

Building Your Résumé Package

Before employers decide to meet you, they first view your application materials. Traditionally, the set of application materials is referred to as a résumé package, which includes a résumé and a cover letter. Although many employers only allow online applications, which may not require a résumé and/or cover letter, every job seeker needs to create a formal résumé and cover letter. This information is used as a foundation for information an employer will require in the application process. The creation of a quality résumé package provides a job seeker with personalized, concise, and accurate information that can be used in any job search situation.

Your résumé package needs to efficiently and effectively sell your skills and communicate how your attributes are unique compared to all other candidates vying for your target job. A **résumé** is a formal written profile that presents a person's knowledge, skills, and abilities to potential employers. Your résumé is an important job search tool that should be created in advance of a job search and continually updated throughout your career. Even if you are not currently searching for a new job, a time will come when a current résumé is needed. Do not wait until that time to create or update your résumé. Continually add new job skills, accomplishments, and experiences to your résumé.

When you begin to create your résumé, you will quickly discover that there are various types of résumés and résumé formats. You may also receive conflicting advice as to how the perfect résumé should look and what it should include. The appropriate type of résumé used depends on your work experience, education, and other factors. A well-written résumé makes it easy for potential employers to quickly and easily identify your skills and qualifications that make you the right choice for the job.

This chapter will present the tools for creating a professional résumé and cover letter. As you go through the process of constructing your résumé package, make every word sell your skills and career accomplishments. Your résumé package represents you. Therefore, be honest with the information you provide and display character by not lying or embellishing the truth. There are five steps toward building a winning résumé:

1. Gathering Information
2. Creating an Information Heading and Utilizing Proper Layout
3. Writing a Skills Summary or Personal Profile
4. Inserting Skills, Accomplishments, and Experience
5. Reviewing the Completed Résumé

Step One: Gathering Information

The first step in building a résumé is to create a draft document with key headings. This involves collecting and merging all relevant information into one document. Begin identifying and listing the following information into an electronic document:

1. *Education.* List schools, degrees, certificates, credentials, GPA, licenses, and other relevant education-related information, including military experience. Include dates with each entry.

2. *Skills.* List all skills you possess and identified from the completed accomplishments worksheet (Activity 13.1) in Chapter 13 .
3. *Employment.* Starting with the most recent job, list the employer, start and end dates of employment (month and year), job title, and responsibilities.
4. *Languages.* List foreign languages, fluency levels, and if you can read, speak, and/or write the foreign language.
5. *Honors and awards.* List any honors and awards you have received at school, work, or from the community.
6. *Professional/community involvement.* List volunteer work and community service projects. Include any leadership role you took in these activities.

Note that when compiling information to include in your résumé, there is no personal information listed. Personal information such as birthdate, Social Security number, marital/child status, ethnicity, or religion should not be included on a résumé. It is also inappropriate to list hobbies or include photographs. There are laws that protect employees from discrimination in hiring and advancement in the workplace, and employers should not be aware of personal information unless it is relevant to the job for which you are applying. Additional information regarding this subject is presented in Chapter 15. Older job seekers should not list the date of graduation on a résumé, as it could be used for age discrimination.

Step Two: Creating an Information Heading and Utilizing Proper Layout

The second step in developing a successful résumé is to begin your electronic document. This includes listing personal contact information and identifying and arranging your information in the proper résumé layout. The top of your résumé is called the **information heading**. An information heading contains relevant contact information, including name, mailing address (city, state, ZIP code), contact phone, and e-mail address. Use your complete and formal name, including a middle initial if you have one. When listing your e-mail address, remove the hyperlink. If your current e-mail address is unprofessional, secure an address that is professional. Include only one contact phone number that is active with a professional voice mail message. Review the information heading for completeness, proper grammar and spelling, and accuracy. Spell out the names of streets. When using abbreviations, check for appropriate format, capitalization, and punctuation.

Once you have created your information heading, lay out your résumé. If you are at the start of your career and/or do not have extensive work experience, create a résumé using the **functional résumé layout**. This layout is used to emphasize relevant skills when you lack related work experience. A functional résumé focuses on skills and education. When writing a functional résumé, the first section contains the skills summary statement that you will create in step three. Immediately below the skills summary you will list relevant skills and education. Include your high school in the education section only if you have not yet graduated from college. Finally, list your work experience. Most functional