



How to Write a Chronological Résumé

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A chronological résumé presents your work history in reverse chronological order, beginning with your current or most recent position. It helps employers quickly understand where you have worked, what you have accomplished, and how your career has developed.

Among the three common résumé formats—chronological, functional, and combination—the chronological format is especially useful when your recent experience closely matches the position you want.

When to Use a Chronological Résumé

A chronological résumé makes it easy to highlight:

- Your recent and relevant employment.
- Your job titles, employers, and employment dates.
- Promotions and increasing responsibility.
- Accomplishments that demonstrate your qualifications.

This widely used format works particularly well when your work history shows a clear connection to your next career step. A combination résumé may be useful when you want to emphasize transferable skills while retaining a detailed employment history. [CareerOneStop's résumé format guide](#) explains the differences.

Keep the Design Simple and Readable

Choose a clean layout with consistent spacing, readable type, and clear section headings. Avoid crowded pages and decorative elements that distract from your qualifications.

For online applications, a straightforward, single-column layout is a practical choice. Use familiar headings such as “Professional Experience,” “Education,” and “Skills” to help employers and applicant tracking systems locate information. Follow the employer’s instructions for file type and submission requirements.

Templates can provide a starting point, but choose one for readability and ease of editing. Your experience should determine the layout—not the other way around.

Put Contact Information at the Top

Include your name, phone number, professional email address, and city and state. You may also include a link to an updated LinkedIn profile, portfolio, or professional website when relevant. A full street address is generally unnecessary.

Keep 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.

Add a Professional Summary When It Helps

A professional summary is optional. Use one when a few focused sentences can clarify your qualifications or connect your experience to the position.

Instead of describing only what you want from an employer, explain what you offer. Identify your relevant experience, strongest skills, and evidence of your value. Avoid vague claims such as “hardworking professional seeking a challenging opportunity.”

For example:

Customer service supervisor with six years of experience leading retail teams, training new employees, and improving service processes.

Tailor the summary to each application, and include only claims you can support.

List Professional Experience in Reverse Chronological Order

Begin with your current or most recent job and work backward. For each position, include:

- Job title.
- Employer name and location.
- Employment dates, using a consistent month-and-year format.

- Concise bullet points describing relevant contributions and results.

If an employer is unfamiliar, add a brief description when it helps explain your work.

Give the most space to recent, relevant positions. The last 10 to 15 years can be a useful starting point, but it is not a strict cutoff. Include older experience when it strengthens your qualifications, and shorten details that no longer support your application.

Emphasize Accomplishments and Contributions

Help employers understand what you achieved, rather than listing duties alone. Begin bullet points with clear action verbs and explain the outcome whenever possible.

For example, instead of:

Responsible for training new employees.

Write:

Created a training checklist that helped new employees complete onboarding more consistently.

If you have reliable measurements, add them:

Redesigned onboarding materials, reducing average training time from four weeks to three.

These are illustrative examples; use your own verified results. Accomplishments can include improved quality, time saved, problems solved, successful projects, or positive customer outcomes. Not every contribution needs a number. Harvard's [résumé guide](#) offers additional guidance on clear, specific descriptions.

Position Education Where It Adds the Most Value

List your education in reverse chronological order, including the institution, degree or credential, and relevant field of study.

Recent graduates and applicants with newly completed, relevant training may place education before work experience. For experienced applicants, education usually follows professional experience. [CareerOneStop's education guidance](#) explains this placement.

College graduates generally do not need to include high school information. Include a GPA if requested or if it meaningfully strengthens an early-career application. Relevant coursework, academic projects, and honors can also help when professional experience is limited.

Include Relevant Skills and Certifications

Use a dedicated skills section for qualifications the employer needs, such as software proficiency, technical tools, languages, or specialized methods.

Be specific and accurate. Show interpersonal skills—such as leadership and collaboration—through examples in your experience section.

Include relevant certifications and licenses, along with expiration dates when applicable. Training, volunteer work, and professional projects may also deserve space if they demonstrate qualifications for the role.

Leave References Off the Résumé

Do not include references or the phrase “References available upon request.” Save that space for information that supports your candidacy.

Prepare a separate reference list to provide when requested, and obtain each person’s permission before sharing their contact information.

Tailor and Proofread Before Submitting

Review the job posting and make sure your résumé clearly addresses the employer’s priorities. Use relevant terminology where it accurately describes your experience.

Check employment dates, spelling, formatting, and contact information. Test any links and inspect the final file for unexpected page breaks or spacing problems.

A strong chronological résumé gives employers a clear account of your career and specific evidence of what you can contribute.