

Tip Sheet No 2 – Writing a Winning Resume

What is a resume?

A resume is your personal sales brochure. It outlines your skills and experience, and tells the prospective employer a little about what type of work you are looking for. It also provides contact details so people can get in touch with you.

What is the purpose of a resume?

The primary purpose of a resume is to get you to the next stage of the job application process, which is usually an interview. A resume does not have to contain every historical detail of your career to date - it just needs to create a compelling picture of why you are a suitable candidate for the role on offer.

What do I need to include in my resume?

Typically, a resume will contain the following information:

- Your name and contact details
- Summary or career objective
- Core skills or strengths
- Work history – usually in reverse chronological order ie most recent role first. For each role, include role title, organisation, start and finish dates, job duties and, most important, key achievements.
- Qualifications – including formal education, training courses or certificates; any professional associations can also be included.
- Interests and hobbies (optional)
- Referee details (optional)

This information is usually presented in the above order.

Depending on the role, you may also like to include other details such as licences, languages, technical skills or details of published books or articles, where relevant.

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your resume to 4 pages or less. • Summarise your core strengths and skills. • Tailor for each job application, even if only slightly, to highlight relevant information for the role. • Include achievements for each role, using action words. • Account for gaps in your work history. • Get a friend or colleague to proofread it for you. • Include current contact details including mobile and email if available. • Use consistent fonts and layout. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a photograph unless specifically requested to do so. • Include personal details such as age, marital status, etc. • Include detailed job information for roles you held more than 10 years ago. • Include hobbies and interests that detract from the image you wish to present. • Use an email address that is unprofessional. • Introduce any information that may be perceived as a potential negative for the employer. • Overstate or exaggerate your achievements or responsibilities.

Key Points to Remember

- Your resume should **not** contain every last detail of every job or activity that you have ever done! Be selective in including or highlighting details that are relevant to the role you are applying for.
- Tailor your resume for each role. This may mean keeping a master version with full details, which can be copied and edited for each role. When tailoring, ensure relevant achievements and other details are prominent.

Do I need a Cover Letter?

You should include a cover letter for every job application, tailored specifically to the company or role. The cover letter is your chance to capture attention, highlight key areas of suitability and request a meeting or interview.

Tips for Cover Letters

- Keep to one page maximum.
- Address the person by name and title if possible, or use 'Dear Sir or Madam' – avoid 'To Whom it may Concern' at all costs!
- Clearly indicate which role you are applying for.
- Try to grab the reader's attention early on.
- Review the job advertisement or role description for the key competencies or requirements, and specifically address these in your cover letter.
- Try to convey enthusiasm and interest in the role. Explain what it is that really appeals to you about the role or company, but avoid 'gushing'.

Recommended Books

Resumes That Get Shortlisted by Jim Bright & Joanne Earl (2008)

The Resume Handbook: How to Write Outstanding Resumes and Cover Letters for Every Situation by Arthur D Rosenberg (2007)

The Complete Book of Resumes: Simple Steps for Writing a Powerful Resume by Karen Schaffer (2005)

Writing a Winning Job Application – A Guide to Responding to Selection Criteria by Lloyd White

Useful Links

www.careerfaqs.com.au/resumesandcoverletters - An Australian site that provides samples of resumes for specific industries and roles.

www.seek.com.au – The Tools & Resources page provides tips on resumes, cover letters, addressing selection criteria and more.

www.eresumes.com – Contains free tips on resume writing as well as a variety of samples; information is US flavoured.