

Resume Writing Guide

As you prepare to update your resume, please take the time to review the suggestions below. This information is compiled from some of the most popular, highly effective resume writing strategies.

Section 1: Contact Information

The resume header includes your name and contact information and should be the first section on your document. There are various ways to display this information but it is important to remember the following:

- Your name should be the largest font on the page.
- Your contact information should be aligned in a way that is clear and easy to skim.
- The two most important items, aside from your name, are your phone number and email.
- Do not use special characters like boxes or stars to separate information, these items can be distracting and make your document appear cluttered. Utilize alignment to the left and right margins to differentiate information. Center alignment of information can also be acceptable. The ultimate goal is clarity and clean alignment.

An example to illustrate these suggestions is provided below. Additional examples are provided at the end of this document.

123.456.7890

Add your personal email

Cleveland, OH

LinkedIn/Name

(if applicable)

First Name Last Name | Credentials (if applicable)

Section 2: Professional Profile

The second section of your resume should include a professional profile. This can be titled as “Professional Profile”, “Professional Summary” or something that brands your experience like “Research Associate and Leader”. The professional profile can be thought of like the modern day “elevator pitch”; if you could describe your career trajectory and experience or areas of expertise, what would you say? Here are some additional considerations regarding a professional profile:

- This section should be tailored for each opportunity to which you intend to apply.
 - Professional profile information should be a match between your strongest attributes and those sought after by the employer, grant awarding agency, board committee, etc.
 - Highlight your absolute, top-tier items in this section. Imagine this is the only section that the hiring manager will see - what should be included if this were the only section considered in the decision to extend you an interview or decline your candidacy?
 - This information should be clear, concise, and to the point. Use key words and avoid filler language or excessive detail.
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Section 2: Professional Profile Continued

Below is an example illustrating a formula for developing a professional profile:

Professional Profile

Experienced (industry identifier) with over (x) years of expertise in (topic area or activity 1), (topic area or activity 2), and (topic area or activity 3). (Personal identifier) skilled in, (top skill 1), (top skill 2), and (top skill 3). Final statement of passion or what sets you apart from other candidates.

Below is an example of a professional profile created using the above formula:

Student Success Coach and Advocate

Experienced higher education administrator with over 15 years of expertise in student success coaching, crisis intervention, and student conduct evaluation. Skilled in relationship development, program evaluation, and team leadership. Passionate advocate for the holistic support of student needs from matriculation through graduation with a particular focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the advising process.

Some additional points to consider given the above examples:

- Topic areas, activities, and top skills should change for each position to which you apply. This may not be a drastic change if your experience is in a concentrated field or when applying to very similar roles. In the event that your career has been vast and varied or you can claim various areas of expertise your editing efforts may be more involved.
- The items selected to fill in the topic areas, activities, or top skills areas should **match** those required in the job description or opportunity. As an example, if you list your top skills as public speaking, graphic design, and organization but the job description does not require these skills, you could be passed over for lack of alignment.

Section 3: Skills and Areas of Expertise

The third section of your resume should be a skills section. This can be titled as “Skills and Areas of Expertise”, “Professional Skills” or something similar. Avoid titles that are too expansive as this is a straightforward section. Here are some additional considerations regarding a professional profile:

- This section should be tailored for each opportunity to which you intend to apply.
 - Skills featured in this section should be a **match** between your strongest attributes and those sought after by the employer, grant awarding agency, board committee, etc. Use the job description to assist you with this matching process.
 - Highlight your top qualities in this section. Imagine this is the only section that the hiring manager will read in order to get a sense of whether or not you meet the required qualifications listed on the job description.
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Section 3: Skills and Areas of Expertise Continued

Below are two examples of how you could format a skills section.

Core Skills and Expertise

- Customer Service
- Data Analytics
- Team Management and Leadership
- Microsoft Excel Expert
- Digital Marketing
- Professional Public Speaking
- Excellent Written Communication
- Strategic Planning
- Business Plan Development

Example one is a clear, clean way to list several skills and areas of expertise. A list like this can include hard and soft skills but should be concise without additional details. A bullet pointed list is generally recommended for use in resumes as it gives a lot of important information regarding your qualifications in a concise format.

