



How to Write a Functional Résumé

A functional résumé organizes your qualifications around skills and accomplishments. It gives you space to show what you can contribute when your past job titles do not fully reflect your abilities.

Among the three common résumé formats—chronological, functional, and combination—the functional format places the greatest emphasis on:

- Skills and capabilities relevant to the position.
- Accomplishments from employment, projects, education, or volunteer work.
- Experience grouped by relevance rather than by date.

The goal is to help employers recognize the connection between your experience and their needs.

When to Consider a Functional Résumé

A functional résumé may help when you are changing careers, returning to work, or drawing on significant experience gained outside paid employment. It can also help applicants with limited work experience organize evidence from internships, coursework, and community activities.

However, frequent job changes or employment gaps do not automatically make this the best choice. Employers still need to understand where and when you developed your skills.

CareerOneStop notes that most employers prefer a chronological résumé. A combination format offers another option: highlight relevant skills near the top, then provide a clear employment history.

Choose a Simple, Readable Format

Use a clean layout with consistent spacing, readable type, and clear section headings. A straightforward, single-column design is a practical choice for online applications.

Templates can help you get started, but avoid elaborate graphics, crowded layouts, and decorative elements that compete with your qualifications. Follow the employer's instructions for file type and submission.

Use familiar main headings such as "Professional Summary," "Relevant Skills and Accomplishments," "Work History," and "Education." Within the skills section, choose descriptive subheadings that reflect the position you want.

Put Contact Information at the Top

Include your name, phone number, professional email address, and city and state. Add an updated LinkedIn profile or relevant portfolio link if it strengthens your application. A full street address is generally unnecessary.

Place essential contact information in the main body of the document rather than relying on a word processor's header or footer. Use a consistent visual style for your résumé and cover letter.

Write a Focused Professional Summary

A short professional summary can explain how your background prepares you for the position, especially during a career change.

Focus on relevant strengths and experience. Avoid general statements about wanting a challenging job or an opportunity to grow.

For example:

Retail supervisor transitioning into administrative coordination, with experience scheduling teams, maintaining records, resolving customer concerns, and training new employees.

Keep the summary specific and accurate. If it adds little beyond the rest of your résumé, you can leave it out.

Organize Skills and Accomplishments by Relevance

This is the central section of a functional résumé. Select a few skill categories that match the employer's priorities, such as:

- Project coordination.
- Customer service.

- Technical support.
- Training and team leadership.

Under each heading, use concise bullet points to show how you applied that skill and what you accomplished. Identify the setting when it helps the reader understand your contribution.

For example:

Training and Team Support

- Developed an onboarding checklist for new employees at a retail store.
- Led practice sessions to help volunteer event staff answer common attendee questions.

Organization and Scheduling

- Coordinated weekly shift coverage for a team of 12 employees.
- Managed registration records and volunteer assignments for a community fundraiser.

These examples illustrate the format; replace them with your own experience. Include reliable measurements when available, but never invent numbers or outcomes.

Give Accomplishments Enough Context

A skill label alone tells an employer very little. Support each claim with an action, a setting, and a result when possible.

Instead of writing:

Strong communication skills.

Write:

Created a customer FAQ guide that helped retail staff give consistent answers about returns and exchanges.

Relevant experience can come from paid work, freelance assignments, volunteer roles, academic projects, or independent work. Label each setting clearly so readers can distinguish professional employment from other experience.

Avoid repeating the same accomplishment under several headings. Give each bullet a clear purpose.

Include a Clear Work History

Keep a concise employment section, even when skills receive most of the space. List positions in reverse chronological order, including job titles, employer names, and consistent month-and-year dates.

You can shorten older or less relevant roles, but do not omit work simply to disguise an employment gap. A functional résumé should make your qualifications easier to understand while preserving an accurate account of your background.

If you have no paid employment history, use clearly labeled sections for projects, internships, or volunteer experience. Complete any separate application questions about employment history fully and accurately.

Present Education Accurately

Include your institution, degree or credential, and field of study. If you are still enrolled, identify the degree as in progress and include an expected completion date when known. Do not imply that completed coursework is an awarded degree.

Recent graduates may place education near the top when it is a strong qualification. Relevant projects, coursework, and academic honors can help demonstrate skills.

A GPA is optional unless requested. It may strengthen an early-career application when it is high—often 3.5 or above. If you include a major GPA, label it clearly rather than presenting it as your overall GPA. [CareerOneStop's education guide](#) offers additional examples.

Graduation dates are a judgment call for completed degrees; include dates when requested. High school information is usually unnecessary once you have earned a college degree.

Add Relevant Skills, Licenses, and Certifications

Include technical tools, software, languages, licenses, and certifications that matter to the position. State proficiency levels accurately and note expiration dates when relevant.

Avoid duplicating your main skills section. Use this additional section for concrete qualifications that employers need to locate quickly.

Include seminars or short courses only when they add meaningful evidence of your preparation.

Keep References Separate

Leave references and the phrase “References available upon request” off your résumé. Prepare a separate reference list and obtain each person’s permission before sharing their contact information.

Check that any professional profiles or portfolio pages you link to are current and consistent with your résumé.

Review the Résumé Before Submitting

Read the job posting again and check that your strongest, most relevant qualifications are easy to find. Use the employer's terminology where it accurately describes your experience.

Proofread names, dates, credentials, and contact details. Check links and inspect the final file for spacing problems or awkward page breaks.

For examples you can adapt, explore [CareerOneStop's sample résumés](#), including functional and combination formats.

A strong functional résumé connects your skills to specific evidence and gives employers enough context to understand how those abilities prepare you for the job.