

The Resume Writing Guide



A step-by-step workbook for
creating a winning resume

Lisa McGrimmon

The Resume Writing Guide

A Step-by-Step Workbook for Writing a Winning Resume

Lisa McGrimmon

Copyright © 2013 Lisa McGrimmon

www.CareerChoiceGuide.com

Edition: May 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this publication can be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without permission in writing from Lisa McGrimmon.

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the author is not engaged in rendering professional career services. If expert assistance is required, the service of the appropriate professional should be sought.

The author makes no representation or warranties of any kind with regard to the completeness or accuracy of the contents of this work. She accepts no liability of any kind for any losses or damages caused or alleged to be caused, directly or indirectly, from using the information contained in this work.

Table of Contents

Chapter One - How to Get the Most Out of This Book

- Get yourself in a mindset for success • 1
- Learn from the experience of 2000 clients • 2
- Partners in resume writing • 3
- Getting the most out of this book • 5

Chapter Two - What Type of Job Do You Want to Target?

- Why you need to target your resume to a specific job • 7
- Why you need a new resume for each different job you apply to • 9
- Decide what type of job you want to focus on when writing your resume • 10
- Assignment:* Decide what job will be the focus of the resume you will write • 11

Chapter Three - What Type of Resume Should You Write?

- Features of three types of resumes • 12
- What type of job seeker benefits from each type of resume • 14
- Why you may need to use more than one type of resume if you are looking for more than one type of job • 18
- Assignment:* Decide which resume format will best highlight your skills and minimize any weaknesses • 19

Chapter Four - Before You Start Typing...

- Why you should not format your resume as you write the content of your resume • 20
- Discover a more efficient way to write your resume • 22

Chapter Five - Contact Information

- Contact information to include on your resume • 24
- Common mistakes people make when including their contact information on a resume • 24
- Assignment:* Write your contact information • 28

Chapter Six - Job Objective or Profile

- Features of job objectives and profiles • 29
- How a job objective or profile makes your resume more appealing to employers • 30
- Why you cannot write an effective resume if you do not have a specific job objective or profile • 31
- Decide whether you will write a job objective or a profile • 32
- How to write an effective job objective and an effective profile • 33
- Assignment:* Write your job objective or profile • 34

Chapter Seven - Summary of Skills

- Features of a summary of skills • 37

- Benefits of using a summary of skills on your resume • 37
- How to decide what information should be included in a summary of skills • 39
- How to describe your skills and accomplishments in a way that makes a strong, positive impact on potential employers • 40
- How to organize your summary of skills • 49
- Assignment:** Write your summary of skills • 52

Chapter Eight - Work History

- Features of the work history section of a resume • 55
- What employers are thinking when they read your work history • 55
- What information should be included in your work history • 57
- How to describe your work experience in a way that makes a great impression • 59
- How to address common concerns with the work history section of your resume • 64
 - How to Minimize Gaps in Employment History • 64
 - How to Minimize the Appearance of Holding Many Jobs in a Short Time Span • 69
 - How to Deal With a Long Work History to Minimize Potential Age Discrimination • 72
 - What to Do When Your Most Relevant Work is in the Past • 73
 - What to Do When Some of Your Most Relevant Experience was Obtained Through Volunteer Work and Not Paid Employment • 76
 - How to Document Your Work Experience When You Are Making a Career Change • 77
 - How to Document the Same Job Held at Different Companies Without Becoming Repetitive • 77
 - How to Show Increased Responsibility at One Company • 78
 - What to do if Your Education is Your Strongest Selling Feature • 79
- Good headings to use for the work history section of your resume • 80
- Assignment:** Write your work history • 82

Chapter Nine - Education

- Features of the education section of a resume • 86
- What information should be included in the education section of your resume and what should be omitted • 87
- How to address specific situations related to your education • 89
 - What to Do if You Started but Did Not Complete a Diploma or Degree • 89
 - What to do if You Completed Your Education Many Years Ago, and You Are Concerned About Age Discrimination • 90
 - What to do if You Have Completed a Lot of Certificates, Diplomas or Other Relevant Professional Development and Your Education Section is Very Long and Difficult to Read at a Glance • 91
- Should education be placed before or after the work experience section of your resume • 91
- Assignment:** Write the education section of your resume • 92

