

# Résumé Guidelines

A résumé (sometimes called a *vita* or a *curriculum vitae*) is "a short account of one's career and qualifications."<sup>2</sup> The French spelling of the word—with the accents—is often preferred, because this distinguishes it from the verb "resume" (as in "The class *resumed* after the fire drill").

Having a résumé already prepared when a special opportunity arises is a tremendous boon. When I am asked to write a letter of recommendation, I *always* ask the student for a copy of his or her résumé (as well as his or her transcript—because these are not the same thing, by any means). Similarly, there have been numerous times in our department where we have wanted to recommend a student for a special program or award. Much of the time, we have to include the student's résumé with our recommendation, so of course we contact the student—who often isn't expecting this request—and ask for a current résumé. This has (too often) led to an all-nighter, as that "lucky" student has to throw his or her life experiences onto a page on short notice—and invariably he or she also has several other course assignments due at the same time.

If you prepare a résumé now, it is much easier to polish it up when you really need it. You won't regret it! It would be great to get into the habit of updating it occasionally, such as once a quarter. Keep a file folder or envelope with "Résumé Updates," into which you can drop items that you want to add to your résumé the next time you work on it—things like recital programs, letters announcing that you made the Dean's List, and so forth.

Résumés can be organized various ways, and sometimes emphasize different things, depending on the purpose for which they're needed. For this project, you will design a generic (and complete) résumé, gathering together *everything* that might come in useful, and organizing your information into a clear, attractive layout. (The beauty of word-processing is that you can always adapt a copy of your résumé to suit a particular need.) This project should be regarded as a "master" résumé, where you can start to maintain a complete list of all your accomplishments.

## Checklist / Considerations

(You do not need to include every item from the following list on your résumé; incorporate the material that is relevant to what you have to offer.)

1. Your **name** goes at the top; centered often looks best. Play around with fonts and styles.
2. Some career counselors advise putting the **month and year** in an upper corner.
3. You should include current and permanent postal and email **addresses** (and telephone/fax numbers)
4. If you maintain a website, include its **URL**.
5. You need to make your main **area(s) of endeavor** obvious. Do you want to be thought of as a composer? An oboist? An educator? Do you offer multiple strengths? You may want to put this information directly under your name at the top, or have a separate heading for it.
6. You should list your **education**—schools attended, years of attendance, degrees earned (put your expected date of graduation and degree for Cal Poly). If you earned special recognition at any school, list that also. How far back should you go? Nothing before high school for undergraduates; if you proceed into graduate studies, your ordinary high school data should be dropped at that point.
7. **Work experience** generally comes next—jobs held, with dates of employment. It's a good idea to

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<sup>2</sup> *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. "résumé."

summarize your responsibilities after each position. If some of your jobs have been career-oriented, and others were not, it's okay to separate them into separate categories. Again, nothing before your high school years, unless it was an extraordinarily unusual position.

