

Developing a Professional Resume



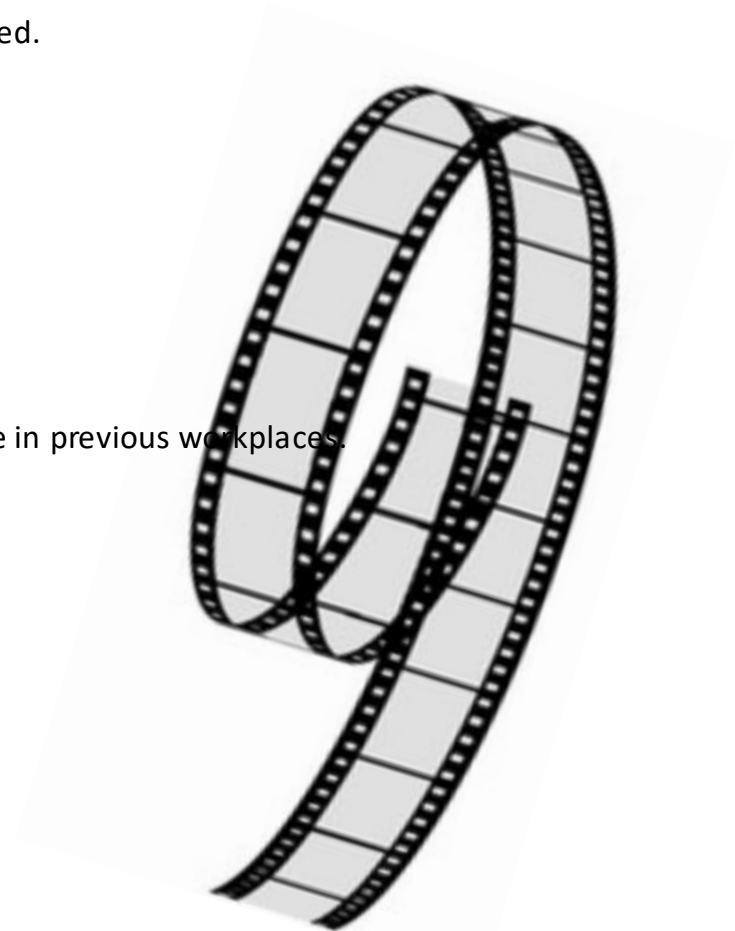
- ▶ What is a professional resume?
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WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL RESUME?

- A resume is a document whose purpose is to get you an interview with a private company, nonprofit, NGO, or government agency.
- It is a concise presentation of your experience, skills, and education that proves your skills and traits, and shows your accomplishments and contributions to organization in previous jobs/volunteer roles, focused on demonstrating your fit for a specific job you are applying for.
- In the US, a resume and a *curriculum vitae* are two different things. For academic jobs—teaching and research, not administrative roles—you write a *cv* that answers “Where did you go to university?” “Who has hired you in the past?” “What have you published in peer-reviewed journals?” ONWARDS offers another workshop on preparing compelling *cvs*.

A résumé is . . .

- Not a “career obituary.”
- Not a look back at where you’ve been and tasks you’ve performed.
- A “movie trailer”!
- A teaser of what you would offer if hired.
- A look at your accomplishments and the difference you’ve made in previous workplaces.



The reader:

- Should be able to identify the professional role to which you aspire—and the value you bring to it—in ten seconds.
- Should easily be able to identify key words relating to your roles and accomplishments.



PROFILE: first section of a resume

- A profile “positions” you in the eye of a recruiter or hiring manager as a qualified applicant for a specific position, so it will change with every job for which you apply. Avoid obvious traits every candidate is assumed to have, such as motivated, ethical, hard-working. What differentiates you from the average candidate?
- Sequence of information:
- PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AS A FUNCTION, NOT A JOB TITLE
- EXPERIENCE SUMMARIZED IN A SENTENCE
- CURRENT PROFESSIONAL FOCUS
- PROVEN SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE BASE (include transferable)
- LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH (it’s assumed)

