

RESUMES: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

You can ask five different people their opinion on how to write a resume and receive five different answers. In the end, if you answer “yes” to the following four questions you are probably on the right track. 1) *Is it error free?* 2) *Is it easy to read?* 3) *Is it honest and truthful?* 4) *Is it informative and descriptive?* Beyond that, you will find different opinions on many of the specifics. Career Services states their opinion on some of the most frequently asked questions.

HOW LONG SHOULD IT BE?

Typically, for a new graduate, the resume should be no longer than one page. However, if you need to use two pages, this is acceptable, provided the second page is at least one-third text and all the information is relevant to the position for which you’re applying. If you go to two pages, make sure to include your name on the second page.

SHOULD I INCLUDE MY GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)?

This decision depends on how high the GPA is. Suggested cutoffs range from 2.7-3.7 with most career counselors using 3.0 as a minimum acceptable level to list. If your cumulative GPA is lower but the GPA in your major or your junior/senior year GPA is higher you might consider listing this instead. Make sure you are clear and honest about what you are listing. It is also recommended that you indicate what scale is being used (e.g., 3.5/4.0).

DO I NEED TO LIST AN OBJECTIVE?

Recruiters and career counselors seem split on this question. Many recruiters/employers like the objective because it helps them sort and forward the resume to the appropriate person or department. Many career counselors will indicate that it is only necessary to include an objective if your career goals are not obvious from the content in the resume. One thing is clear, if you include an objective, make sure that it is short, clear and to the point.

HOW FAR BACK SHOULD I GO?

Traditionally-aged students need only go back four years and should typically only include information from the college experience. Nontraditionally-aged students can go back 10 years but should only include significant and pertinent information.

SHOULD I INCLUDE INTERESTS ON THE RESUME?

Unless particularly relevant to the position for which you are applying, listing interests and hobbies is not necessary. Use the limited space on your resume to showcase your education, work experiences and other volunteer/extracurricular experiences.

IS IT BETTER TO USE BULLETS OR A PARAGRAPH FORMAT?

Either format is acceptable. However, given the amount of time an employer initially gives to the resume, bullets help to highlight the information and guide the reader through the resume. Paragraph format takes less space and allows the writer to include more information. In either format, make sure to use action verbs and simple descriptive sentences.

SHOULD I INCLUDE RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL INFORMATION?

It is best to stay clear of sensitive topics including religion and politics. Exceptions to the rule would be made, of course, if you are applying for positions in either of these fields. Legally, employers cannot use this type of information to make a judgment on your employability, but you never know how the information might bias them in the decision-making process.

DO I LIST MY REFERENCES ON THE RESUME?

References do not need to be listed on the resume. You should have a separate page using your same contact information at the top (name, address, phone) that lists your references, their relationship to you (instructor, employer, etc.) and contact information. You may want to make this consistent with the “letterhead” used for the resume and cover letter.

Remember that these are general guidelines to follow. Each situation may require adjustment according to the position and application requirements and each individual may need to adjust based on his/her background and experiences.