriculum vitae is like a resume, but most job searchers won't use one; in the U. S., they are used mostly in academics and medicine. But you might write one if you apply to graduate school or as part of a scholarship application.
>
> ***What about a federal job?***
> Resumes for federal jobs are quite different; check an online resource for help.

The table below will help you determine your job search context and which type of resume to write, and briefly outlines how the resume types are structured.

For the job search context…	…write this kind of resume	…which is structured like this
• looking for your first job OR • beginning a professional career after completing qualifying education or with a more general work history	a **functional** resume, which focuses on transferrable skills (from previous employment, education, and/or other activities) that qualify the applicant for the job	• contact information • objective / resume summary • relevant skills • employment history • education • additional relevant activities
• advancing through a field or specialty	a **chronological** resume, which focuses on previous employment that qualifies or prepares the applicant for the job	• contact information • objective / resume summary • employment history • education • additional relevant skills & activities
• moving to a new field after experience in another OR • reentering the work force after time away	a **functional** or **combination** resume: does a little of both of the above	• contact information • objective / resume summary • relevant skills • employment history with details of related skills • education • additional relevant activities

Lewis Hall-321 • 360-416-7855 • SVC.WritingCenter@skagit.edu • skagit.edu/writing-center • ONLINE at skagit.mywconline.com

SVC | SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE **Writing Center**

Process: How to go about writing your resume

1. Whichever type of resume you plan to write, you'll need to collect the information to put on it.

- **Brainstorm a list of the paid employment you have had.** You'll want your position title, the name of the company or organization you worked for, and the dates you worked there. (More specifics are below in the "Build Your Resume" section.)

- **Make a list of your education/schooling.** This includes education and training beyond high school, and might also include high school, if you haven't finished a college program yet. (More specifics are below in the "Build Your Resume" section.)

- **Collect and categorize your relevant skills and experience.** This is a crucial step in the process during which you'll figure out what your skills are, what to call them, and where you gained them. You'll decide where in the resume to put them and how to write them up in the "Build Your Resume" section, below.

  There are two basics ways to go about making your skills list:
  1. Brainstorm a big list of your skills and experiences.
  2. Go over your list and organize the items into categories for your resume–which are associated with certain jobs you've had, which are related skills, etc.
          OR
  1. Make a list of all the work you have done, paid or otherwise.
  2. Add to the list the other activities you have been involved in.
  3. For each job, brainstorm the related skills and experiences (think, "In that job, I…")

  → When you write your resume, you'll want to present your skills in the language that is used by most employment situations. Once you've made your list, categorize your skills and experience using the **"Key skills employers look for"** (see the box below).

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">Key skills employers look for</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Your experience might include managing an office, working on a construction crew, running a fast-food drive-thru, or volunteering at your child's school. Whichever resume type you use, highlight your skills in a way that matches them to the most important skills employers look for:</td></tr>
<tr>
<td>

- communication (including foreign languages, if you are fluent)
- leadership
- cooperation & collaboration / team building & teamwork
- training/orienting
</td>
<td>

- management
- self-improvement projects/goal-setting
- completing projects
- customer service
- time management
- project management
</td>
</tr>
</table>

Lewis Hall-321 • 360-416-7855 • SVC.WritingCenter@skagit.edu • skagit.edu/writing-center • ONLINE at skagit.mywconline.com

SVC | SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE **Writing Center**

2. **Determine which resume "type" you will use (see the table under "PLAN YOUR RESUME" on page 1, above).**

3. **Decide on the organization of your resume:**
   → Look at examples of the type of resume you're writing; consider using a template and adapting it to your needs.
   → See the details in **"What to include on your resume"** and **"Ideas for the design/layout/format of your resume,"** below.
   → Try to tailor your resume to particular jobs you apply for, but avoid being so specific that you have to start over for every new application.

4. **Finish your resume:**

   → As with any writing, be sure to **get feedback,** and **make changes** to improve!

   → **Edit like crazy!!** You want your resume to be flawless.

   → If you are applying with a hard copy (printed) resume, consider a slightly heavier weight paper, but don't go crazy with anything fancy!

   → If you submit your resume electronically, always use a .pdf file, and name the file clearly with your name (e.g., BanksRobert_resume.pdf).

   Be sure to **update** your resume regularly, so that it's ready to go when you need it!

BUILD YOUR RESUME

What to include

These are the sections typically included on a resume. *How they are organized in YOUR resume will depend on which **resume type** you decide on (see above).*

- contact information
- objective / resume summary
- employment history
- education
- skills
- additional relevant activities

Contact information: Name, address, phone number, email address

- **Use the name you want to be known by at work**–

  – but don't use nicknames that are too informal or inappropriate to the work context.

- **If you want to use your legal name for financial/business purposes but prefer to be called by a different name, you can indicate that as well**–

  – (e.g., Edward ("Ted") Kurwila, Marielena ("Lee") Bustamante

- **Use a professional email address, preferably one that uses your name (first and last or first initial and last).**

  If you have an email address that is informal ("slaphappyman"), mysterious ("strobelightmuffins"), or inappropriate (use your imagination), get a different address to use for your professional life.

Lewis Hall-321 • 360-416-7855 • SVC.WritingCenter@skagit.edu • skagit.edu/writing-center • ONLINE at skagit.mywconline.com

SVC | SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE
Writing Center

- **Don't use an email address associated with your current job.**
- **Don't use a school address (unless applying for an on-campus job).**
- If you are already a professional, include a link to your LinkedIn profile.

