

Mount Mercy Career Services

Resume Dos and Don'ts

Your resume is a marketing tool that lists a summary of your qualifications for employment. It will typically let the reader know what type of position you are seeking and will highlight your education, experience, skills and other relevant information. The best way to determine what should be included on your resume is to ask yourself what the potential employer would want to know about you to consider you for the position. The primary purpose of the resume is to get you an interview. Use the following tips to “wow” a future employer:

- **Using resume templates is discouraged.** Create your own unique document that is both appealing and easy to edit.
- **When emailing your resume and cover letter, try to send them as PDF documents to preserve formatting.**
- **Unless you have a very common name, consider eliminating your middle name or initial from your resume for easier name recognition.** (Nicknames can be in quotation marks between your first and last name.)
- **Only 1 telephone number needs to be listed.** Be sure that your email address, voicemail message and social networking sites are professional.
- **Resumes should be 1-2 pages in length and printed on resume paper.** If you are just starting out in your field, or if you are seeking corporate employment, your resume should be one page. If you are seeking a nonprofit position, or you have a lot of experience, it can extend to two pages (with your name at the top of the second page).
- **It looks best to have your name in bold, a couple of sizes larger than the body of the resume.** Your address, telephone number and e-mail address should not be larger or in bold.
- **Font size is generally 10-12 points and in Ariel or Times New Roman for easier reading.**
- **Margins do not need to be more than 1 inch.**
- **If a cover letter will accompany the resume, an objective is not necessary.** If included, objectives for internships may indicate that you wish to enhance your skills; objectives for employment should state the skills you will bring to the employer.
- **List everything (jobs, degrees, internships, activities) in reverse chronological order.**
- **Experienced job seekers may wish to include a Profile or Summary of Qualifications at the top of the resume, with 4-6 bullets or phrases highlighting the skills and traits that would be of interest to the specific employer.**
- **Include your current degree program and anticipated graduation date, even if you have just begun your studies.** (Freshman may include their high school.)
- **List your degrees by month and year. If they are more than 15 years old, dates should not be listed. Use dates of attendance only if you did not earn a degree. Be accurate in the name of your degree.**
- **Only the name, city and state of your colleges and employers should be included.** Details such as address, telephone number and supervisor will be listed on employment applications.
- **Consider having your section titles in all capital letters and bold font, the same size as the text.**
- **List degrees and job titles, or colleges and employers, in bold font with limited underlining and italics.**
- **Bullets should begin with action verbs and be in phrases, not sentences.**
- **Use the present tense of verbs to describe duties in your current job, internship or activities. Use past tense when describing duties from previous jobs, internships or activities.**

- **List results and skills when possible, not just duties.**
- **Write in the first person but do not use personal pronouns such as “I.”** Simply state what it is that you want (in your objective) or what it is that you do/did (in your jobs/activities).
- **Do not split names and phrases between lines or sections between pages.**
- **List other languages in which you are fluent or familiar.** If you have traveled extensively or live in another country, include information.
- **List your GPA if it is 3.0 or above.** If the GPA in your major is significantly higher than your cumulative GPA, you may list them both. If you graduated with honors (e.g., cum Laude), you do not need to include your GPA. Once you are in graduate school, GPAs are no longer required.
- **Awards and scholarships are listed on resumes for undergraduate and graduate students, usually towards the bottom of the page.** Academic accomplishments should decrease on resumes as relevant work experience increases, unless they are applicable to the position that you are seeking.
- **Be sure that key words for your field are used in your resume.**
- **Do not include personal information such as birth date, marital status, social security or license or certificate number.** Exclude hobbies, interests, and religion/ethnic background unless they would be considered relevant to an employer.
- **Include computer skills such as systems, languages, programs and databases.**
- **If you are applying for positions in social services, your community service activities should be listed and described briefly.** If you are applying to a “for profit” company, list them without descriptions.
- **We no longer note that references are available upon request.** Instead, have a page (with the same heading as your resume) that lists 3-5 professional references with their title and contact information. Take this list with you to interviews or send it when requested.
- **If you are changing careers, a functional (skilled-based) resume is usually most effective.** Please consult with a career counselor to determine the best style for you.
- **Mount Mercy University prefers that Mount be written out.**
- **Do not rely solely on Spell Check. It is sometimes inaccurate, and it will not work on words in all capital letters.**
- **Carry additional copies of your resume to interviews.**