Chapter Ten - Volunteer Work

- Should you include volunteer work on your resume • 95
- Basic features of the volunteer work section of your resume • 96
- What types of volunteer work should be included and what information should be omitted • 97
- Headings to use for this section • 98
- Where this section should appear on your resume • 98
- Assignment:** Write the volunteer work section of your resume • 101

Chapter Eleven - Formatting Your Resume

- Review and revise the content of your resume • 102
- Make final decisions about the order of sections in your resume • 107
- Choose font and heading styles and add bullets • 108
- Format your contact information • 109
- Format your employment, education and volunteer information • 109
- Apply formatting rules for two page resumes if necessary • 111
- Assess how your content fits on the page and apply strategies to help it fit better if necessary • 112
- Print, proofread and revise • 116
- Assignment:** Format, print, proofread, and revise your resume • 120

Chapter Twelve - Be Ready for Any Type of Job - Create Your Foundation Resume

- What is a foundation resume • 121
- How you will benefit from creating a foundation resume • 122
- How a foundation resume is different from a targeted resume • 123
- How to write a foundation resume • 124
- How you will use your foundation resume • 126
- Assignment:** Write your foundation resume • 132

Chapter Thirteen - Sample Resumes

- Basic combination resume • 134
- Combination resume with skills grouped into several sections • 136
- Combination resume with accomplishments section • 138
- Combination resume with education first (recent graduate) • 140
- Gap in employment history • 141
- Job seeker is over 45 • 142
- Basic functional resume • 143
- Basic chronological resume • 144
- Chronological resume with education listed first • 145
- Career change resume • 146
- Combining several contracts at a temporary agency into one entry • 148
- Short work history • 149
- Relevant experience is in the past • 150

- Relevant experience was obtained through volunteer work • 151
- Same job at several different companies • 152
- Increased responsibility at one company • 153

Chapter Fourteen - Resources

- Resume writing form • 155
- List of verbs for resume writing • 155
- List of descriptive words (adjectives and adverbs) for resume writing • 168
- Websites that have thorough job descriptions • 175
- Choosing a career • 177
- Grammar for resume writing • 177

Chapter One

How to Get the Most Out of This Book

What You Will Find in This Chapter:

1. Get Yourself in a Mindset for Success
2. Learn From the Experience of 2000 Clients
3. Partners in Resume Writing
4. Getting the Most Out of This Book

“Your attitude, not your aptitude will determine your altitude.” Zig Ziglar

Get Yourself in a Mindset for Success

You can absolutely find a job in any economy, even if you have barriers and challenges that other job seekers might not have. You can free yourself from the whims of economic change or employer biases about age, education, work history or family situation if you know how to present yourself well and manage your career.

The biggest secret to conducting a successful job search is being willing to adopt a can-do attitude and do everything it takes to find the job you want.

The information is out there. It is easy to learn how to stand out from the crowd when looking for work, but you would probably be shocked by the number of job seekers who fail to take the few simple steps needed to distinguish themselves from other people competing for the same jobs.

That is unfortunate for other job seekers, and frustrating for career coaches, but it is great news for you!

If you have been unsuccessfully looking for work for a while, or if you are just starting a job search, you need to know that the things you have to do to find a job are not all that difficult, and almost anyone can do them.

You have more power in this process than you probably realize. You just have to do things slightly better than other job seekers.

That is all it really takes to stand out. Just be a tiny bit better than your competition. The extra steps are not difficult if you just commit to doing them consistently.

Push yourself a bit beyond your comfort zone, require just a little bit more of yourself, and you will be able to stand out.

Learn From the Experience of 2000 Clients

I know from experience that this is all true. It is not some pie-in-the-sky, fluffy, feel-good silliness that gets you pumped up for the moment but fails to provide you with tested, practical solutions to really achieve your goals.

Unfortunately, you will find a lot of resume writing advice out there that is just empty silliness. A lot of people who write resume books and online articles have no experience writing actual resumes with real clients.

