Guidelines for Writing Resumes

A resume is an essential tool in the job search. This tool is used to market or sell yourself to an employer. It should only be a short summary, not the whole story. The following are general guidelines for writing different types of resumes. These guidelines change geographically and vary according to the person and the profession.

RESUME FORMAT:
Length should be one page, but never exceed two pages.
Margins (top, bottom, left, right) should be approximately 1 inch.
There should be plenty of white space and it should be easy to read.
Font should be black, size should be between 10 and 12 using conservative font styles.
Layout should be easy to follow and information easy to locate.
Appearance should be neat and clean, no errors or corrections.
Paper should be 20-25 weight bond, rag, or linen and of neutral color.
Envelope and cover letter papers should match the resume paper.
Should be left justified with date on the left.

RESUME CONTENT:
Show responsibility and results that relate to the needs of the company.
Give examples of accomplishments and the ability to solve problems.
Show statistics and numbers.
Be honest, positive, and specific.
Use category headings: for example, Objective, Professional Highlights, Education, Training.
Avoid abbreviations. Don't use sentence format; instead use action verbs and short powerful phrases.
Include volunteer experiences, languages, internships, and certifications that relate to the position.
Use industry terminology.

GENERAL TIPS:
Write your own resume. Start by writing down a list of everything you've done, your work record, education and your accomplishments. Don't include salary information, unless requested. When requested, create a salary information sheet separate from your resume. Do not mass mail resumes. Do not include post cards for employers to return. Use a computer or type your resume. If you do not have this equipment, check with local Job Services, libraries, copy centers, or schools as they generally have equipment available to use. Use bolding, italics, and the underline function in moderation. Some occupations do not require resumes, although it is always a good idea to have one. Either attach a reference sheet or provide references when requested.

TYPES OF RESUMES:
Chronological Resume: A chronological resume highlights your work experience. It starts with the most recent position, then describes the next job, and so on, until all the important jobs are listed. This style is the most used of all resumes. This style is useful for people with work experience who have been laid off, or for those who are changing jobs. Do not use it if you have major gaps in employment or have had many job changes.

Functional or Skills Resume: A functional or skills resume highlights skills and potential, rather than work experience and education. It is very helpful when you are changing careers, you have good skills but limited work experience, or there are gaps in your work experience.

Combination Resume: Combination resumes highlight the most relevant skills and accomplishments while de-emphasizing employment history in less relevant jobs. This format helps combine skills from a variety of sources, as well as minimize drawbacks from employment gaps and absence of directly related experience.

Target Resume: Use target resumes when you have done a lot of research on a company/position within the company and you are aware of their specific needs. If done correctly this resume can be very impressive to employers. Everyone can use the targeted resume; however you must revise it to fit each individual employer and this can be very time consuming.

Accomplishment Resume: The accomplishment resume stresses outstanding results with less detail on experience. This resume presents accomplishments, such as sales records, works published, money saved, or patents, contracts, and improvements made.

Creative Resume: Use creative resumes for occupations such as designers, copywriters, graphic artists, illustrators, and photographers. The creative resume includes the basic elements of the other resume types, but presents them in a more visual way. This is accomplished using color, design, photography, and other creative mediums. Some job seekers have gone as far as to send prospective employers their resumes on a computer disk, which allows them to use sound, video, and graphics along with their text.

Professional Resume: Resumes for professionals describe education and experience. Qualifications support all statements. There are no wrong resumes for the professional. Any style or combination of styles can be used for this resume.

Recent Graduate's Resume: People who have just graduated may not have a lot of work experience in their chosen field. Resumes for recent high school, General Education Development (GED), or college graduates can stress education, summer and part-time jobs, and interests. Relate your education, work experience, and interests to the type of work you desire. This can be a good way to present your qualifications. This resume is also useful for people with little or no work experience.

Electronic Resume: A growing number of companies rely on electronic resumes. Some companies use search firms that do the scanning and retrieval for them. There are also a growing number of "resume banks" on the Internet that will store your electronic resume for free. Employers then pay a fee to search these banks for resumes of candidates that might fit their needs. An electronic resume uses a set format and is easily "scanned" or keyed into a computer database. It searches for resumes that contain key words or phrases that indicate the desired skills or attributes. Nouns that identify skills are more important than verbs or adverbs (e.g. UNIX or Xwindow, versus streamlined or implemented). Additional searches may use job title, location, languages spoken, college, degree type, etc. Use industry terminology specific to the profession. Colleges and universities may access databases in their career or planning and placement offices. Private employment agencies may access similar databases. Ask the companies to which you apply if they use electronic databases or scanning techniques for selecting applicants. If they do not, then you should use a different type of resume.