

# Graduate Career Services

The Graduate School and Division of Student Affairs

## Resumes

A resume is a 1-2 page document that provides an overview of your professional skills, experiences, and accomplishments, and is used to communicate them to a potential employer. It helps you distinguish your education and skill set from that of other applicants, and is a positive reflection of your achievements in school, work, leadership, and service. It is often your chance to make a positive first impression, with the purpose to pique the employer's interest so that they will invite you in for an interview. It should be customized and tailored for each employing organization. Unlike a CV, your resume is not a record of everything you have done academically, but rather a snapshot of those elements of your education and experience that align to the requirements of the job.

### What does the perfect resume look like?

There is no such thing as the perfect resume, but all resumes must be perfect (i.e. free from typos, spelling errors, formatting inconsistencies, and grammar mistakes). Use spell check, but carefully proofread multiple times and have someone else review it, too. Employers have hundreds of resumes to review, so their first step is to look for a reason to stop skimming yours. Typos offer a perfect reason, as they cause employers to question your attention to detail.

### Examples of consistent formatting

Instances of the following elements should be formatted the same throughout the resume.

**EDUCATION**

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**UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME** Notre Dame, IN  
 Degree, Major or Concentration Graduation Month & Year  
 Academic Honor(s)  
 Relevant Coursework/Thesis topic *(if applicable)*

**PREVIOUS INSTITUTION(S)** City, STATE (or Country if non-US)  
 Degree, Major or Concentration Graduation Month & Year  
 Academic Honor(s)

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**RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

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**MOST RECENT RESEARCH INSTITUTION NAME** City, STATE (or Country if non-US)  
**Title, Department** Starting-Ending Dates (Month year – Month year)  
 ○ Briefly describe the research and your role/accountability in conducting the research  
 ○ Describe any results that have been achieved or what the objective of the research is intended to accomplish (*action verb + accomplishment + results*)  
 ○ Highlight specific skills, qualities and attributes demonstrated  
 ○ *(maximum of three bullet points)*

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**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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**MOST RECENT EMPLOYER COMPANY NAME** City, STATE (or Country if non-US)  
**Title, Department** Starting-Ending Dates (Month year – Month year)  
 ● Accomplishments and accountabilities in following formula:  
 ● *action verb + accomplishment/accountability + results (example below)*  
 ● Designed and managed implementation of 2,000 PC WAN across five regional offices, streamlining division's communications and knowledge sharing  
 ● Highlight specific skills, qualities and attributes demonstrated  
 ● *(maximum of five bullet points)*

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**PREVIOUS EMPLOYER COMPANY NAME** City, STATE (or Country if non-US)  
**Title, Department** Starting-Ending Dates (Month year – Month year)  
 ● Accomplishments and accountabilities in following formula:  
 ● *action verb + accomplishment/accountability + results (example below)*

Alignment using right-justified tabs

Space between items in a section

Space between sections

Style of dates

Punctuation

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## What information should I include on my resume and how should it be organized?

There are numerous websites and articles online to help you write an effective resume. What's important is to ensure you select a format that is appropriate for the employing organization where you are applying and that, in general, it helps to showcase your specific skills and experiences. Here are some basics to get you started.

### Name and Contact Information

There are many ways to format the contact information section of your resume. The most important factor is to efficiently use the space at the top of the page to maximize the available room elsewhere for content. We recommend centering your name and listing your contact information on one or two lines below it.

Include the following:

- Your full name (First and Last), formatted with a slightly larger font than the rest of the resume.
- One phone number where employers can reach you during regular business hours, typically a cell phone.
- Professional e-mail address, either your Notre Dame e-mail or one that is your first and last name rather than a nickname.
- The URL to your website or LinkedIn profile, if you have one (optional).

### Professional Summary

A professional summary is a brief statement or set of bullet points that highlights key aspects of your relevant skills and experiences for a particular job. Consisting of three to five bullets or phrases, it should summarize why you are the right person for the position.

How to write a professional summary:

#### **1. Identify the employer's needs and how you fulfill them.**

- Closely read the job description.
- Identify the skills and experiences that match the needs in the description.

#### **2. Tailor the summary to you.**

- If what you have written reads like it could be applied to anybody, rewrite it.
- Include your specific skills and experiences.
- Avoid generic lines like "Highly-motivated scientist/historian with excellent problem-solving skills."

#### **3. Write the bullet points.**

- Should appear directly below contact information.
- Should be 3-8 lines.
- Bullet points are recommended rather than a paragraph for ease of reading. If using a paragraph to save space, include no more than 3-4 lines of text.
- Organize as follows: initial pitch, skills, and fit.

NOTE: A professional summary may not be necessary for every situation. Consider discussing your resume with a Graduate Career Consultant to determine if a professional summary could help increase your application success.

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## Education

The Education section should include all your institutions and degrees, listed in reverse chronological order starting with your current graduate program at Notre Dame. Provide your upcoming anticipated graduation date, as well as actual graduation dates for previous degrees (month and year). Be consistent with formatting degrees (M.A. or Master of Arts). Relevant coursework and thesis/dissertation title can be included when important to the position you seek, as can study-abroad institutions and programs.