You might be surprised by the number of people who write one resume for themselves and then decide they know enough about the process to write a book, or a website, about creating resumes. Unfortunately, those people don't know what they don't know, and they end up selling people a lot of bad advice.

Then there is resume writing advice written by employers who review a lot of resumes. They generally do know what works and what does not work on a resume, but what is missing from their information is the process.

They have not been involved in actually creating the resumes they review, so they know what a great resume looks like, but they do not know how to instruct someone step by step through the process of creating that great resume.

That is why I decided to write this book.

There are already resume writing books that do a good job of describing the general characteristics of good resumes, and there are resume books out there that provide excellent sample resumes. However, what is missing from every resume book I have ever read, is a clear description of a step by step process that takes you from the point where you are staring at a blank screen to the point where you are completely satisfied that you have written an excellent resume that shows your own unique skills and experiences in the best possible light.

That is what this book will do for you. You will start from a blank page on your word processing software, and I will show you, one step at a time, how to work through the process of writing a winning resume, exactly the way I would work through the process with a client.

I have worked with about 2000 clients. I have personally written about 1000 resumes and supervised the writing of another 1000 resumes. I have helped all kinds of people from all walks of life find jobs, and because I have helped a lot of people from a lot of different backgrounds, I know the questions and worries people have.

There aren't many resume writing questions and concerns I haven't heard, answered and resolved for my clients.

As a job search workshop facilitator, I was required to maintain an 80% success rate over three months. That means, 80% of my clients had to be working within 3 months of attending my workshop. I consistently achieved those targets every year even in tough economic times, and even though my clients faced a lot of career-related challenges.

And what about the other 20%? A small number each year were impossible to contact when I did my follow-ups. Most found work; it just took them longer than three months, and some decided to return to school or start a business.

All of the participants in my workshop left at the end of the week with a resume that we wrote together with the help of my wonderful assistant. That is how I know for sure that the resume writing information in this book works.

It has worked for 2000 clients. It can work for you, too!

I cannot promise that you will find the perfect job within a specific time frame. That would be irresponsible because there are a lot of variables for each person, and resume writing is only one part of the job search process. I can promise that the recommendations in this book have been tested by 2000 clients, and those clients have had excellent success in finding work.

The things I will ask you to do to write an effective resume are not extremely difficult, but you will need to commit some time and mental energy to brainstorm, write and revise your work. I will show you exactly how to do that little bit extra you need to do to stand out from the crowd.

You just need to commit to doing it.

Partners in Resume Writing

I always tell clients that we will be partners in resume writing. I never write the resume for them. We write the resume together, as a team.

In fact, you need to be wary of career experts who say they will write a resume *for you* with minimal input from you. Truly professional resume writers will write your resume *with you* using an enormous amount of input from you, so the content of the resume is a true reflection of the unique attributes, individuality and skills you have to offer employers.

So, throughout this book, you and I will be a team. I will be the expert on how to write a resume. You need to be the expert on your own career. We both bring to the table important information that is necessary to write an outstanding resume.

This book is not about me providing endless lists of stock phrases to include on your resume. It is about me showing you how to take your own knowledge about your skills and experience and turn that into a great resume that shows employers who you are and why they should bring you in for a job interview.

If you simply copy run-of-the-mill, stock phrases from a book, you will only write a plain, vanilla resume that does not stand out from the competition. If you want to create a resume that demonstrates why you are great at the work you do, you need to use your own words and your own knowledge about your industry, your skills, and the unique attributes you bring to the job and use those ideas to write your own points on your resume.

Yes, that is initially more work than copying someone else's stock phrases, but it will pay off because your resume will be far more effective.

You will not be on your own in this process. I will show you what needs to be included and omitted on your resume, how to structure your resume to show yourself in the best possible light, and how to write a resume that minimizes concerns you may have (gaps in your work history, limited work experience, or incomplete degrees or diplomas are a few of the common concerns we will deal with). I will also show you how to brainstorm information about your job duties, skills and accomplishments, how to write about your skills and experience in a way that makes an impact, and where to find detailed job descriptions if you need some help remembering all of the important skills you use at work.

Your job is to take all of that information and apply it to what you know about your own career.

Together, we can create an effective resume.

