What is a resume? The essentials you need to know

'Resume' is a word you'll hear a lot during the job-hunting process. A resume, sometimes called a CV or curriculum vitae, is a document that lists your work experience, education, skills and achievements.

You'll need a resume for almost any job application. It's considered essential information to give to an employer so they can weigh up whether you're suitable for a role, and if they want to invite you to a job interview.

What should my resume include?

- **Personal details**
  Start by listing your full name and contact information, including your phone number and email address.

- **Career objective or summary**
  These are short statements to help you pitch yourself. If you've recently left school or university and don't have much professional experience yet, begin your resume with a career objective – a sentence or two outlining your skills and your work ambitions. If you have experience in the workforce, you might want to include a short career summary instead, describing your experience and where you're aiming to go next in your career.

Next, include your education or work experience – start with whichever is more recent.

- **Education**
  List your latest education experience first and work backwards, this includes courses or qualifications you've completed at university, TAFE or other institutions that relate to the role you're interested in applying for. Include your high schooling if it was less than five years ago. For each experience, include the qualification you received, where you studied, when you started and finished, any special areas of study, plus awards or other achievements.

- **Work experience**
  List your most recent jobs including the title of your position, the name and location of the company or organisation, and the dates you worked there. Place them in order with the most recent job first. Under each job, use bullet points to give a brief overview of your responsibilities and achievements, weaving in the skills you used. You can also mention relevant internships and volunteer work in this section – just make sure you identify that you volunteered or interned.

After this, it's a good idea to add some more information to reinforce or add to the picture of what

you've got to offer.

- **Skills, strengths or interests**
  You could create headings for these topics and list information that's relevant to the job you're applying for. Highlight any relevant professional memberships, too.
- **References**
  Most employers will require references from people you know professionally who can vouch for your skills and abilities. You could include contact and company details for a former employer, manager, or an academic advisor if they agree to be your referee, or you might wish to write "references available on request".

How long should my resume be?

Keep your resume short and to the point, so you can make a good impression when an employer takes a quick glance at it. Consider making your resume one or two pages if you have less than 10 years of professional experience. Senior executives or academics may like to have resumes that are three or more pages long.

What should it look like?

It's important to make sure the design and layout of your resume is neat and makes it easy to read. Use one or two clear fonts and use headings, bullet points and paragraphs to split up the text. While you're at it, make sure your spelling and grammar are correct.

What to leave out

Your resume is meant to give a summary of your skills and experience – so there's no need to include every detail. Some information isn't necessary in a resume:

- Leave out personal details such as your home address, religion, age or marital status
- There's no need to list every job you've ever had – especially if a job isn't relevant to the role you're applying for now.
- Don't include your salary expectations or previous salaries you've received – you can list this information in your SEEK Profile.

Still not sure where to start? Download our free resume template and make it your own.

For more tips, check out our other articles on resumes and cover letters