

Resume Basics: What, Why, and How

The purpose of a resume is to market yourself to employers by concisely summarizing your education, experience, and transferable skills. You should view your resume as a marketing and personal branding tool, used to convince an employer as to why you are the best person for the jobs. Most often, employers will have to “meet” you on paper before they meet you in person. With this in mind, the most effective resumes are not generic, but use the job description to guide their content along with your own personal achievements and contributions.

- **Sequence:** Your resume should be structured from most important to least important experience, in reverse chronological order (most recent to least recent). Your education is the most important thing you are doing, so goes at the top. The rest of the order is up to you. Is your leadership experience more impressive than your work experience? Flip categories around to reflect your most significant categories. Sports achievements will go at the bottom unless you are a CU Student-Athlete.
- **Length:** At this point in your life, your resume should be no longer than 1 page. If you are struggling to make everything fit, consider removing sections that are not pertinent to the job for which you are applying. A resume is not “everything you’ve ever done.”
- **Margins/Whitespace/Font:** You want to limit excessive whitespace, as much as possible, while ensuring that the document is not overflowing with text. Margins between .5 and 1 inch are recommended for business school resumes. You need to appear to fill a page, so make your font 12 if you don’t have a lot to put down, 10 point font if you do. Do not go below 10 point.
- **Alignment:** Use alignment to draw the reader’s eye to important information. For example, all of the organizations you worked for, job titles you held, and dates of employment should align so that a recruiter can quickly find this information. ***Alignment should remain consistent throughout the entire document.***
- **Formatting:** Much like alignment, formatting should remain consistent throughout your resume. For example, if you choose to bold and italicize your job titles, make sure you bold and italicize all every job title in the document. Use periods or no periods, just be consistent.
- **Content:** By the end of your Freshman year your resume content will be 75% high school and 25% college; by the end of your sophomore year - 50% high school, 50% college; by the end of your junior year – 25% high school and 75% college; by the end of your senior year it should be 100% college. So, get involved so you can start trading your high school experiences out for college experiences.
- **Errors:** Your resume should be 100% error free. Review your resume for spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Additionally, an extra set of eyes never hurts. Have a career advisor, faculty/staff member, or parent review your resume, after you’ve proof-read it.