# PREPARING RESUMES

*The primary purpose of your resume is to get the reader's attention and make that person want to know more--that is, **to get an interview**.  It is **not** a comprehensive history of your entire work life. Rather, it is a sales sheet, and you are the product.  A "perfect resume" won't get you a job offer, but a poorly written resume may very well prevent you from getting that interview--and without an interview, you **won't** get the job.*

*This handout provides you with some general guidelines and tips to help you prepare an effective resume.  Sample resumes are also available as a separate handout.*

*For additional guidance or assistance, contact the Career Services at (402) 557-7423, (800) 756-7920 ext. 7423 or [careerservices@bellevue.edu](mailto:careerservices@bellevue.edu).*

***A Word of Caution: Please don't be tempted to use one of the Resume Wizards or Templates that are available online or included in many word processing programs. They can be difficult to work with, don't allow you to present yourself in a way that makes you unique—and employers can identify them easily!  Instead, create your resume as a simple document in MS Word, like those included in the Bellevue University Resume Examples handout.***

# POSSIBLE RESUME FORMATS

There is no "best" or "right" way to prepare your resume.  The key is to use a format that will present you and your qualifications in the best possible light--**and make the reader want to know more.**   Discussed below are the two most common resume formats along with some general guidelines to help you decide which is best for you.  Sample resumes are available as a separate handout to illustrate how each format is used.

1. **The Chronological Format**
   This is the most common resume format, and the one most familiar to employers.  With this format, you present your work history in chronological order, starting with your present or most recent job and working backward.  Job titles, employers and dates of employment are emphasized, with duties and accomplishments and results listed under each job.

   *Advantages:* emphasizes continuity and career progression in employment, highlights job titles & names of employers, easy to follow, most familiar to employers.

   *Best used:* when your career direction is clear and your career objective is consistent with your education and work history, when the name of a job title or employer adds prestige to your resume, when your work history shows steady job progression and/or advancement.

2. **The Functional Format**
   This format allows you to highlight and emphasize your skills and highest competencies.  Here, you list major skill areas and describe accomplishments that illustrate your proficiency in each skill area.  These accomplishments are usually derived from a variety of work experiences and are arranged under each major skill area rather than under the position you held at the time.  Using this format, the Work History section of your resume contains only the job titles, employers and dates of employment.

   *Advantages:* emphasizes skills and competencies, allows considerable flexibility in describing your professional experiences, de-emphasizes work history, and eliminates repetition in listing jobs where the duties are the same or very similar.

   *Best used:* when you are making a career change or have little or no work experience that is relevant to your career objective, when you have significant gaps in your employment history or are reentering the job market after a long absence, when you have held the same job or been doing the same type of work for an extended time, when you want to emphasize a particularly strong set of skills or strengths.

# SUGGESTED SECTION HEADINGS FOR YOUR RESUME

Your resume should be well organized and easy to read. It should be concise and logical in presenting a true picture of who you are and what you have to offer. To be most effective, you should use headings to set off major categories and highlight your strengths. Following are some suggested headings to help you get started. Whether you use all of these headings and the order or sequence of the headings used will depend on your particular strengths as they relate to the position you are seeking.

1. **Career Objective - Optional**

   Different employers have different opinions regarding the need to include your career objective on the resume. Some recommend it while others say it is optional. Generally, it is probably most appropriate for very recent college graduates who have little or no work experience that is directly related to their chosen career field. It may also be appropriate for an individual who is making a significant career change. However, in most other instances, it may be more appropriate to address this subject in the cover letter.

   If used, the career objective should clearly state, in the fewest words possible, what position you are seeking. Make it as specific as you can and avoid using phrases like "with opportunity for advancement." Remember, your resume should **tell the employer what you can do for them, not what you want them to do for you**. A good example might be "an entry-level cost accountant position utilizing strong analytical and problem solving skills" or "an employment specialist responsible for recruiting and hiring high quality employees."

2. **Summary of Qualifications – Optional, but Strongly Recommended**

   Although not essential, this section can be especially helpful as a way to draw attention to your particular strengths and show why you are uniquely qualified for the job. If used, it should highlight only the three to four *most important* things about yourself as they relate to the skills/qualifications needed for the position. Typical information might include:

   - How much relevant work experience you have (e.g., "over six years' experience in the use of computer applications to resolve business problems").
   - Particular skills and personal characteristics you possess (e.g., "excellent communication skills with a strong commitment to customer service").
   - If not set up in a separate section: special technical skills or knowledge (e.g., "proficient in the use of various software applications such as Microsoft Office, PhotoShop").
   - With extensive experience, you might also include key words that highlight your areas of expertise and experience.