8. It is also expected for musicians to list their **Professional Experience**, even the unpaid opportunities. Therefore, if you've done volunteer work in music, or been featured as a composer, solo performer, or helped to engineer a cd, etc., you should include those items. Include the date(s), the repertory (as appropriate), and a brief description of your activities if not evident from the heading. [So: if you can't remember exactly when and what you played in a student recital two years ago, start looking for the program you so carefully saved (!), or go to the Music Department to consult its records.]
9. If you have earned **honors** or **awards** during your career thus far, be sure to list them! This includes scholarships you've been awarded, inclusion on the Dean's List, prizes in competitions, participation in honor ensembles, and so forth. List the award, the date, and a brief explanation of the nature of the award if it is not obvious. [Some advisors will recommend that you present this information earlier in your résumé, perhaps following "Education." This is up to you.]
10. Many advisors recommend listing "**Skills**," which would vary according to your aptitudes. Typical headings include "Teaching Skills," "Performance Skills," "Analytic Skills," "Organizational Skills," "Interpersonal Skills," "Technical Skills," "Research Skills," "Leadership Skills," and so forth. Usually each heading is followed by a short statement of what you believe your special abilities to be, especially if these are aspects to you that do not appear elsewhere in your résumé.
11. There are occasions where a reviewer might want to know your **language competencies**. If you've studied or speak any foreign languages, it's good to list those. It is customary to evaluate your own skill level; the standard terms are "fluent, excellent, good, fair, poor (or limited)." **DO NOT** overstate your abilities!
12. Similarly, your **computer competencies** are often of interest to a reviewer, especially a potential employer. List the programs you have learned, along with the format (PC or Mac), and use the same rating terms listed in Item 11 (except for "fluent"!)  
Ex.: Microsoft Word 98 (Mac) - excellent  
Again: it is unwise to claim greater expertise than is truly the case.
13. Are you a member of any **professional organizations**? You should list those.
14. You should include a list of **community and collegiate activities / memberships**. Are you an intercollegiate wrestler? Or on crew? Are you a member of a social fraternity or sorority? Do you coach a youth soccer team? Do you perform some sort of community service? This is the spot for this kind of information. [Many people choose to eliminate listings that are political or religious in nature.]
15. If you are a member of any **honor societies** or **service organizations**, you should include these, too.
16. Occasionally, your **foreign travel** experiences might be relevant. If you've ever been abroad, list the countries you've visited with the dates.
17. A conventional category in many résumés is **hobbies and special interests**.
18. Another category that often appears in longer résumés is a listing that reflects your **Professional**

**Portfolio.** Headings for this sort of list might be "Papers Read," "Publications," "Recordings," or "Compositions." (If your background is broad enough to have accumulated a list of these kinds of achievements, you probably would omit the "Skills" categories suggested above, and probably even "Professional Experience.") "Portfolio" entries should come relatively early in your résumé, perhaps following "Education."

19. Some résumés list **references** at the end, giving names, addresses, and telephone numbers. (**BE SURE** you have the person's permission before listing him or her as a reference!!) Others merely add the phrase "references available upon request" (but make sure, again, that you already have some people to turn to if someone asks to check your references).
20. Using your graphic design skills, assemble the above information into an attractive **layout**. Do not use font sizes that are too big or too small. Do not use too many different font styles, which can make your résumé look jumbled. Are the entries in your résumé neatly aligned? Do not use the "space" key to move information around; it's time to learn how to use your word processor's ruler, tab marks, and hanging indents. Get help if you can't figure things out yourself. If information under a single heading needs to continue onto a following page, can you keep all the lines together on the second page? Or should you break up the entries, and repeat the heading at the top of the next page?

Other Résumé Considerations (not included in this assignment):

21. You may have heard arguments for a "**one-page résumé**" at some point. This current project will almost certainly result in a longer version. The older you get, the less likely it will be that a one-page summary of your accomplishment will be feasible, or even desirable. A frequent compromise is the "**one-sheet résumé**," which uses the front and back of a single-sheet of paper. Don't worry about the length of your résumé—thanks to a computer's flexibility, it is simple to trim down your résumé when you want a shorter format—and much easier to do so when you can take stock of all your accomplishments while deciding which ones to emphasize in a brief document. (In a multi-page résumé, you should put your name and the page number on the second sheet and thereafter.)
22. **Update** your résumé often—once a quarter is a good timetable to follow.
23. [This is not a requirement for this assignment, just advice:] When it comes time to "use" your résumé, it's appropriate to print it on a fairly heavy **good-quality paper** (such as 24 lb. bond). Avoid regular light-weight typing (or photocopy) paper. White is okay, but many people prefer a neutral-toned tan or grey. Be careful about colors; bright hues would be suitable only in rare circumstances.

### Grading

The point distribution for the résumé will be:

<b>Mechanics (20)</b>	<b>Point Scale:</b>	A	18-20 points
Well-designed layout, easy-to-follow (5)		B	16-17
Internal consistency (3)		C	14-15
Thoroughness / breadth / accuracy of information (10)		D	12-13
Appropriate hierarchy of information (2)			

### Score Busters

Errors in grammar, punctuation, proofreading = **-.25 pt. each**  
 Late résumés will lose 2 points a day