Objective or resume summary

There is disagreement about whether to include an "objective" or "resume summary" in a resume. It is most useful for those with less job experience or who are conducting a broader job search. See example resumes for ideas about how to write the objective or summary.

- **resume objective** *(best for beginning job searchers):* "a one- to two-sentence introduction that states your intention as a job applicant." *(indeed Beginner Resume)*

- **resume summary** *(best if you have job experience or relevant skills for the job):* brief description of "your accomplishments, skills and relevant experience as they relate to the position ."*(indeed Beginner Resume)*

Skills ("hard," "soft," & "transferrable")

Use the "Key skills employers look for" to help you mine your experience for the skills to include on your resume. Think in terms of all three types of skills:

- **hard skills:** job-related knowledge; skills that are needed to do a specific job (e.g., a medical transcriptionist must be trained in medical terminology and transcription practices, etc.)

- **soft skills:** personal and interpersonal qualities and abilities that help workers to thrive in many types of jobs (e.g., collaborative, communication, and leadership skills, etc.)

- **transferrable skills:** skills or characteristics that are relevant to nearly any job field; they can be "transferred" from one job to another, even if those jobs are quite different. (These are often soft skills.)

☆ **Other relevant skills**: E.g., computer skills, experience with specific equipment, communications skills, leadership skills, etc.; include foreign languages, if you are fluent, e.g., "conversational Spanish," "read and write fluently in Spanish")

Skills you should NOT include:

- Don't include your hobbies or every group membership–*unless they're relevant to the position.* ☺
- Don't include church membership, unless it's relevant to the position your applying for.

Employment history

- List your employment in reverse chronological order (most recent first).
- Include position/title, name of the business/company/organization, and dates you worked (e.g., "Feb. 2001-August 2011").

SVC | SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE
Writing Center

- Depending on which type of resume you choose, you might include key skills or accomplishments (chronological, combination)

Education

- Education should be listed in reverse chronological order (most recent/highest achieved first).

- Include relevant education only.

- Provide the name of the school, years attended, degree or certificate earned, and relevant coursework.
  → If you didn't graduate, include program and number of credits completed.

- Include high school only until you have graduated from college. (Just the year of graduation is sufficient.)
  → If you did not graduate high school, include the years you attended.
  → If you completed a GED, list it above the high school information, and include the date earned.

Additional resume sections

If you have additional **relevant** skills or experience, you can consider adding another section if there is room. Some possibilities:

- Additional skills
- Additional relevant activities
- Licenses

- Certificates
- Volunteer experience
- Awards, Recognition
- interests

Use effective design/format

- **Keep your resume to a single page** unless you have several years of work experience directly related to the job you are applying for.

- **Use the templates** provided by the Writing Center to get started! (But avoid standard Microsoft templates or fancy templates you find–they can be more distracting than helpful.)

- **Set even margins** at top, left, and right, with a slightly bigger margin at the bottom (.75" - .5")

- **Use a readable font.** Consider using sans serif fonts for headings and serif fonts for the body.

- **Use section headings** to indicate the parts of your resume (e.g, "Education," "Skills & Experience").

- **Use bold face type** or all caps for headings and key terms.

- **Use bulleted lists** to help organize the information within sections.

- **Keep the formatting consistent.** Use the same font and type size for similar elements, for example, and distribute the information evenly on the page.

- **Use white space** to avoid a busy, crowded page.

Lewis Hall-321 • 360-416-7855 • SVC.WritingCenter@skagit.edu • skagit.edu/writing-center • ONLINE at skagit.mywconline.com

SVC | SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE
Writing Center

Use "resume language"

Use key words to be sure your resume is clearly "matched" to the position you're applying for.

- Many employers use Applicant Tracking System (ATS) software, which means your resume will be scanned first by a computer to see how well it matches the job description.

- **Study the job description carefully for key words and use those words** to describe your relevant experience and skills. E.g., if the job description uses the term "team leader" and your resume says "team captain," the ATS may not recognize it as the same thing.

Be specific:

> *Rather than* "headed up many projects with other employees"
> *say* → "served as team leader for upgrade analyses with night shift security crew"

Use "resume speak": Resumes use a shortened form of sentences that removes the subject "I" and many prepositions and articles.

> *Rather than* "I served as the team leader for the night shift security crew."
> *say* → "served as team leader for night shift security crew"
> *or* → "team leader, night shift security crew"

Use past tense (mostly): Describe experiences in past tense, unless they are ongoing:

> → For a job from your past, say "organized supplies."
> → If you are still doing that job, say "organize supplies."

Use action words: Make your experience and skills dynamic by using specific action words (e.g., "achieved," "established," "outperformed"…)

- See the box of action words below (and see this great list of action words at indeed.com).

Action word sampler

accomplished	delivered	implemented	produced
achieved	designed	improved	programmed
advanced	developed	increased	reorganized
advised	documented	instructed	replaced
analyzed	drove	maximized	spearheaded
assembled	enacted	mentored	steered
attained	enforced	modeled	streamlined
chaired	ensured	organized	strengthened
collaborated	established	outperformed	supervised
communicated	exceeded	overhauled	tested
conveyed	generated	performed	trained
coordinated	guided	planned	upgraded
created	headed	presented	wrote

SVC | SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE **Writing Center**