



What to Include in Your Résumé: Start With What Matters

A résumé introduces your qualifications for a particular job. Its purpose is to help an employer understand what you have done, what you can do, and how your background connects to the position.

Before adding an item, ask: **Does this help explain why I am qualified for this job?**

That question provides a useful starting point for choosing experience, accomplishments, education, and skills. Your résumé should give readers enough context to assess your qualifications while keeping the most relevant information easy to find.

Begin With the Employer's Needs

Read the job announcement carefully. Identify the main responsibilities, required qualifications, and skills the employer emphasizes.

Then match those priorities with evidence from your background. You may have directly related employment, transferable skills from another field, or relevant experience from projects, education, and volunteer work.

Use the employer's terminology when it accurately describes your experience. Keep every claim specific and supportable.

Include the Essential Information

Most résumés include:

- **Contact information:** Your name, phone number, professional email address, and city and state. Add a relevant portfolio or professional profile link when useful.
- **Experience:** Job titles, employers, employment dates, and descriptions of relevant responsibilities and accomplishments.
- **Education:** Schools, degrees or credentials, and relevant fields of study.
- **Skills and credentials:** Technical abilities, languages, licenses, and certifications that matter to the position.

A professional summary, projects, volunteer experience, or selected honors may also strengthen your application. Choose sections according to what you can demonstrate and what the employer needs.

Describe Relevant Experience Clearly

Give readers a brief explanation of your role, followed by evidence of your contributions. A short introductory sentence can establish context, while concise bullets make responsibilities and accomplishments easy to scan.

For example:

Coordinated office scheduling and records for a community education program.

- Introduced a shared calendar that helped staff identify scheduling conflicts.
- Reorganized registration records to make participant information easier to retrieve.

These examples illustrate the approach; use your own verified experience.

Responsibilities help employers understand the scope of your work. Accomplishments show how you performed it. Include enough of each to make your qualifications clear, without reproducing a full job description. [CareerOneStop's work experience guide](#) recommends emphasizing the skills, tasks, and outcomes most relevant to the target job.

Show Contributions and Results

Look for examples of problems solved, service improved, work completed, or resources used more effectively. Your value may involve helping customers, supporting colleagues, improving accuracy, or keeping an essential process running smoothly.

Use reliable measurements when they add meaning. “Reduced report preparation time from eight hours to five” is more informative than “greatly improved efficiency.”

Not every contribution needs a number. Describe results plainly when measurements are unavailable, and distinguish your individual contribution from a team’s achievement.

Include awards or recognition when they provide useful evidence of relevant performance or ability.

Present Education and Skills Accurately

Include education and training that help establish your qualifications. Relevant coursework can be useful, particularly for students, recent graduates, and people changing careers.

If you have not completed a degree, describe your status clearly. Use wording such as “Coursework in accounting” or identify the degree as in progress, with an expected completion date when known.

Skills gained through work or independent study can also belong on your résumé. Be specific about what you can do. For example, “Excel: pivot tables and lookup functions” tells an employer more than “computer proficient,” provided it accurately reflects your ability.

List seminars and short courses selectively. Give priority to training that remains relevant and credentials the employer needs.

Use a Summary When It Helps

An optional “Professional Summary” or “Qualifications Summary” can connect your strongest experience and skills near the top of the résumé.

Keep it brief and factual. For example:

Administrative professional with experience supporting government and education offices. Skilled in staff scheduling, records management, and spreadsheet reporting. Improved office workflows by introducing shared tracking tools. Fluent in English and Spanish.

Use this as a model for structure, not as a statement to copy unless every detail is true of your background. The experience section should support the claims in your summary.

A summary is not mandatory. A focused objective can sometimes clarify a student's or career changer's direction, but a generic statement about wanting a challenging job adds little. [CareerOneStop's guidance on résumé introductions](#) explains how to highlight relevant qualifications at the top.

Choose an Order That Supports Your Application

Experienced applicants usually place work experience before education. Students and recent graduates may lead with education, projects, or other relevant preparation.

A chronological résumé presents employment in reverse chronological order. A functional résumé emphasizes skill groups, while a combination résumé brings a skills overview together with employment history. Any of these approaches can be tailored to a specific opportunity.

Use clear headings and a readable layout. Follow the employer's submission instructions and check the final document for errors.

Build From Evidence

A strong résumé makes your qualifications easy to recognize. Choose relevant information, explain your contributions, and keep the details accurate.

For examples and templates, explore [Harvard's résumé guide](#). Use a template as a starting point, then adapt it to the experience and qualifications you can offer.