

# Creating An Effective Resume

## Resume Sections & Formatting

While there are some variations, below is a list of the main resume sections that employers expect to see. You'll notice that there are several "optional" sections. You can choose which sections to use, based on your own unique experience.

- Name & Contact Information
  - If you plan on returning home or visiting another city on summer break, include both a current address and a permanent address.
- Education
  - List your GPA if it is above a 3.0. You can include your cumulative and your major GPA.
  - List any honors, awards, or achievements.
  - Describe any study abroad experiences in a separate entry for each institution.
  - If you've attended additional colleges besides Beloit, include it in this section here.
  - Do not include high school experiences.
- Related Work Experience
  - For each position, list the job title, company title, company location (city and state only), and dates of employment.
  - Describe in several bullet points the work that you performed, as specifically as possible, leading with an active verb. See our "Active Verb Worksheet" for help.
  - A good formula to use is: "Action + Project or Experience + Result" when you are writing the bullet points. (For example: Led study groups for an upper level psychology class, to reinforce classroom material.)
- Related Activities
  - These types of sections can be broken down further, into Leadership Experiences, Volunteer Experiences, or Co-Curricular Experiences, depending on your experience and the opportunity to which you are applying.
- Supporting Work Experience
  - Use this section to list the positions that you held that can verify your work history.
  - They can be described in less detail than your Related Work Experience.
- Skills Summary (Optional)
  - Use this section to describe your transferrable or industry-specific skills. Think about proficiencies in specific software (beyond Microsoft Office) or strengths that you possess, including language proficiencies, certifications, or social media skills.

## **A Note about Length**

Your resume should be one full page in length. When trying to fit everything into this requirement, work on the required sections first, and then add the optional sections. Finally, adjust the margins (no smaller than 0.5 inches), font size (no smaller than 11 point), and spacing (single space) to fit the page.

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## Five Steps to an Effective Resume

### **1. Know your goal.**

Are you documenting your work history and accomplishments? Are you creating multiple templates for several career paths? Are you applying for a specific opportunity? Once you know your goal, keep that goal in mind throughout the writing and editing process. It should inform the choices you make, especially if you are tailoring your resume to a specific industry, organization, or opportunity.

### **2. Make one resume template and adapt it.**

Most professionals keep one master template of their resume and then create new versions for each job opportunity. When adapting your resume for a specific job opportunity, read the posting or job description very closely, to see what qualifications and skills the opportunity requires. Then ask yourself, "When have I demonstrated those skills?" Highlight those skills as much as you can, by moving them towards the top of the resume.

### **3. Know how employers read resumes.**

Your resume will be reviewed for 10-20 seconds, maximum. When employers read your resume, they will read the top headings of the page, followed by the left hand column of the page and then the interior of the page, in an F-shape.

Make the reading easy on the reader by having clear, left-hand justified sections. Keep your formatting consistent. (For example, if you bold one position title, bold them all, so that a reader can easily find each position title.) Highlight the most relevant information by keeping it towards the top of your resume, as much as you can. To test your readability, look at your resume from across the room. Can you easily identify the structure? If so, you formatted it well!

Finally, make sure that the resume is completely free of errors and typos. Have a few friends (or a Career & Community Engagement staff member) review it for typos, after you think it's done.

### **4. Tell your story – briefly but descriptively.**

Your resume is your opportunity to tell the story of your academic and professional pursuits to the world. Include information that is going to make a reader interested in learning more about you. Be specific and use descriptive language, while adhering to the 1 page length requirement.

### **5. Keep your resume current and accurate.**

Update your resume frequently, to reflect your most recent accomplishments. It's much easier to describe an experience when you just had it! As you move, make sure that your phone number, mailing and permanent addresses, and email addresses are updated. Finally, make sure that the dates (listed as month and year) of your work history are accurate.