Writing a Resume

Everyone struggles with resumes, working and reworking them dozens of times. And when you've never written one before, trying to craft a good resume feels impossible. Resumes are hard to write for two primary reasons. First, the design is subjective. What one person likes, another hates. Second, one type of resume might be right at one stage of your career but not at another. A career changes as you do.

Before You Write:

Research your possible employers before you write even one word. Find out as much as possible about them. This info will determine your focus, and focus determines design, presentation, and content. Resumes are as much about the employer as about you. Your reader doesn't really care what you seek; they want to know what you can do for them. Get to know, as much as possible, what a particular organization deems important. This is practical research. Research is essential.

Resume Format:

What do employers/recruiters want to see? How do you decide what to include or exclude? The short answer: it depends on your career goals as well as the employer's goals. Use both to decide which format to choose. There are 3 common resume types:

Chronological (usu. lists education and experience in reverse chronology)
- Most common
- Easy to read
- Not preferred if you have gaps in your employment history
- Not appropriate for someone switching careers

Functional (aka Skills)
- Non-sequential format
- Makes skills appear stronger by grouping them
- Emphasizes what you can do and have done, rather than where and when
- Good for recent graduates
- Not popular with employers
- Most jobs ask for employment dates, so online applications can be a problem

Combined
- Begins with functional summary of qualifications, skills, abilities, experience
- Gives short chronological work history followed by education
- If done well, looks impressive
- Good for careers with gaps
- Still unpopular with some employers

Whichever format you choose, try to make your resume easy to read at a glance. At the same time, make your resume stand up to close scrutiny. Organization and design can handle both types of necessity.

Designing Your Resume:
You can always look for models, but first try experimenting with sections. How do you draw the eyes' attention to the right places and make things easy to read?

Step 1. List all your skills to help you generate content, skills such as
- Admission and assessment
- Charting
- Interviewing of patients
- Troubleshooting

List action words and check off those that apply to you, words such as
- Assist
- Educate
- Perform
- Record
- Verify

Step 2. Organize:
Now organize sections and think about how to arrange them. Using a three-level system organizes your material well.

- L1   Work Experience
- L2   Job Title + Employer/Organization + location + dates
- L3   Details listed in bullets

Step 3. Consider other headings:

A common approach is to have an "Objective Statement," "Career Goal," or "Career Summary." You have to decide whether to include this step or not. Some people who hire say they hate objectives on resumes. Others say they can't tell what an applicant wants without an objective. Still others say to simply sum up your experience to give the reader a basic idea of who you are. The Writing Center agrees with this view. Avoid self-inflation. Avoid excessive adjectives. Just state facts.

Begin your resume with the "Objective Statement" or the "Career Summary." After that come "Education," "Clinical Experience" or "Employment," "Leadership Experience" or "Research." After listing these, there are many other headings to consider:

- Community Service
- Internships
- Language Proficiency
- Memberships in Organizations
- Presentations and Publications
- Specialization
- Technical Training
- Licensures and Certifications
- Volunteer Work

Must Do's:

To sum up: Writing a resume is not a one-size-fits-all process. It should be tailored to specific targets. It takes time, effort, research, choices, and positive thinking. Visit the Writing Center for feedback and advice. Make your job hunt as effective as possible by first crafting a good resume. Once you have a resume you like, you'll be able to use it in networking, interviewing, and landing a job.