

DEVELOP YOUR RÉSUMÉ & REFERENCES

The process of developing a résumé is an extension of your self-assessment. Unless you have thoroughly and honestly determined what your skills are and identified specific situations in which you have either developed or successfully used your skills, your résumé will not be distinctive or effective. Keep in mind that résumé writing is not rocket science, but neither is it simple. It requires careful thought, attention to detail, and understanding of purpose. Prior to working on résumé specifics, please keep in mind the following important ground rules:

TEN RÉSUMÉ BASICS

1. Be concise

The length of your résumé depends on your skills and experience. You may need more than one page to effectively state your strengths, but do not use space carelessly. Most undergraduates develop a one-page résumé; MS students and alumni may require two, while PhD candidates' resume may be three pages or more when including publications, presentations and references. Key information such as degrees and titles should be easy to find. Arrange the information by importance.

2. Know your objective

Your purpose in writing an effective résumé is to obtain an interview and to guide your interview discussion. Customize your résumé for the opportunity.

3. You cannot write a résumé in an hour or two

Writing an effective résumé is time-consuming, and requires planning, feedback, edits and adjustments. In fact, a résumé is never "complete." Adjustments continually improve content and format.

4. Presentation matters

Your format or layout should be professional, consistent and logical. Avoid using a template.

5. Use keywords

Employers search résumés for keywords. List every primary software tool, instrumentation, research method, and computer language. Read current job postings and employer websites to determine key skills currently sought after. Include buzzwords in your area of interest that match your search and skillset.

6. Spell check (*with U.S. English version*)

Don't simply rely on MS Word's spell-check function. For example, "software" and "soft wear" are both correct in the "eyes" of the computer.

7. Ask for feedback

You may be a good engineer and researcher, but you probably are not an expert in résumé writing. Consult the ECS staff and others with experience in current employment practices. Listen carefully and make wise decisions regarding the development of your résumé.

8. Think of résumés as advertisements

For each advertisement, there is a target audience and the advertiser emphasizes the most important and relevant information. Relate this approach to résumé writing. Sparingly use bullets, boldface or italics to emphasize details. Generally, one form of highlighting for a specific entry is sufficient.

9. Fifteen minutes of fame

Any topic on your résumé welcomes a question. Can you talk about your academic project, ASME membership, computer skills or leadership role for 15 minutes? Your résumé lists and describes events; the interview validates them. When writing your résumé, think about the next step—the interview!

10. Do not pay anyone to develop your résumé

They don't know you and it's really expensive.

QUICK TIPS

- *Do not simply list your degrees and jobs. Use what you learned in your skills assessment to fully develop each section of the résumé.*
- *Identify the degree and level (i.e., BS Chemical Engineering), expected degree date, institution and GPA.*
- *Use the official name of the school: University of Wisconsin-Madison.*
- *List study abroad experiences.*
- *Be sure your degree is correct. Department names and degrees differ—for example, "Industrial Engineering" (degree) vs. "Industrial & Systems Engineering" (department name).*

ACTION VERBS

Use consistent verb tense (generally past tense). Start phrases with descriptive action verbs. Supply quantitative data whenever possible. Adapt terminology to include key words. Incorporate action verbs with keywords and current "hot" topics, programs, tools, testing terms, and instrumentation to develop concise, yet highly descriptive phrases. Remember that résumés are scanned for such words, so do everything possible to incorporate important phraseology and current keywords into your résumé.