Getting the Most Out of This Book

This book is a resume writing workbook, which means you will get the most benefit from the book if you complete the specific task or tasks set out in one chapter before you move on to the next chapter.

I will take you through the resume writing process step by step by asking you the first question I ask every time I write a resume with any client (What type of job are you looking for?), followed by the next question, and the next.

I will show you how to make crucial decisions about your resume along the way based on your answers to each question.

- Are you making a career change?
- Are you worried about age discrimination?
- Do you have a gap in your work history?
- Are you a recent graduate?

Your answers to these types of questions will provide the information you need to make important decisions about what to include on your resume and how to structure it in a way that shows you in your best light and minimizes any concerns about your work history.

I have designed this workbook to guide you the way a career coach would guide you through each step of the resume writing process. Please take your time to complete each task in each chapter to the best of your ability before you move on to the next chapter.

A Couple of Resources to Simplify the Writing Process and Clarify Concepts:

Sample Resumes

Chapter 13 includes 16 sample resumes that illustrate different resume formats, the sections within a resume and the strategies recommended in this book for minimizing concerns about your work history and highlighting your most marketable skills. It can be distracting if you have to flip back and forth to different sections within a book, and, if you are reading this book on a device with a small screen, you might prefer to view the sample resumes on a larger computer screen, so I have also included all of those resume samples on my website at <http://careerchoiceguide.com/resumeexamples>.

You might want to have your computer handy while you read through this book so you can refer to the sample resumes easily. Alternatively, feel free to print the sample resumes

from my website so you have paper copies to refer to if you will not have easy access to a computer while reading this book. The examples will give you a deeper understanding of the concepts described in the book. You will also be able to refer back to them easily on my site while you are writing up your own resume.

Resume Writing Form

I also offer a free resume writing form on my website. It contains space to write all of the information you would need to include on virtually any type of resume. It is a little more efficient to type your information directly into a blank Word document (or other word processing software), but some people will benefit from the added structure a form provides.

You can download a copy of my resume writing form at:
<http://careerchoiceguide.com/resumeform>.

Chapter Two

What Type of Job Do You Want to Target?

Your Task for This Chapter:

Decide what type of job you are targeting.

Action Steps for This Chapter

- **Step One:** Know why you need to decide what type of job you want to target before you write your resume.
- **Step Two:** Understand why you need a new resume for each job you apply to.
- **Step Three:** Decide what job you want to focus on when you write your resume.

*“If you don't know where you are going,
how can you expect to get there?”*

Basil S. Walsh

Step One: Know why you need to decide what type of job you want to target before you write your resume.

Before you start to write your resume, it is crucial to decide what type of job you want to pursue so you can write a resume that is targeted to that job.

Why You Must Write a Resume for a Specific Job:

1. To be effective, a resume must be focused and demonstrate to the employer that you are an excellent candidate for the specific type of job he or she needs to fill. General, untargeted resumes are less effective because they do not take every opportunity to hammer home the idea that you would be great at the specific job the employer needs to fill.
2. Every decision you make about what to include in your resume hinges on the type of job you are seeking.
3. Every decision you make about how to format your resume also hinges on the type of job you are seeking.

Example

Imagine you are currently working as an adult education teacher. You think you might like to make a career change, and you have recently completed some training in addictions counseling.

If you want to write a resume to apply for another job as an adult education teacher, you will need to highlight your related work experience. The work experience section will be near the top of your resume, and you will go into detail describing your past experience working as an adult education teacher.

If, on the other hand, you want to write a resume to apply for a job as an addictions counselor, your education will be the most important feature to highlight. The education section will be near the top of your resume, and you will go into more detail describing your education. You will also need to write about your work experience in more general terms and highlight aspects of your job that demonstrate skills that would be useful if you were working as a counselor.

At this stage, do not worry about issues like whether you need to highlight your work experience or your education on your resume. We will look at that in detail later in the book. Just know that you need to target a specific job to write the most effective resume possible.

Writing a Targeted Resume is so Much Easier Than Writing an Unfocused Resume

It is very difficult to write a great resume without targeting a specific job.

