

Revision checklist for résumés (traditional)

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The résumé and cover letter are designed to get a job interview, not to secure a job, as some writers believe. The résumé offers a prospective employer a quick look at an applicant's educational and work history and provides other pertinent information, such as special skills, awards, and interests. It should be succinct and clear so that prospective employers can absorb information at a glance. (Keep in mind that the résumé you are helping with may be one of hundreds that an employer has to read.)

While composing their résumés, writers often downplay work experience that they think is irrelevant to the job that they are seeking. They assume, for example, that being a bartender or a server in a restaurant has little or no relevance to a marketing position. What they do not realize is that the personnel manager of a marketing firm might be impressed by the fact that an applicant spent three years with the same restaurant, won the Employee of the Month award, or had responsibilities for handling money or training new employees. Writers should consider how their experience might relate to a particular job and play up those relations in their résumés and cover letters.

- Is the résumé pleasing to the eye? It should be balanced, not crowded at the top or off to one side.
- Is all necessary information included? (Check for the student's name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address. Review and ask questions about education, professional or related experience, and other experience.) References are not usually listed unless requested. Sometimes, résumés include a line indicating that references will be furnished on request.
- Is the e-mail address appropriate for a prospective employer? It should contain the applicant's name, not "ladiesluvme@yahoo.com" or "greengoddess@hotmail.com."
- Has the writer eliminated all unnecessary information (such as birthday, height, weight, gender, number of children, political or religious affiliation)?
- Are the parts logically and effectively arranged?
- Is the length appropriate? Unless there is a good reason, a résumé should generally be no longer than one page and certainly no longer than two pages.
- If an objective is included, is it accurate? (As a professional or career objective, students sometimes write that they seek "an entry-level position as a . . . ," but an entry-level position is an immediate objective, not a long-term goal. Applicants should focus on how the job fits into their career goals, not just their short-term job goals.)
- Are education and work history (and other such information) in reverse chronological order, with most recent activities listed first?

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- Has the writer considered all relevant experience, such as volunteer work, internships, course work, and school projects?
- Are job descriptions unnecessarily wordy? (For example, phrases like “responsible for” can often be omitted or tightened.) Furthermore, has the writer emphasized his or her strengths without exaggerating or misleading the reader?
- In lists, are all the items in parallel grammatical form? (For example, the list “writing proposals, trained new employees, planned staff meetings, Employee of the Year” is not parallel. A parallel version is “wrote proposals, trained new employees, planned staff meetings, earned Employee of the Year award.”)
- Is the résumé error-free? Misspellings, grammatical mistakes, and other errors may cause employers to ask, “If this person is careless in writing a résumé, what kind of work can I expect from him or her?”