SAMPLE PROFILE

Component	Sample language
Professional identity	Nonprofit program management professional serving civil rights advocacy
Experience summary	with expertise in needs assessment, program design, implantation, operations, monitoring and evaluation.
Current focus	Current focus is capacity building, institutional knowledge, diversification of funding sources
Proven skills for this job	Effective in turning around organizations during leadership transitions, funding losses, or other adverse conditions
Knowledge base	Leadership, consensus building, financial management, measuring results
Traits	Patient, open, collaborative
Languages (not English!)	Fluent in Ukrainian, Russian, and Arabic

IDENTIFYING AND ARTICULATING YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

Employers want to know what you have done to make an organization more effective, whatever your role was. Rather than list your job tasks, a resume should offer proofs of your skills when they were applied to a particular problem, opportunity, assignment, or task. Use this tool to identify your applied skills and knowledge base:

Problem—Action—Results—Skills (PARS)

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY	YOUR ACTION	RESULTS/MEASURE	SKILLS/TRAITS APPLIED
<p>URBAN POLICY ANALYST: Charged with identifying sites for future housing or commercial developments in a poor area of the Bronx, NYC</p>	<p>Conducted fieldwork, interviewed stakeholders, researched current owners, market values, taxes, and selling prices; produced a database and analyzed it</p>	<p>Recommended 60 potential sites, 23 of which were chosen for affordable housing and small business development to be constructed over 5 years</p>	<p>Research, fieldwork, interviewing, database development, data analysis, testing recommendations against criteria, analytical writing and presentation</p>
<p>PSYCHIATRIC SOCIAL WORKER: Assigned to work with a developmentally delayed 15-year-old boy in a residential facility who was acting out, throwing feces at staff, family stopped visiting, no staff interaction</p>	<p>Assessed his behavior and causes, designed a behavioral modification program for him, worked with him individually 5 days a week for 3 months, developing tools to help him work out frustrations in a socially acceptable way.</p>	<p>Family resumed visits, staff was found to be visiting him “off the clock” and he was able to join activities. This was an incremental, meaningful improvement in his quality of life.</p>	<p>Psychiatric assessment, choice of appropriate treatment, ability to build trust, effective implementation, outreach to existing resources</p>

FROM PARS TO RESUME BULLETS PROVING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- For your resume, convert each PAR into a brief accomplishment statement:
- X **problem statement** becomes implicit
- X **Skills and traits** illustrated are shown, not told
- Combine and shorten **action** and **measurable results** into a bullet of one or at most two sentences.
- Bullets will tell the story of your work content without task lists
- See how the two sample PARS on the previous slide were converted into a resume bullet

Examples of resume bullets from PARS:

- For a redevelopment area in the Bronx, built a database of market values, taxes, selling prices of current properties. Analyzed it and identified 60 possible sites resulting in 23 completed housing and commercial development projects within 5 years.
- Assessed and designed a behavior modification program for a 15-year-old boy institutionalized for developmental delays with increasingly behavioral problems. Within 3 months he learned better ways to express frustration, his family resumed visiting and he was able to rejoin activities.

SCOPE AND MAGNITUDE STATEMENTS

Replace job descriptions and task lists by providing a scope and magnitude statement of your overall job.

- **What** is the portfolio (scope) of your job, and on what scale (magnitude)?

SAMPLE STATEMENT and its positioning on the resume:

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Hired to revamp fundraising in anticipation of loss of major grant for this INGO with a 2022 annual budget of \$15 million.

- Researched possible new sources of funding, obtained a new 3-year grant donor
- Reduced risk by diversifying sources of funding

WRITING FOR IMPACT

- Specificity builds credibility: quantify your results when possible and monetize where applicable, showing \$ or % improvement.
- Write for the audience who will read this resume: what can you assume they know?
- To improve clarity and increase impact, remove redundant or unnecessary adjectives. “I came, I saw, I conquered”.
- Use AI with caution. Perplexity and ChatGPT are the most common. Fact check their results. Use only to help you write in your own words—do not use anything *verbatim*. Give it the job posting you are replying to as a check to make sure you address all requirements. It cannot cite accomplishments you have not provided—comes back with “yup got that!”
- Avoid the word “Relevant” as in coursework, experience. Use “Selected” instead.

