



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

**Career
Advancement**

Effective Résumé Writing
for U.S. Applications

What Is A Résumé?

A résumé is a summary of your education, experience, and skills.

Its main purpose is to convince a potential employer to invite you for an interview – to make them want to learn more about you. Resumes are used to screen applicants and determine which candidates have the backgrounds which most closely match employers' needs. It answers the questions: have you, can you and will you do the job?

It differs from a CV because it is intended for professional positions, rather than for academic posts.

The focus of a CV is on you and your academic work: your training, research interests, publications and teaching. In contrast, a resume serves as a snapshot of your skills and work experience. The focus of a résumé is on what you bring to the table as an employee.

Different countries have different standards for résumés. As an international student interested in looking for jobs in the United States, make sure yours conforms to the specific country in which you want to work.



Résumés Should:

- Be specific and as quantitative as possible
- Be accurate, concise and consistent
- Be written in the appropriate tense for when you had that position
- Be written in reverse chronological order
- Be truthful
- Be tailored to the position for which you are applying

Résumés Should Not:

- Be longer than one page (some exceptions apply)
- Have spelling mistakes or grammatical errors
- Be repetitive
- Use generic words like, “helped,” “assisted,” and/or “supported”
- Simply list the duties of each job or say what you were *supposed* to do

How to Tailor Your Résumé

- **Read the job description** carefully and use it as a guide for the terminology and phrasing you use in your resume. Think about ways you can make your resume match or coincide with the job description.
- **Consider the audience** → their needs are spelled out in the job description
- **Use space wisely and effectively**
 - Prioritize the needs described in the job description and give them the most space or attention
 - Tell your **best** story, not your entire story. This might mean emphasizing some things and even leaving other things out.
 - Think about ways you can emphasize that being international is an asset to the job
- **Use creative or descriptive categories** to guide the reader and to highlight your most relevant experiences

International Student Résumés Should Include:

- More explicit information on how large or successful a previous employer was
Ex: “A \$10 million marketing firm”
- Emphasize strong language skills with specific details
Ex: “Translated written and spoken Chinese on a daily basis for two years”

International Student Résumés (in the United States) Should NOT Include:

- Your age or birthday
- A picture of yourself
- Your visa or citizenship status
- Your race, nationality, ethnicity, marital status or family information
- Your references (they go on a separate sheet)



Getting Started

Your resume should absolutely include these categories:

- Your current **contact information** at the head of the page:

Ms. Resume Writer

123 Employed Drive | Resume Town, IL 60606

312-123-456 | resumewriter@uchicago.edu

- Multiple sections detailing your:
 - **Education**, including relevant coursework and any academic awards
 - **Experiences**, both paid and unpaid
 - **Activities** and/or **Leadership**
 - **Skills**, including language and computer skills as well as relevant certifications
 - **Interests** (if there is room and if applicable to the job opening)



Education

As a graduate or soon to be graduate of one of the country's premier academic institutions, you want to make sure your education is appropriately listed. Your graduate degree should be listed above your undergraduate degree. If you earned your undergraduate degree abroad, be sure you note the location of that school in your education section. Unlike a CV, honors, awards or papers will be listed in your Education section under the relevant degree.

Career Advancement recommends this format:

University of Chicago

Master's of Arts in Anthropology, Expected June 2013

GPA 3.8/4.0

Honors Awarded: Anthropology Department Award 2012

Bates College

Bachelor's of Science in Biology, June 2010

GPA 3.9/4.0

Relevant Coursework: Intro to Biology 101, Biochemistry 231

You do not need to put the length of time that you were at any institution, just when you graduated and/or received your degree.

Experience

This is the section you should use to detail all the experiences you have had. These do not have to be only paid positions, but can also include internships, volunteer work and school organizations.

List the organization, where it's located, the title of the position you held and how long you were there. You will also include 3-5 bullet points on your tasks, responsibilities and accomplishments from your time there. It will look something like this:

Bain & Company, Boston, MA

July 2010 – August 2012

Analyst

- Item #1
- Item #2
- Item #3



Skills and Interests

This is an opportunity for you to explicitly mark what hard skills you have. These types of skills can include:

- Computer skills
 - List industry-specific programs: MS Excel/PowerPoint/Word, LexisNexis (law), STATA (consulting), SPSS (research)
- Language skills
 - Be sure to use the word “fluent” as opposed to “native”
- Certifications
- Interests
 - If you have room, list any interesting and relevant non-work interests that you have: volunteering, athletic activities, cooking, etc.
 - Listing your interests can create a nice ice breaker during interviews and gives the employer a fuller picture of what kind of person they’ll be working with.



Résumé Tips:

- Be specific and quantify whenever possible
- Proofread multiple times for grammar and spelling (do not just rely on Spell Check)
- Use descriptive headers to guide the reader (“Leadership” might be more appropriate than “Activities” depending on the experiences you want to highlight)
- Organize information in reverse chronological order (most recent first)
- Start each bullet with a strong descriptive action verb (“Coordinated and oversaw events” not “Was responsible for programs”). *See the Career Advancement “Writing Résumés” handout for a list of action verbs.
- Don’t list minor duties like “opened mail” or “filed documents”
- Pay close attention to verb tenses and be consistent (most items will use the past tense)
- Use the language of the job posting to tailor descriptions of past experiences
- Carefully consider including test scores or other rankings. They might not mean much to your audience, or they could raise more questions than they answer.

Need More Help?

For English language courses go to:

<http://ihouse.uchicago.edu/esl>

If you would like to go over your résumé in person, discuss job search issues or work on any of your other application materials, make an appointment with Career Advancement. You can make an appointment in person at the Career Advancement front desk, online through Chicago Career Connection or over the phone at 773-702-7040.

Walk-In Hours for Undergraduate and Masters Students:

Monday – Friday
3:00pm – 5:00pm

Walk-In Hours for PhD Students:

*Check for weekly on-site walk-in hours with your dedicated Career Advancement graduate counselor

