Writing your graduate resume

A resume (or CV) is a concise record of your skills, education, employment history and achievements. But it's more than that – it provides that vital first impression of who you are and what kind of employee you will be, so it needs to stand out from the crowd (in a good way!).

Getting started

Before you start writing, take the time to research what to include in your resume and what it should look like:

- **Search online for sample resumes** tailored to the role/industry you are targeting e.g. graduate nursing resume. Use these as a guide as to what information to include and the best format/layout to apply.

- **Read several advertisements** for the type of job you are interested in and take note of the common skills and attributes they require (e.g. strong analytical skills, ability to work autonomously, etc). Try to include these in your resume (but always be truthful about your level of expertise and experience).

Formatting

Most employers only have time to quickly scan resumes so make yours as reader-friendly as possible by using a plain font for the body text (such as Arial or Calibri in 10-12 point text) and a simple layout with clear headings and consistent spacing and formatting. Stick to a maximum of three pages and avoid wasting space with tables or columns.

Avoid fancy fonts and images, coloured text and multiple pages of unrelated information that will make your resume difficult to read.

Resume must-haves

Put the most important information at the beginning of your resume so you capture the employer's attention. It also pays to tailor your resume for each job you apply for to really emphasis the qualities that employer is seeking.

Contact details

Make your name the main heading of your resume – use a large, bold font and centre it at the top of the page. There is no need to write 'resume' or 'curriculum vitae'. Centre your email address (make sure it's appropriate) and mobile number underneath your name (and ensure you record a professional voicemail message). Include your LinkedIn profile url if you have one and also your domain address if you have an online portfolio. Remember to include your name and contact details in the footer of subsequent pages. Don't include your date of birth, religion, photo (unless required for your industry) or your nationality.

Career objective/summary/goals/profile

This should be a short snapshot (two or three sentences) of the specific skills and experience that make you the ideal candidate. Imagine you only have 30-60 seconds to sell yourself before the employer moves on to the next resume (because unless you grab their attention they probably will). For example:

> *Recent accounting graduate with above-average academic results, backed up by hands-on experience gained while working part-time at an accounting firm. Highly proficient in the latest accounting software and looking for a challenging position where I can combine my strong numerical and analytical skills with my special interest in superannuation and funds management.*

Key skills and attributes

Using dot points, briefly highlight six to eight of your key skills and attributes. Always focus on skills that will benefit the employer by matching them to key words in the job advertisement. Include specific professional/industry skills (such as 'advanced ability in Excel and PowerPoint' or 'a whiz at creating engaging social-media content') and generic skills (e.g. 'confident working with multidisciplinary teams' or 'effective time-management skills in fast-paced environments').

Don't forget to include transferrable skills that you may have gained on campus, during casual employment or in volunteer roles. For example, a shop assistant position may not only involve obvious skills such as sales and cash handling but also conflict resolution, face-to-face communication and marketing. When listing transferrable skills it's good to explain why they are relevant (e.g. 'highly skilled at conflict resolution after two years of face-to-face contact with customers in a busy fast-food outlet').

CSU Career Development Service

Education and training

Start with you most recent qualifications and work backwards. Begin with your CSU degree, followed by any other studies or training (such as TAFE, First Aid Certificate etc) and high school qualifications (do not include primary school or unrelated courses). A good format to follow is:

- Name of qualification and course dates [Bachelor of Xxxxxxxx, 201X-201X].
  If you have space you could include a short outline of your degree – refer to your online course brochure.

- Education institution and location [Charles Sturt University, Xxxxxx].

- Any special electives/achievements/internships [e.g. 'completed electives in Product Innovation Management and Social and Environmental Marketing' or 'achieved high distinctions in 6 out of 8 core subjects'].

Experience

Start with your most recent work experience and work backwards. If you have limited paid employment you could include work placements or volunteer roles. Give greatest emphasis to roles that showcase the skills the employer is looking for and use lots of action words (organised, developed, initiated etc) to describe what you have done. Where possible, use figures or results to quantify your contribution (e.g. 'achieved a 10% uplift in website traffic'). A good format to follow is:

- Job title and dates held [Retail assistant, January-present].

- Employer and location [Big W, Bathurst].

- Overview of role in 1-2 sentences ['I work in a customer-facing role in the layby department, which included relieving as assistant manager over the busy Christmas period.'].

- List the key responsibilities of each role in dot points [● completing cash and EFTPOS transactions ● supervising a team of 4 staff ● managing customer complaints]

- List your achievements in dot points [● awarded team member of the month twice in six months ● exceeded sales targets by 20%].

Optional extras

Depending on the role/industry you are targeting, you could also include other headings such as Publications (listing published articles or research papers), Other Skills (highlighting volunteer roles, leadership positions or skills the employer has not listed but your research indicates may be useful, such as languages) or Interests (clubs, sports and hobbies that show you are outgoing or creative).

Referees

Complete your resume with the name, job title and current contact details of at least two referees. Include their working relationship to you (lecturer, supervisor etc) and make sure you obtain their permission first.

Extra hints

☑ Limit your resume to two or three pages and number them (in case they get separated).

☑ Use bullet points instead of long sentences/paragraphs where possible.

☑ Be consistent with language – describe current positions in present tense ('I teach') and previous positions in past tense ('I taught').

☑ Write the way you would speak in an interview; avoid trying to impress with complicated words or jargon that you don't normally use (as you may use them incorrectly).

☑ Proofread the document carefully for typos or grammatical mistakes (or ask someone else to do this for you).

☑ If emailing your resume, save it as a pdf so the employer can open it easily.

Need further help?

Get in touch with CSU's Career Development Service for support with your resume.
http://student.csu.edu.au/services-support/careers

CSU Career Development Service