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3. **Education and Training**

   Here, you want to list the schools attended with dates, degrees and any honors you received.  You should also include any relevant training classes, seminars or workshops you may have completed in addition to your formal education.  Some suggestions for completing this section:

   - Include only post-high school education--and only those experiences that are relevant to your career objective.  (A college degree is always relevant, even when changing careers.)
   - If you completed coursework related to your career objective but didn't receive a degree or certificate, use some phrase like "Graduate Studies in Business" or "Forty credit hours of course work in Psychology."
   - If you attended several schools before earning a degree, you may simply list the school where you received your degree.  List others only if the coursework completed is relevant and different from your degree program itself (e.g., your degree is in psychology, but you also completed coursework in computer programming at another school).
   - Include your GPA if it is 3.00 or higher.  (List as follows: GPA: 3.00/4.00, so the reader can see the scale used as well as your actual GPA.)  Generally, you want to show your overall GPA, but you may want to list your GPA in your major instead--if it presents a more positive picture (e.g., GPA in Major: 3.56/4.00).
   - If you graduated with honors, be sure to mention this (e.g., "graduated cum laude").
   - It is perfectly acceptable to use either initials or the full spelling of the degree received (e.g., "BA" or "Bachelor of Arts").  The full spelling is most useful when you want to emphasize the type of degree, while use of initials will allow you to place more emphasis on your major course of study.

4. **Professional Experience/Work History**

   This section should include those work experiences (both paid and unpaid) that relate to the position you are seeking.  It is not necessary to list every job you have ever held, but be sure to list those that demonstrate how you have developed and effectively used your skills and abilities in the work setting.  You also want to show a steady work history with no lengthy gaps in employment, if possible.  Thus, it may be important to include jobs you held while going to school, even if they aren't directly relevant to your career objective.

   - If you have considerable work experience, it is only necessary to list those jobs held over the past eight to ten years, especially if you are changing careers.

- If your work experience consists mainly of jobs you held to put yourself through school, then you should include them even if not directly related to your career objective.  This will demonstrate your initiative and commitment, as well as your general business experience and use of job-related skills like problem solving, customer service, etc.
- List your jobs in reverse chronological order, starting with your present or most recent job and working backwards.  If you are using a Functional Resume format, simply list the positions held along with names of your employers, city, state, and dates of employment.  If you are using a Chronological Resume format, you will want to include brief phrases that describe your major responsibilities and accomplishments under each position.

5. **Professional Skills and Accomplishments**
- You will generally include this section only when you are using the Functional Resume format.  Here is where you will list your major skill areas and include brief phrases under each that describe experiences and accomplishments that demonstrate your proficiency in that area.

6. **Other Possible Headings**

Depending on your particular strengths and experiences, there are various other headings which can be used.  Some suggestions:
- Professional Organizations and Activities
- Honors and Awards
- Community Service and Volunteer Activities
- Special Skills or Technical Specialties

7. **References**

As a general rule, you should never list names of references on your resume.  If necessary—to round out the visual representation of your resume—you may include the phrase "References Furnished Upon Request" as a final statement in the same style as your other major headings.  It is also acceptable to omit this statement altogether.

A separate handout is available ideas and suggestions on setting up your reference page.

See *Examples Resumes* handout for ideas on how the above strategies can be used.

# THE "ALWAYS" AND "NEVER" RULES
# OF EFFECTIVE RESUMES

While you have considerable flexibility and freedom to create a resume that presents you in the best possible light, there are a few "rules" you should follow to assure that your resume gets the attention it deserves. These are best described as "things you should *always* do" and "things you should *never* do."