Top Skills

- **Program management:** 97% average success rate in in meeting project objectives
- **Data analysis:** expert analysis and reporting of quantitative data
- **Customer service:** 55% Net Promoter Score (NPS) in 2023, classified as an excellent rating
- **Team leadership:** skilled in leading teams of 5-27 full-time staff members
- **Grant writing:** secured \$1.7 million in funding during the first quarter of 2024 alone

Example two is an good option for an individual applying to a role which has fewer job functions or required skills or one which puts great emphasis on outcomes and impact. This format gives you the option to showcase less skills but more detail regarding each skill. You will notice that the skill itself is bolded - this is essential. Bolding the skill still caters to the short skim of a first round resume review because the skill itself stands out clearly. The additional information is supplemental and the reader does not have to read the rest of the sentence to understand the skill you have highlighted.

Additional tips for writing your skills section:

- Do not expect the reader to connect dots or assume correlation. If a job description requires an experienced public speaker, do not list “oral communication” as a top skill and assume they will make the connection that you are an experienced public speaker. When possible, use the language already listed in the job description as the reader will be pre-programmed to look for that language. It may seem too obvious to use the same text from the job description, but obvious is what you want when a first round review can take less than 10 seconds!
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Section 4: Professional Experience

The fourth section of your resume should be your professional work experience. Keep titles for this section simple. Generally, resumes should feature up to 10-15 years of experience. This is, of course, a general statement and there are certainly exceptions. Here are some additional pointers for writing your professional experience section:

- List experience in reverse chronological order. This means your most recent experience should be listed first.
- Bullet points should start with strong verbs and statements should be clear and concise.
- Bullet points should focus on skillsets and strengths. Avoid listing every job responsibility you have.
- Items listed should speak to the areas identified as important to the industry to which you apply. If you are an academic advisor with heavy experience in data analysis and you decide to make a career change to a data management role, your academic advising role should have supporting statements showing your experience with and skillsets related to data analysis. Conversely, if you stay in academic advising, your bullet points might demonstrate skillsets in relationship management, adult development, and student appointment software utilization.
- As with the three previous sections, use alignment and bold text to your advantage. The most important elements include your current and former job titles and dates of employment.

Below you will find a formatting example for the professional experience section. Notice bold text and alignment choices draw the eye to the most important information.

Professional Experience

Company Name	Position 1	City, State
Position Title		Year Start - Year End
o point one		
o Point two		
o Point three		
Company Name	Position 2	City, State
Position Title		Year Start - Year End
o point one		
o Point two		
o Point three		

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Section 4: Professional Experience Continued

For those who have spent several years with the same company but in different positions, the following format can be useful:

Professional Experience

Kelly Services

Cleveland, OH

Various Positions Held

Mar. 2015 - Aug. 2020

Kelly Services is a temporary staffing firm with a formal partnership with Case Western Reserve University (CWRU). Throughout my tenure, I held several positions within different departments at CWRU.

Department 1 Name

Position Title

Jan. 2017 - Aug. 2020

- point one
- Point two

Department 2 Name

Position Title

Mar. 2015 - Jan. 2017

- point one
- Point two

Some notes regarding the above example:

- You will see that the employer is listed first with a date range which captures the entirety of your employment with the company. This shows longevity. You may have served in 4 roles during a 10 year tenure, but this emphasizes you stayed within the same employer.
 - The overarching title in the example is “various positions held”. If you serve in the same role in various departments, you could change this to “department administrator” or a title which encompasses all of your roles instead of “various positions held”.
 - The statement beneath the employer and the overarching position/dates of employment is an opportunity to provide some additional information. If the organization is not well known, you can put a statement regarding what the organization does. Use this space to give more information that you deem “need to know” but limit to 1-2 sentences.
 - For all staff currently working or who have previously worked in a Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) department via a Kelly Services placement: please note that your employer in that case is **Kelly Services**, not CWRU. The supporting statement under the employer name is a good place to draw the correlation and explain the employer type so that you may represent CWRU on your resume.
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Section 5: Education

The fifth section of your resume should be education for most people. If you have completed less than 2 years of full time, post-graduate work, your education would be included at the top of your resume under a professional profile or skills section. Once you have more than 2 years of full time work experience, a hiring manager will be most interested in your work experience and your education will become a qualification they need to ensure you have rather than weighted as experience for consideration. Other considerations for the education section:

- Make sure to utilize the same alignment and bolding strategies from the rest of your document through to this section. The formatting should be consistent with your previous sections.
- Things like GPA, academic honors, etc. are often not significant in the hiring process. If you have less than 2 years of full time, professional work experience you may keep these items. Beyond that, remove supplemental information including minors or one-off classes.
- Ensure you are consistent. If you list the conferral year for one degree, list it for all of them. If you spell out one degree because it is not easily recognizable then spell out all degree names.
- If you have not finished a degree or certificate program put the designation “in progress”, “expected (insert month and year)”, or something similar after the program title. Do not infer you have a credential that you have not earned as this could disqualify you from a job offer.

