

Résumé Types

Highlight your skills with a résumé that best reflects your situation

Some industries adopt a “one-size-fits-all” model, suggesting a single product or service can satisfy a range of needs and interests. This model, though, seldom works in a job search, where training and expertise can be vastly different. Unfortunately, job applicants adopt the single-model mentality when they assume a chronological résumé is the only, or best, option to convey their experience.

Employers may prefer chronological résumés, because they can quickly see where, when, and how applicants have spent time in a given field, but chronological résumés aren't effective or appropriate for everyone. Understanding the types of résumés can help you highlight your experiences and abilities in the best light.

Chronological

The most common type of résumé in industry, a (reverse) chronological résumé emphasizes an applicant's employment history. Starting each category with the most current position or experience and moving back in time to the least current positions and experiences, chronological résumés identify the organization the applicant has worked with, the position(s) held, and work the applicant did for each.

Chronological résumés are most appropriate for individuals with consistent employment, often within in a single industry, as they help applicants highlight longevity within the field or within a particular company, as well as sequential advancement and increasing responsibilities.

Functional

A functional or “skills-based” résumé focuses on professional expertise and competencies the applicant has acquired and, ideally, applied in various contexts—regardless of whether the applicant was financially compensated for that work. Focusing on what the applicant can do rather than where the applicant did it, the functional résumé emphasizes skills valued by an industry.

Functional résumés are appropriate for individuals with little or no formal experience in the target profession (e.g., those entering or transferring into the field), as well as for those with gaps in their employment history. Increasingly, functional résumés are finding favor with over-qualified applicants because they downplay specific organizations, titles, and positions and, instead, promote skills and accomplishments related to the position of interest.

TARGETED

Presenting information that may appear in a chronological, functional, or combination résumé, the targeted résumé is customized to address the needs and interests of a particular position in a specific organization. For example, targeted résumés may note positions, list experience, or give details that might not appear on any other document the applicant submits during a job search.

Conventional targeted résumés are appropriate for applicants who want to show immediate correlation between their training and experience and the needs and interests of a particular organization—even if the applicant would not offer this information to the industry at large.

COMBINATION

A combination résumé blends elements of the chronological and functional résumés, allowing applicants to list their work history and job-related skills they may have acquired in forums outside of the target industry.

Combination résumés are appropriate for people who have conventional workplace experience and complimentary skills they may have acquired and developed in forums other than formal employment within a given industry. Combination résumés can also help applicants whose conventional job titles and responsibilities neither suggest nor highlight the applicant's proficiency in other areas.

CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

Roughly translated from Latin as “[the] course of [my] life,” the curriculum vitae or “CV” provides an applicant's employment history, job qualifications and, occasionally, personal information. Companies in Europe may ask applicants for a CV but, in the United States, CVs are usually reserved for positions in academia and medicine. Often running two or more pages, these documents offer comprehensive information about the applicant, including academic credentials (e.g., degrees, thesis titles, committee members), publications, conference presentations, committee work, professional contributions, and other achievements that may not be valued in industry contexts.