NOTE: Latin honors should be written in italics and all lowercase: *summa cum laude*

## Professional Experience

Add any current and previous positions in reverse chronological order. However, you do not need to include every job you've ever had, and the accomplishments you describe within each position should be tailored to the needs of the job you are applying for. If you have a variety of previous positions, in order to keep the most relevant positions together you could have a "Related Professional Experience" section and an "Additional Experience" one. That way the items in each section remain in reverse chronological order, but the overall sections on the page stay in order of importance.

Write your accomplishments and accountabilities in the following formula: *action verb + accomplishment/accountability + results*. For example: "Designed and managed implementation of 2,000 PC WAN across 5 regional offices, streamlining division's communications and knowledge sharing." Highlight specific skills, qualities, and attributes demonstrated, and use 2-5 bullets per position. If you need to use more than five bullets to convey the relevant information, consider breaking them into smaller sub-sectioned groups of bullets.

## Research Experience

When your research is directly related to the position you seek, or the job requires or values research experience in particular, you could have a specific Research Experience section rather than combining it with your other previous positions. As with Professional Experience, briefly describe the research and your role/accountability in conducting it. Describe any results that have been achieved or what the objective of the research is intended to accomplish (*action verb + accomplishment + results*). Highlight specific skills, qualities, and attributes demonstrated, and aim for three bullets max.

## Technical Skills & Professional Involvement

List your various technical skills, computer proficiencies, languages, memberships in professional organizations and societies, and leadership positions. Don't assume the reader will know you have experience with a particular tool just because you study a particular area; be specific and list all related information. Awards or honors can also go in a section like this.

### Grammar Rules:

Because of the limited amount of available space in a resume and the extremely short amount of time an employer will typically glance at the page (6-30 seconds), some common "rules" of grammar, such as writing in complete sentences and spelling out numbers, can be strategically bent to increase efficiency. However, employers still expect things to tie together grammatically. Use a consistent first-person voice, past tense for past experiences, and parallel structure in your verbs.

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## What else should I know?

### General Considerations

Most information within each section should be arranged in reverse chronological order (most recent first). If an older experience is more related/important than some recent experiences, consider dividing into two sections.

White space is important on the page to increase ease of skimming/reading. Margins should be kept between 0.5" and 1.0" and a consistent space should appear between sections and between items within a section. We suggest one line between sections and a half line between items.

Unlike a CV, your resume will not generally include a detailed list of your publications. However, if your research is particularly important for the job you seek, you could potentially list 1-3 selected publications or presentations to emphasize transferable skills or research focus. However, full citations are not necessary.

### Quantifying on a Resume

The fastest way to strengthen most resumes is to quantify the size of your projects and the scope of your accomplishments. Numbers catch the reader's attention and validate your experiences. Talk about how much, how many, and how often. The best numbers are the results of your work, but the context can be just as helpful. When quantifying, the number (15) will attract more positive attention than the word (fifteen), because it looks different from the surrounding text. Use symbols like \$ and % to add additional visual cues.

### Consider having a "Master Resume"

A master resume is a resume document that includes everything you've ever done at every job you've ever had. It could be five pages long, but you use it as a record or archive from which you can pull the 1-2 pages' worth of information that relates to each job you apply for. No one but you will ever see the master resume.

## Summary (Resumes)

### Basics:

- Resumes are clear, concise and organized. Focus on the employer's needs, emphasizing skills and technical expertise that show your ability to add immediate value.
- Resumes are short. Stick to one page (2 at the most). If early positions are not relevant to the search at hand, leave them off.
- Resumes are skimmable. A hiring manager's first look may last no longer than 6-30 seconds.
- Resumes are visual. Use capital letters, bold font and spacing to improve the reader's absorption of key information.
- Resumes are dynamic and should be customized for each position applied for. If you can send the same resume to multiple organizations, it likely won't separate you from other candidates.
- Resumes contain strong action verbs at the beginning of phrases. A candidate's use of strong, clear, action verbs provides a quick inventory of skills/abilities that leave a lasting impression of competence.
- Resumes contain accomplishments and/or results that quantify candidate's impact whenever possible.

- Resumes are error free. Proofread several times for spelling, grammar, and structure. Your advisor and a Graduate Career Consultant should review the document prior to posting on Go IRISH or sending on to prospective employers.

### Advanced:

- Look at LinkedIn profiles in your field. Find skills that match your education and experience and retool for use in your documentation.
- Gain new experiences. Participate in professional organizations and community activities. Update resume to showcase service/leadership accordingly.
- Research applicant tracking software (ATS). Most organizations employ software to scan resumes for keywords and match to specific job posting. Using websites such as <https://www.jobscan.co/> will allow you to see how your resume matches up.
- Dump your resume into a word cloud generator to see what skills and experiences are highlighted.
- Remember, it's easier to edit than create. Keep your resume dynamic and up-to-date. Never stop revising and tweaking content.