Below is an example of formatting for the education section:

Education

Institution Name	Location City, State
Degree Name, Acronym	Year Earned
Institution Name	Location City, State
Degree Name, Acronym	Year Earned

Section 6: Volunteer Experience, Awards, Publications, etc.

The sixth and final section of a resume is open for other items of relevance to you and the opportunities to which you apply. Some may have noteworthy volunteer experiences, others may have professional licenses, awards, or publications to list. Whatever you feature in this section should further emphasize skills and qualifications already listed or show another layer of your skills or qualifications not yet showcased in your experience while also being relevant to the opportunity. As an example, if you apply to research scientist positions but you volunteer for your church softball league every year and you list that on your resume - does that tell the reader something significant about you and your skills and qualifications for that role? When it doubt, ask yourself “how is the relevant?”. As a final point, make sure this section is formatted in a way that is congruent with the sections that come before it.

Student Success Coach and Advocate

Experienced higher education administrator with over 15 years of expertise in student success coaching, crisis intervention, and student conduct evaluation. Skilled in relationship development, program evaluation, and team leadership. Passionate advocate for the holistic support of student needs from matriculation through graduation with a particular focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the advising process.

Core Skills and Expertise

- Customer Service
 - Learning and Development
 - CRM Software
- Microsoft Excel Expert
 - Inclusive Advising
 - Professional Public Speaking
- Excellent Written Communication
 - Crisis Intervention
 - Time Management

Professional Experience

Company Name	Position 1	City, State
Position Title		Year Start - Year End
- point one - Point two - Point three		
Company Name	Position 2	City, State
Position Title		Year Start - Year End
- point one - Point two - Point three		
Company Name	Position 2	City, State
Position Title		Year Start - Year End
- point one - Point two - Point three		

Education

Institution Name	Location City, State
Degree Name, Acronym	Expected May 2025
Institution Name	Location City, State
Degree Name, Acronym	Year Earned

Professional Profile

Experience researcher with over 12 years of experience in (skill or activity 1), (skill or activity 2), and (skill or activity 3). Skilled in data analysis, client relations, and research team leadership. Passionate in changing the lens through which research is conducted to ensure strong data integrity, a collaborative process, and a product which promotes conversation and social change.

Top Skills and Expertise

- Program management: 97% average success rate in in meeting project objectives
- Data analysis: expert analysis and reporting of quantitative data
- Customer service: 55% Net Promoter Score (NPS) in 2023, classified as an excellent rating
- Team leadership: skilled in leading teams of 5-27 staff members
- Grant writing: secured \$1.7 million in funding during the first quarter of 2024 alone

Professional Experience

Kelly Services Cleveland, OH
Various Positions Held Feb. 1999 - Aug. 2010

Kelly Services is a temporary staffing firm with a formal partnership with Case Western Reserve University (CWRU). Throughout my tenure, I held several positions within different departments at CWRU.

Department 1 Name
Position Title Jan. 2017 - Aug.
2010

- point one
- Point two

Department 2 Name
Position Title Mar. 2015 - Jan. 2017

- point one
- Point two

Education

Institution Name Location City, State
Degree Name, Acronym Year Earned

Alternate Header Examples

1

First Name Last Name

123.456.7890	LinkedIn/Name
Add your personal email	(If applicable) Cleveland, OH

2

First Name Last Name

123.456.7890	LinkedIn/Name
Add your personal email	(If applicable) Cleveland, OH

3

First Name Last Name

123.456.7890	LinkedIn/Name
Add your personal email	(If applicable) Cleveland, OH

4

First Name Last Name

123.456.7890
Add your personal email
Cleveland, OH
LinkedIn/Name (if applicable)

5

First Name Last Name

Add your personal email	123.456.7890
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6

First Name Last Name

Cleveland, OH
Add your personal email
123.456.7890
