

# Résumés

## CAREER CENTRE TIPSHEET

A RÉSUMÉ IS A SUMMARY OF YOUR SKILLS, EXPERIENCE, AND ACHIEVEMENTS, but more importantly it is your personal marketing tool. It will usually be your first contact with a potential employer, and its goal is to get you into an interview. This tipsheet is designed to guide you through the basics of the résumé and point out useful resources.

### Did you know?

Did you know that employers spend an average of only 10 to 20 seconds reading a résumé for the first time? Or that 85% of employers will stop reading a résumé with spelling or grammatical errors? With such a small margin for error, taking the time to create and carefully proofread a résumé that really highlights your most relevant skills and experiences is definitely worth the time and the effort.

### Marketing 101

A good salesperson articulates the key selling points of their product to potential clients. They focus on the needs of the clients, while trying to point out the best qualities of the product. In this case, the product is you and your skills, and the client is your future employer.

### Know the product

What unique attributes and skills do you have to offer the employer? Your skills are competencies you have developed through your work, volunteer, extra-curricular, and academic experiences. Some of the most frequently requested skills include communication, leadership, multi-tasking, writing, using computers, teaching, and organization. To learn more about what skills you have to offer, sign up for the You and Your Career Options workshop at the Career Centre.

### Know the customer's needs

If applying to an advertised position, you can gain a lot of information on the employer's needs from the posting itself. Remember, the most effective résumés demonstrate to the employer that you have the skills and abilities they require, by giving specific examples of when you developed and used these skills.

If you are applying for a position that does not have a detailed posting describing the required skills, you may wish to consult the following resources in the Career Resource

Centre: The Job Hunter's Word Finder, industry specific résumé resources and the Internet-based Career Cruising.

### Styles of résumés

Everyone has a different opinion of what a résumé should look like — there is no one right format. The most important thing is to choose the right style for you depending on how your experience matches up to the position requirements. There are three basic types: chronological, functional (or skills-based), and modified chronological.

**Chronological:** Information is presented in reverse chronological order, with the focus on work experiences. This works best when you have a clear career goal and career-related experience.

**Functional or skills-based:** The focus is on skills and draws on all your experiences allowing you to effectively present skills developed in your academic and extra-curricular activities. This works best when you have little direct experience and want to emphasize transferable skills and abilities.

**Modified chronological:** As the name implies, this combines the best of both the above types. This works well when work experience is in several areas or there are gaps in your employment history. Some employers prefer the chronological format because it is clear and easy to follow. You should choose the format that most effectively markets your skills and what you can contribute.

### Typical components of a résumé

While there is a tremendous variety in the way you can present your information in a résumé, there are standard components that should always be included. Contact information and objective generally appear first, but after that the order may vary depending on the position to which you are applying — you will want to put the most relevant information first when possible.

**Contact information:** Make sure the employer has a clear way of contacting you or leaving a message. Include your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and fax number (if available).

**Objective (optional):** Your objective statement should be brief, specific, short-term, and honest. It should relate

to a specific career area or position.

**Education:** In reverse chronological order — most recent first — list all your degrees and diplomas, with dates of completion or expected dates of completion, program or area of study, and educational institutions. You may want to include selected courses, G.P.A. (include scale), awards, academic achievements, thesis or research topic if relevant to the position to which you are applying.

**Experience:** This can include work experience, volunteer experience, extracurricular, or even course projects if highly relevant. Experiences are listed in reverse chronological order within each section (date, position, organization, city). Think about highlighting *career-related experiences* by grouping them into relevant and additional categories, or into areas of expertise such as teaching, public relations, administrative, field work, laboratory, or programming. Include *volunteer and extracurricular experiences* that demonstrate leadership, communication, interpersonal, time management, teamwork, organizational, and other skills. In a chronological résumé, they are often listed in their own sections. *Extracurricular activities* can include clubs, associations, community or campus activities, and hobbies or sports. *For skills-based résumés*, group your experiences into relevant categories such as communication, analytical, and computer. Include a brief work chronology toward the end of the résumé.

**Describing your experiences:** When describing your experiences be direct, assertive, honest, but not modest. Use point-form statements, beginning with positive action words to describe your responsibilities and accomplishments — include results if relevant. Accomplishment-based words include terms like: achieved, attained, established, improved, motivated, refined, and spear-headed. For help generating descriptions with more punch, pick up a copy of the *Marketing Your Accomplishments* tipsheet or use books like *2500 Keywords to Get You Hired*, both available in the Career Resource Centre.

### Résumé services offered by the Career Centre

**Résumé and Cover Letter Basics:** Do you have little or no knowledge in preparing a resume or cover letter? In this workshop, you will learn how to design an effective resume and cover letter. No preparation is required before attending.

**Résumé Tutorials:** Do you want to improve your existing résumé? Bring in your draft to revise it during this interactive peer-to-peer learning session.

Check out the **Career Centre** Website for a full list of résumé services offered to students and recent grads.

### Additional résumé resources

Looking for more examples of successful résumés, or maybe some dynamic words to spice up your descriptions? Stop by the Career Resource Centre for some of the following resources.

**Sample résumés:** We maintain a collection of outstanding student résumés in our *Sample Résumés and Cover Letters* binder. Also, you might want to consult books like the *Gallery of Best Résumés*, or *Resumes that Knock 'Em Dead* for additional samples.

**Keywords:** The *Job Hunter's Word Finder* and *2500 Keywords to Get You Hired* both have lists of occupation-specific keywords that are frequently used to describe skills and actions in certain industries. *How to Say It in Your Job Search* has keywords as well as sentences and paragraphs for those who need a boost in communicating their skills effectively.

**Résumé Tutor Online:** Consult this online resource that will help you learn how to build and compose a resume to reflect your skills, experience and achievements for the job that you want.

**International résumés:** *The Global Résumé and CV Guide* provides excellent information on local standards and expectations for résumés and cover letters for a range of countries.

### Useful websites

- **JobWeb:** Sample résumés and cover letters in a variety of styles for a variety of occupations, but all for students and recent graduates (USA).  
▶ [www.jobweb.com/resumes.aspx?folderid=116](http://www.jobweb.com/resumes.aspx?folderid=116)

### Here for you at the Career Resource Centre

**Career tipsheets:** over 40 topics available in the library and online.  
**Career research tools:** over 1,000 occupational books, *Careers by Degree* series, Career Cruising database access, and graduate school resources.

**Job search resources:** Résumé, cover letter, and interview guides; *Informational Interview Contacts*; and employer directories.

**Additional services:** word processing, Internet access, free local faxing, photocopier, and computer terminals.