



Resume Guidelines

Ready Reference ♦ E-4

College of Engineering, Architecture & Technology ♦ Career Services

While no "right" or "proper" design for resume content exists, a few guidelines for resume format are commonly accepted practices. Following these structural rules for your resume will help you present a professional impression to prospective employers.

Resume Length

One page is the accepted rule for resume length. A two-page resume should only be used if you have extensive experience or qualifications relevant to the position for which you are applying. If you do choose to develop a two-page resume, be sure to organize your content in a manner that places the information most likely to impress an employer on the first page. An employer is not likely to look at the second page if the first page is not impressive.

Type Size and Style

A resume should always be typed with the font size between 10 point and 12 point with absolutely no information crossed out or handwritten. In regards to the type style, use a style that is both professional and easy to read. Dense styles and styles with curlicues should be avoided. A few common font styles are Times, Schoolbook, New Century, Optima, Palatino, Helvetica, Futura, Universe, and Courier.

Margins

The margins of your resume serve two basic purposes. First, the margins can contribute to the visual appeal of your resume. Overly narrow margins can make your resume appear jumbled, and overly wide margins can project a perception of emptiness in your resume. The standard rule of thumb is to set your margins at one inch (1") on all sides to create a well-balanced design. If you are in a crunch for space, try decreasing the top and bottom margins slightly, but avoid decreasing the side margins. Side margins are the key to the second purpose of your resume margins, to provide your prospective employer with space to make notes on your resume.

Sentence Structure

Think "phrases", rather than sentences. Statements should be brief and informative rather than long and excessively descriptive. Short sentences are easier and faster to read and understand, showing that you value the time the prospective employer is taking to review your resume.

Also, be sure that the grammatical structure of your sentences is correct and consistent. Past tense should be used when describing experiences you have already had or activities in which you have already participated. Present tense should be used only to describe those activities in which you are currently involved. Avoid beginning sentences with the word "I"; the employer already knows that the resume is about you.

Word Choice

Use active wording to add power to your resume. Begin your sentences with action verbs that describe exactly what you did, or are still doing, in your experiences and activities. See Ready Reference E8 for a list of action verbs.

Paper Selection & Printing

When you are ready to print the final copy of your resume, a professional quality paper and laser printer should be used. A bond paper in a solid conservative color, such as white, ivory, or light gray, is the best stationary to use. Dark colored paper and patterned paper should be avoided because your resume will likely be photocopied for review by more than one person, and dark or patterned paper does not copy or scan well. Free resume paper is available from CEAT Career Services.

✓ **HOT TIP:** Don't rely on spell check to catch all of the errors in your resume. Be sure you proofread your resume, and have several others proofread it as well. Errors imply you didn't put your full effort into your resume, therefore the job isn't important to you.

Oklahoma State University
College of Engineering, Architecture & Technology
Career Services Office ♦ 101 Engineering North ♦ Stillwater, OK 74078
405.744.3920 ♦ cathy.southwick@okstate.edu
www.hireOSUgrads.com