Make it easy to read

- Common, clean font *e.g.* Times New Roman or Arial—see ATS slide
- Spacious, type at least 10 point, margins at least .7 inch
- Your name is the largest item on the top of the first page
- To make job titles stand out, use **ALL CAPS BOLD**
- Use italics only for subheads or foreign words
- Put dates of employment flush right on the same line as the employer name, so a reader can readily scan length of employment
- Spell out any acronym the first time you use it, *e.g.* American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

FORMATTING PROTOCOLS

INCLUDE IN US RESUMES	EXCLUDE FROM US RESUMES
No photos (use only actors and models)	photo
City and state, no street address. NYC is New York, NY	Birthday or age
Never New York City. In Queens and Staten Island, you must name municipality, i.e. Woodside, NY. Brooklyn is a city. New York, NY can stand for Manhattan or all 5 boroughs.	Marital or parental status
For you: Fully authorized to work in the US	Health statement
Cell phone, email, link to LinkedIn profile	
Header on the second page if any: 2 page limit (few exceptions)	
Put “page 2” on page 2, no # on page 1	
References go on a separate document	Employer may ask for references to be on resume, rare outside of academe

OPTIONAL SECTIONS

- VOLUNTER SERVICE EXPERIENCE—often included in an overall EXPERIENCE section
- PUBLICATIONS—separate peer-reviewed journals from other publications, just as you would in a CV.
- SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS. To show only most recent, can be SELECTED SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS.
- HONORS AND AWARDS—if only one or two, put within experience.
- AVOCATIONAL INTERESTS—only if proving needed skills, *i.e.* captain of a sports team validates transferable leadership ability.
- Avoid nonspecific section titles such as OTHER, ADDITIONAL

ORDER OF SECTIONS

- Name
- Contact info
- PROFILE or SUMMARY
- EXPERIENCE—may be divided to present similar roles together, but within each section, jobs must be in reverse chronological order (most recent first).
- EDUCATION—highest-level degree first; may have a separate subsection after degrees for Professional Development. Mention honors. In the US it is ok to put your GPA after your degree.
- TECHNICAL SKILLS—unless central to the job you are applying for, *e.g.* GIS

APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEMS

- These systems have rules that determine what they read!
- Most systems can only read PDF or Word documents, so avoid writing in InDesign or any other program.
- Use machine-readable fonts such as Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial, and Georgia.
- If you use a two-column format, the width of the columns must be equal. If they are unequal, the ATS will ignore anything in the narrower column.
- Most ATS systems will not read experience in sections not titled EXPERIENCE. If you have sections on Fieldwork or Volunteer Service, add Experience to that heading, *e.g.* FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE, VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE. Similar sections: INTERNSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS
- ATS systems do not read tables, boxes, headers, footers, or graphics, so avoid them.

COPYEDIT AND PROOFREAD

- Read for strategic flow! Are claims in PROFILE proven? Are there time gaps?
- Read your resume out loud to help you catch continuity problems, awkward syntax, extra words you may miss when reading it silently.
- Spellchecker does NOT proofread section headings because they are in other contexts often full of names.
- Spellchecker does NOT highlight word usage errors and recognizes any legitimate word, e.g. if you typed “pubic policy” for “public policy”.
- Proofreading is not just to correct typos, but also word usage. Common errors occur with homophones, *e.g.* their for there, incorrect verb forms *e.g.* the past tense of “to lead” is led, not lead.
- Subject/verb agreements are the most common grammatical error.
- Get feedback on your resume from peers, advisors, mentors, recruiters and assess it before making changes. Reasonable people differ.

TAILORING FOR A SPECIFIC JOB

- Once your resume is finished, recognize that for each job, you will need to tailor it for each job to which you apply:
- Change the order of the skill sets you present, and experience, to better align with the required skills and experience of each job. Do this in the PROFILE. You may need a broader statement of job function if you are applying for roles for which you are qualified.
- Separate experience into like sections. ATS systems read from left to right and top to bottom and may be confused by this, but you can change it on the resume you bring to an interview.
- Use the language in the ad as much as possible.

QUESTIONS?