**Things You Should *Always* Do**

- Be consistent throughout in format, style, order and sequence of information presented, etc.
- Keep your resume brief, concise and to the point. One page is usually sufficient, but you may go to a second page **if** you have considerable work experience that is relevant to the position you are seeking—or you are seeking a position in the education/teaching field.
- Make sure your resume is easy to read. Allow for blank space and draw attention to job titles, degree earned, etc., through the use of **bolding**. Resume headings can be set apart by placing them in **ALL CAPS** and perhaps centered on the page. Whatever method you choose, remember to use it consistently throughout your resume.
- Use an easily read font such as Times New Roman or New Century Schoolbook. Ideal font size is 12, but 11 is acceptable. Set your margins at one inch on all four sides.
- Use conventional English and avoid the use of acronyms and jargon unless you are absolutely sure the reader is familiar with and will understand the terms.
- Use brief phrases that start with **action verbs** to describe what you have done. Wherever possible, use quantities, amounts and dollar values to illustrate the results achieved (a list of possible action verbs is included with this handout to get you started).
- Lead with your strengths. If education is your strongest point, begin with that, and go on to work experience. If you have considerable relevant work experience, list that before your education. As you list duties and accomplishments, begin with your strongest statements.
- Include volunteer work, internship or practicum experiences, extracurricular activities, thesis or research projects, etc., if they are relevant to the position you are seeking.
- If your resume has a second page, include your name at the top of the second page and label it as page two. Be sure to indicate at the bottom of your first page that it is "Page One of Two" or "Continued."
- When printing copies of your resume, use high quality paper in a conservative, professional color (white, ivory or buff, very light gray). Use a high quality printer (laser is best) if you are printing from a computer. Otherwise, have copies made by a professional printing service.
- **MAKE SURE YOUR RESUME IS ERROR-FREE.** Use good grammar and check to see that there are no spelling or typing errors (computer spell-check programs are helpful, but don't rely on that alone). proofread carefully and have at least one other person check it as well.
- Check your resume one last time. Does it show what you can do and how well you can do it?
- And finally, **PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, and PROOFREAD** again.
- Ask a Bellevue University Career Coach, friend, or family member to proofread your resume. Sometimes a second set of eyes will catch things you overlooked.

## Things You Should *Never* Do

- Never list personal information such as age, marital status, health status, religious or political affiliations, etc.

- Never tell everything. Your resume is not a complete work summary. list only those items that are pertinent to the position you are seeking and that show you in the most positive light.

- Never use complete sentences and avoid the use of personal pronouns such as I, me and my.

- Never reduce the font size below 11. if you are having trouble keeping your resume to one page, try using a different format. Be sure you have included only relevant information, or have someone else help you edit or revise action phrases.

- Never reduce your margins to less than one inch on all four sides. You don't want the page to look crowded—and you want to make sure a scanner, fax or printer can read everything.

- Never include salary information or references in your resume. If you are required to submit this information, include it on a separate sheet or address it in your cover letter.

- Never send your resume without an accompanying cover letter.

- Never use gaudy or flashy colors for your resume paper, and avoid extremes in style and format.   (The only time these might be appropriate would be if you were seeking a position in advertising, art, theater or other field where creativity and the unusual are expected and acceptable.)

- Never present information that is false or untrue. While you want to present yourself in a positive light, you always want to be honest and straightforward in what you say.

- Never give reasons for leaving a job on your resume. Even the best reasons can be misunderstood or misinterpreted. This subject is best addressed during the interview if the interviewer brings it up.

- Never send or submit a resume that is not your best effort. Even one simple spelling, typing or grammatical error can be enough to get your resume rejected. If you appear to be careless in preparing your resume, the reader may very well assume that you will be equally careless on the job.

*TAKE THE TIME TO MAKE SURE YOUR RESUME IS OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY AND HIGHLIGHTS YOUR STRENGTHS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RESULTS.*

# ACTION VERBS

Following is a list of action verbs for you to refer to when describing work experiences and accomplishments on your resume. This is not an all-inclusive list. You may want to consult a thesaurus for alternatives, especially if you find yourself using the same words over and over. Remember to use the present tense for your current job and the past tense for all others.

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| accomplished | coordinated | gathered | obtained | reported |
| achieved | corrected | generated | operated | represented |
| acted | created | guided | ordered | researched |
| adapted | defined | handled | organized | resolved |
| administered | delegated | hired | originated | responded |
| advertised | demonstrated | identified | participated | retrieved |
| advised | designed | illustrated | performed | reviewed |
| analyzed | determined | implemented | persuaded | revised |
| applied | developed | improved | photographed | scheduled |
| approved | devised | increased | pioneered | selected |
| arranged | diagnosed | informed | planned | sold |
| assigned | directed | influenced | predicted | served |
| assisted | distributed | initiated | prepared | simplified |
| attained | documented | inspected | presented | solved |
| attended | drafted | installed | presided | strengthened |
| audited | edited | instructed | printed | studied |
| authorized | enforced | integrated | processed | submitted |
| budgeted | engineered | interpreted | produced | summarized |
| calculated | established | interviewed | programmed | supervised |
| clarified | estimated | introduced | promoted | supplied |
| coached | evaluated | invented | proposed | surveyed |
| collected | examined | investigated | provided | tabulated |
| communicated | exhibited | led | publicized | taught |
| completed | expanded | listened | published | tested |
| compiled | experimented | managed | purchased | trained |
| composed | explained | manufactured | recommended | transcribed |
| conducted | expressed | marketed | reconciled | transformed |
| consolidated | facilitated | measured | recorded | translated |
| consulted | filed | mediated | recruited | tutored |
| contributed | formulated | monitored | referred | verified |
| controlled | furnished | negotiated | repaired | wrote |