

# The Résumé

## Resume Formats

There are two main ways to organize your information in a résumé: *experience-based* and *skills-based*. There is no "best" résumé format. Consider your skills and experience and determine which will showcase you best. Sometimes, combining features from both formats into a "hybrid" format may be most effective. It is also important to consider the specific requirements of different industries or employers. The two main formats are:

- **Experience-based ("chronological")** - Emphasizes a candidate's work experience in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent job. It highlights the progression and continuity of a career. Accomplishment statements are listed below for each role. This type of resume is commonly used by candidates with a stable work history and a clear career path.
- **Skills-based ("functional")** - focuses on a candidate's skills, abilities, and qualifications rather than their work history. It organizes information into skill-based sections, highlighting relevant skills and achievements. If you have limited relevant work experience and want to highlight your transferable skills, coursework, or projects, a functional resume can showcase your abilities more effectively.

## Resume Tips

1. Tailor your resume - Targeting your resume to the specific job you are applying for is crucial in highlighting your relevant skills and experiences. Use keywords from the posted job description to make it easier for employers to connect your skills to the job, but include your own context and evidence. You may have more than one résumé format to suit the type of work you are seeking, e.g., a functional resume for your first job in your field, and a chronological resume for your summer jobs.
2. Don't only focus on paid experiences. Remember: academic coursework, experiential learning, volunteering, and extra-curricular activities can all be relevant in the world of work. To include these in your "Experience" section, entitle it "Relevant Experience" not "Employment" (which refers to just paid work). Use "(volunteer)" next to the position title to avoid any misunderstandings.
3. Consistency is key. Inconsistent formatting can make your resume look unprofessional. Ensure that your resume has consistent font, spacing, and bullet points. Also, avoid fancy templates, charts, tables or graphics. Simplicity is best! Once you've crafted your perfect format, stay consistent with your cover letter and keep the same contact info header, font, and margins.
4. Be concise and persuasive. Start statements with a strong action word – never use "Responsibilities included..." When you're describing your experience, highlight your accomplishments over job duties. Wherever possible, include results and measurable impact.

## Résumé Considerations for Application Tracking Systems (ATS)

Some organizations use software to filter applications based on specific criteria related to the job requirements. ATS may be the gatekeeper, but ultimately, a human will read your application. For ATS-friendly résumés:

- Use MS Word format
- Use keywords and keyword phrases from the job description, with your own evidence to support them
- Keep formatting simple: no tables, charts, photos, fancy fonts, or symbols
- Don't use a header/footer, since many ATS can't read them
- You can use bullets, bold text, and italics, as long as letters aren't obscured or touching
- Use conventional headings and job titles, such as "Employment History", rather than "What I've Done"

## Resume Sections and Content

### 1) Contact Info

At the top of the first page, include your preferred name, pronouns (optional), local address, phone number (1), professional email address (1), and LinkedIn URL. Resumes for some industries such as computer science may also include a link to their online portfolio such as a GitHub.

### 2) Profile/Summary

A summary statement is a brief paragraph at the top of a resume that gives a holistic view of your professional background. This optional section can highlight your qualifications, skills, accomplishments and experience. It should grab the reader's attention. Keep it concise, typically within 3-4 sentences, and tailored to each job application.

### 3) Highlights of Qualifications

A bulleted list that highlights your strengths that are relevant to the job.

- 5 to 7 key points that will encourage the reader to look at the rest of your résumé
- Include skills, experiences, and knowledge that are relevant to the position
- Describe skills and knowledge that are both transferable ("soft") and technical/discipline specific ("hard")
- Prove it – add details about the skills and mention how they were developed

### 4) Education

Degree/Diploma/Certificate;  
specialization/Major; Institution Name; Date completed (or "[Date] – Present")

Some additional information to include, if relevant to the reader:

- Relevant Courses, Projects and Research
- Academic Highlights/Achievements/Awards
- Professional Development Activities
- Experiential learning: internships, placements, community-based research – could be included within Education or Experience

For more info, visit [trentu.ca/careerspace](https://trentu.ca/careerspace) or drop by the Student Centre, Room 3.10.

### 5) Relevant Skills

This optional section focuses on the transferable skills you can bring to the job.

- Use subheadings to organize and group similar skill sets
- Include academic, volunteer, extracurricular and work experiences to describe how you developed/applied these skills

### 6) Experience

This can include both paid and unpaid experiences, such as employment and volunteer experiences, experiential learning, internships, placements, and community-based research.

- List experiences in reverse-chronological order
- Try dividing into subheadings to highlight the most relevant, not just the most recent, experiences. (e.g., "Relevant Experience" and "Additional Experience")
  - Remember to indicate when a position was unpaid, e.g., "(volunteer)"
- Focus on accomplishments during the experience; include transferable skills

### 7) Optional Headings

**Awards** – Includes scholarships, academic achievements and other recognition

- Include a brief statement describing the award (e.g. "Awarded for exceptional leadership in the community")

#### Volunteering and Extracurriculars

- If relevant, include accomplishment statements

#### Professional Affiliations, Certifications,

**Training** – Highlights professional development outside of postsecondary education

- Remember to keep everything relevant, and include dates and the name of the training institution

**Interests** - Indicates your personality and uniqueness

- Only include if space permits and has a purpose (i.e. somewhat related, unique, demonstrates a personal characteristic), e.g. a Teacher Candidate interested in outdoor education

**Do not include:** References, photos of you, ID numbers, date of birth, or any other personal information.