

HOW TO WRITE A RESUME

(*jobseeking advice from Youth Central - www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au*)

Your resume is your most important tool when applying for a job. It doesn't matter how qualified you are, or how much experience you have - if your resume is poorly presented or badly written, you're going to have trouble getting the job you want - or even an interview.

Taking the time to work on your resume is really important. The information on this page offers some tips and advice on how to make your resume the best it can be.

The Purpose of a Resume

Your resume is a marketing tool. It needs to demonstrate:

- That you are employable
- How you meet the job and the organisation's requirements
- That you have the right qualifications and education
- That you have the right experience and skills
- That you have the right level of professionalism for the job

How Long Should My Resume Be?

There is no set length for a resume. A resume varies in length depending on your experience and education. If you haven't worked much before, one or two pages is best, but three pages is okay if you've got a lot of study and work behind you.

Make sure you don't pad out your resume. If your resume is only one page, as long as it's well presented it might get better results than a two-page resume full of unnecessary information.

More information about the length of your resume can be found on each of the resume templates on the [Sample Resumes and Cover Letters](#) page on Youth Central.

How Should I Order My Resume?

Generally it's always good to present the information on your resume in this order:

1. Contact details
2. Opening statement
3. List of key skills
4. List of technical/software skills
5. Personal attributes/career overview
6. Educational qualifications
7. Employment history/volunteering/work placements
8. References/referees

Not everything in this list must appear on your resume every time, and the order can change from application to application. For more information about each of these sections, check out "What Your Resume Should Include", below.

The most important thing is to get the most useful information across first. For example, if your

education history is not specifically related to the job, put it toward the end of your resume, behind the information that is related to the job.

Check out the sample resumes on the [Sample Resumes and Cover Letters](#) page on Youth Central for examples of how you might want to order the information on your resume.

Do I Need to Change My Resume for Each Application?

You need to tailor your resume to every job application so that it responds to the specific requirements of the job you're applying for.

You might not need to change much, but you do need to make sure your opening statement, your key skills and your personal attributes all respond to the needs of the role, based on the job ad (if there was one) and the research you've done into the job.

You should also tailor your resume to show how your work experience specifically meets the needs of the job you're applying for.

How to Tailor Your Resume

Ways that you can tailor your resume include:

- Using your opening statement to link your experience and education to the organisation and the requirements of the job
- Listing your most relevant key skills first
- Including examples of achievements that meet the advertised requirements of the job
- Including specifically relevant key words and phrases throughout your resume (see "Keywords" in "What Your Resume Should Include", below)

What Your Resume Should Include

There are a number of things that every resume should have on it. Check out the sample resumes on the [Sample Resumes and Cover Letters](#) page on Youth Central to get an idea of what each of these sections should look like.

Contact Details

Make sure you include your name, email address and a contact phone number on your resume. You don't have to include your home address, although there might be some situations when doing so would be a good idea.

Don't include your contact details in the header of your resume. Recruitment software sometimes has difficulty reading information in headers or footers, so it's a good idea to avoid headers altogether.

You can put your contact details in the footer of your resume, but if you do, you must make sure they're also in the main body of the document.

Opening Statement

An opening statement is a summary of who you are, where you've studied and/or worked, and what you bring to the job. It should be about six lines long and written in first person without the personal reference (i.e., don't say "I did this" - say "Did this" instead).

Your opening statement should start with one sentence about who you are and what you bring to the job, then describe the skills and attributes you have that suit you to the job.

For some examples of opening statements, check out the sample resumes on the [Sample Resumes and Cover Letters](#) page on Youth Central.

Key Skills & Strengths

Your resume should include a list of between 10 and 15 skills that link your experience to the job you're applying for.

If the job you're applying for was advertised, either the ad or the position description may provide a list of skills and experiences that are essential for doing the job. It may also provide a list of "desirable" skills and experience. Your list of key skills & strengths needs to respond to all of the items on the "essential" list and as many items as possible on the "desirable" list.

When putting together this list, think of things you've done or learned to do as part of:

- Jobs you've had
- Your studies
- Any work placements you've done
- Any volunteering you've done

For examples of the kinds of skills you might list, check out the sample resumes on the [Sample Resumes and Cover Letters](#) page on Youth Central.

Technical/Software Skills

This is a short list of the names of software or technology you know how to use. Examples might include:

- Word processing or spreadsheet software
- Programming languages
- Tools (e.g., cash registers, EFTPOS)

Personal Attributes

If you haven't got much work experience, a list of personal attributes can be another way to demonstrate that you're the right person for the job.

Things you could include in this section might include ways you can demonstrate that you are reliable, honest, trustworthy or quick to learn new things. Check out the [Employability Skills](#) page on Youth Central to see a few of the things that employers are commonly looking for.

You can include between three to five personal attributes, but make sure you don't include them instead of your key skills.

Educational History

Your Educational History only needs to show your highest level of education. You don't need to include your results, unless showing them proves how well you're suited to the job.

If you can, you should also include a few bullet points listing your academic achievements (e.g., school or class captaincies, awards you've won, or groups you've been part of).

Employment History

When providing your employment history, start with the your most recent job and go backwards from there. Give the position title and the dates you worked there.

