

Which Resume Style is for You?

Before you sit down to decide what you're going to actually say in your resume, you have to decide which type of resume you should be writing. *Type* doesn't mean the design or basic look of the resume- the color paper you chose, the typeface, and so on. It refers instead to the way you organize, sequence, and control the emphasis of the information that you include in the resume.

Fortunately, you won't have to rack your brain to make the appropriate choice. You have only three general options, each with its own rationale. And the third one is a combination of the first two. The three types of resumes are as follows:

- ✓ Chronological
- ✓ Functional
- ✓ Combination

Now take a closer look at each type.

The Chronological Resume: By the Numbers

The chronological resume shown on the following page lists your work experience in-guess what? - a chronological sequence-except that it's in reverse. This is, by far, the most commonly used type of resume today and the one that is the most familiar to employers.

Advantages

The principal advantage of a chronological resume is that it gives employers what they're looking for: an easy-to-follow snapshot of your work experience. Employers prefer this type of resume over others because it gives prominence to what many people consider the most important criteria for hiring: what you are doing and accomplishing *right now*- at this particular stage in your career, as opposed to what you did ten years ago or when you were a sophomore in high school. The chronological resume is especially recommended if you fall into either of the following categories:

- ✓ The position you are going after is in a field in which you have a solid and consistent record of progress.
- ✓ The strongest aspect of your work experience is reflected in your most *recent* job, especially if it is a job that you still hold or have only recently left.

Describing your work history in reverse chronological fashion showcases your qualifications and strengths to good advantage.

Disadvantages

The principal disadvantage of a chronological resume is that it can lock you into a sequence that may not work to your benefit in certain situations.

Say the specific aspect of your work history that has the most bearing on the job you are now applying for relates to a position that you held four or five years ago. And say that you have had two or three jobs since then. In a chronological resume, you have no choice but to position the description of the job that you want to highlight somewhere in the middle of the resume rather than near the top.

Caution

Chronological resumes can also be troublesome in the following situations:

- ✓ You are looking to change careers, and your most recent position has no relationship to the job for which you are now applying.
- ✓ You have worked exclusively in one industry and are applying for a job in a different industry.
- ✓ You are seeking an entry-level position and have almost no work experience.
- ✓ You have been a chronic job-hopper over the past several years and have less than one year in most of the jobs you would be listing in the resume.
- ✓ Your employment history has large gaps- significant chunks of time in which you were out of work, voluntarily or otherwise.

The Functional Resume: Use with Care

The functional resume is organized around your skills, experiences, and accomplishments and not on the specific jobs you have held at various points in your career. It omits entirely or mentions only in broad terms the jobs you've held and when you held them.

Overall, a functional resume warrants consideration if you fall into any of the following categories:

- ✓ You are an entry-level job seeker with no significant work-related experience to speak of.
- ✓ You are reentering the workforce after a lengthy absence, and little of your work history has bearing on the kind of job you are trying to find.
- ✓ You are applying for a job in which your qualifications, presented in strict chronological form, would not portray you as an especially strong candidate.
- ✓ You've held several jobs, but those jobs do not demonstrate growth in responsibility or importance.

Tip

If you are going to use a functional resume, spend extra time on your cover letter to explain why you haven't gone into detail about your work experience.

Advantages

The chief advantage of a functional resume is that it enables you to give prominence to those aspects of your background likely to be of special interest to a would-be employer. Functional resume also serve to shift the focus *away* from aspects of your background (long period of being out of work, for example) that might hurt your chances to getting by the initial screening process. As the resume on the following page shows, the functional resume calls immediate attention to your accomplishments.

Disadvantages

The major disadvantage of functional resumes- and it is a *big* disadvantage- is that many employers view them with suspicion. Yes, your strengths and your accomplishments are important in the context as well: They want to know what specific job you held that enabled you to demonstrate the skills you describe in a functional resume. They want to know how recent that experience was. They would like to see, if possible, some continuity.

Caution

The less information you offer about the actual dates you held certain jobs, the more suspicions you arouse. Justifiably or not, many employers assume that if you're using a functional resume, you probably have something to hide.

The Combination Resume: A Good Mix

The combination resume- sometimes referred to as the *chrono-functional resume*- is rapidly becoming the resume of choice among many career counselors. As you can see from the resumes on the following two pages, this type of resume combines features of both chronological and functional resumes. It showcases your skills and accomplishments but also provides the reader with a clear- if thumbnail- glimpse of your work history.

The combination resume is worth considering if you fall into any of the following categories.

- ✓ You are looking to change careers and want to highlight your general skills rather than specific skills that relate to your past jobs.
- ✓ You have had no luck at all in getting past the screening process with a chronological resume.
- ✓ You are applying for a job that interests you and that you think you can handle, but the connection between your work history and that particular job could be stronger.

Advantages

The principal advantage of a combination resume is that, like the functional resume, it enables you to establish early on what you have accomplished in your career and what skills and attributes you can offer a potential employer. But because you also include in this type of resume a description of your work history, you diffuse the suspicions that often arise when this information is omitted.

Disadvantages

The only disadvantage of the combination resume is that some employers- those who prefer chronological resumes- may assume that you are attempting to conceal certain aspects of your background. All in all, however, this is not a disadvantage that you have to concern yourself with now that combination resumes are becoming increasingly common.

Adapted from "Job Hunting for Dummies".