If you haven't had a job before, you can use other things to demonstrate your experience, including:

- Work experience you've done through school
- Work placements or internships that you've done through university or TAFE
- Volunteer work you've done

For each job provide a list of the things that you achieved while in that job, and the significant contributions you made to the organisation. Make sure that these achievements and contributions match the key skills and strengths listed earlier on your resume.

For examples of how you can do this, check out the sample resumes on the [Sample Resumes and Cover Letters](#) page on Youth Central.

References/Referees

Your resume should list two people who can positively recommend you as an employee. Ideally your references will be people that you have worked with before. Provide their name, their position title, and a way that they can be contacted.

For more about references, check out the [Who Can Be My Referee?](#) page on Youth Central.

Testimonials

A testimonial is another good way to prove that your skill and experience is what the employer is looking for.

Getting a testimonial can be as easy as asking a colleague, teacher or previous employer to write a couple of sentences about you. Ideally the people you get testimonials from should also be included in your references.

You can include any testimonials you get as part of your educational history or your employment/volunteering/work placement history.

Usually it's enough to include one or two testimonials in your resume. Any more than two is probably too many.

For examples of testimonials, check out the sample resumes on the [Sample Resumes and Cover Letters](#) page on Youth Central.

Keywords

A lot of recruitment agencies use software that scans applications for key words and phrases. Applications that don't use the right keywords tend to be automatically rejected.

Key words and phrases that this software looks for can include the names of:

- Skills
- Jobs
- Activities
- Qualifications
- Software
- Tools

To make sure your resume has the right key words and phrases, check out the job ad and make a list of the words and phrases it uses. If you don't have a written job ad to refer to, you can use a job search engine to find other ads for similar jobs and see what kind of keywords those ads use.

Once you have a list to work from, start adding those words and phrases to your resume. Good places to add keywords include:

- Your opening statement
- Your list of key skills
- Your educational history
- Your employment history

For examples of how to use keywords on your resume, check out the sample resumes on the [Sample Resumes and Cover Letters](#) page on Youth Central.

What NOT to Put On Your Resume

Here are a few things not to include on your resume. Note that there may be circumstances when including some of the following information shows that you're a good fit for the job. If that's the case, including that information would be a good idea.

Personal Information

You don't have to provide any personal information on your resume. There's no benefit to be gained from providing information that could be used to generalise about you as a potential employee.

Your resume doesn't have to include:

- Your birthdate
- Your gender
- Your address
- Any ailments or disabilities
- Your health status

A possible exception to this might be when providing this information would give your application an advantage (e.g., if the employer is looking for someone young, or a female applicant). In these situations, consider including such information if you think it would strengthen your application.

Typos or Factual Errors

Submitting a resume or cover letter with spelling mistakes will guarantee you don't get an interview. You should spellcheck your resume before you send it, but you should also get someone else to read it as well and check for mistakes you might have missed.

Double-check everything that you include in your resume. If you mention the company's name, make sure you get it right. If you mention the name of places you've worked before, make sure you get that right. Mistakes on resumes are worse than typos.

You should also consider getting your resume looked at by someone professional. Check out "Reviewing Your Resume", below.

Images and Graphics

Don't include images or photos on your resume. Not only are images disliked by recruiters and HR professionals, they can also create problems with recruitment software.

Content in Headers

Many resumes only feature the applicant's name and contact details in the header of the document. Some recruitment software is unable to read information in headers and footers. If you do include information in the header and footer of your resume, make sure you include it in the body of the document too.

Fancy Formatting

Stick to easy-to-read fonts and formats. This makes it easier for recruiters to review your resume. It also means any recruitment software that reviews your resume can easily read the information. Good fonts to use include:

- Verdana
- Arial
- Century gothic
- Calibri

Don't use large headers to break up the sections of your resume. Use a 10- or 11-point font for your main content and a 12- or 14-point maximum for headers.

Information in Tables

Some resume templates present information in tables to help with layout, but some recruitment software is unable to read tables. Your resume should only be formatted using line breaks and simple formatting (like setting multiple columns across the page).

PDF Versions of Your Resume

Some recruitment software can't read pdfs. Unless a job ad specifically says to provide your resume as a .pdf, you should always only submit your resume in word format (.doc or .docx).

Reviewing Your Resume

Having someone else review your resume is extremely important. Make sure you use someone who will actually tell you if they think something isn't right. People you could ask include:

- Co-workers
- Former employers
- Teachers
- Career guidance counsellors
- Your parents or guardians

The Career Development Association of Australia has a [list of professional organisations](#) (new window) that can review your resume for a fee. They have also developed a resume review checklist that can help you to make sure that you check over everything on your resume and get it right the first time.

A copy of the CDAA's Resume Review Checklist can be downloaded check from the [How to Write a Resume](#) page on Youth Central. A copy has also been included on this USB for you to use.

Resume Templates

For examples of ways to apply all of the above advice when you put together your resume, check out the sample resumes on the [Sample Resumes and Cover Letters](#) page on Youth Central. These templates have also been included on this USB for you to use to create your own resume.

Good luck!

The information on this page was last updated on 25/2/2015. For up-to-date versions of this & other jobs and careers information, visit Youth Central at www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au.