When you write a resume, there are endless decisions to make including:

- How to format each piece of information
- In what order to present the information
- What to include
- What to omit
- How to describe each aspect of your professional experience

If you have a job objective in mind as you write your resume, all of these decisions become much easier to make.

Once you know what job you are targeting, you have an important point of focus. Everything you include on your resume should prove in some way that you would be great at the job you are targeting.

If you have a specific job in mind, before you include anything on your resume, you can ask yourself, ***“Does this information help prove that I would be great at the specific job I am targeting?”***

If the information does help demonstrate that you would be great at that job, it should be included on your resume.

If the information does not help demonstrate that you would be great at that job, you either need to rewrite the information so it does prove you would be great at the job, or, if the information is completely irrelevant, you will omit it from your resume.

If the information demonstrates an absolutely crucial requirement of the job, it must clearly stand out on your resume.

If you have a job objective in mind while writing your resume, you will be able to make good decisions about how to describe your qualifications and how to organize your information in a way that presents you in the best possible light. It will be much easier to decide what to include, what to omit, what to highlight and what to minimize.

An unfocused resume is nothing more than a generic history of your work experience and education. A targeted resume is a powerful marketing tool that will demonstrate to an employer that you are a great candidate for a specific job.

Step Two: Understand why you need a new resume for each job you apply to.

If you are applying to more than one type of job, you need more than one resume. Savvy and successful job hunters will even fine tune and send slightly different resumes for the same type of job at different companies.

A resume must be targeted to address an employer's specific needs, and those needs will be different for each employer.

You might get away with using a single resume in a good economy or when there is a shortage of skilled workers in your field, but this approach is far from optimal because it will limit your job options.

Using a single resume is definitely not recommended in a competitive labor market.

A highly targeted resume will address each employer's needs and get you in the door to more interviews, even in a tough economy. In a less competitive environment, this strategy will still help you get invited to more interviews, open up more job options and allow you to find the job you want faster.

Do not worry about writing more than one resume at this stage of the process.

The idea of writing several resumes can be overwhelming, particularly if you have not even begun to write your first resume.

Focus on one specific job that you want to target, and concentrate on writing that resume for the time being.

Know that the most competitive job seekers fine tune their resumes regularly, and once you have written your first resume, you will find instructions in chapter 12 that will make it very easy to write additional resumes as needed.

Step Three: Decide what type of job you want to focus on when writing your resume.

This step may be very easy to complete, or very difficult. It all depends on where you are in your career development.

Because this book is a resume writing book, and not a book about choosing a career, I will not go into any detail about how to choose a career. If you have absolutely no idea what type of job you would like to pursue, and you want to explore that question, the resources section in the back of this book will direct you to that type of information.

If you know exactly what type of job you would like to target, your task for this chapter is easy

If you are not certain what type of job you would like to pursue, or if you know that you want to write several resumes for several types of jobs that are quite different, I would suggest you start by writing a resume for a job that is similar to your most recent job.

The easiest resume to write is one that is targeted to a job that is similar to or the same as your most recent job. If you are a recent graduate with limited work experience, the type of work you have trained for at school will be the easiest resume to write.

Writing a career change resume is a little bit harder than writing a resume for a job that you have done recently (career change resumes will be covered later in this book). Unless you know for sure that there is no way you would ever apply to jobs that are similar to your most recent job, I would suggest starting by writing a resume that is targeted to a job that is similar to your most recent job. Once you have written that resume, you can fine-tune it to target it to other types of jobs.

When you want to write a career change resume, starting with a completely blank page is a bit of a challenge. It will be easier to go back and adjust your first resume to create other versions of your resume that are targeted to other types of jobs once you have completed this base resume.

Remember: Do not let all of this talk about writing multiple resumes make you feel overwhelmed. You are concentrating on writing one resume for one single type of job right now. I will explain exactly how to fine-tune your resume for other jobs in chapter 12. Fine-tuning resumes to a variety of specific jobs is easier than you might think.

Assignment

Determine one specific type of job that will be the focus of the resume you are going to write.

Moving Forward

You are ready to move on to the next chapter if you...

1. Accept that you must target a specific job on your resume.
2. Understand that you will need more than one resume if you are looking for more than one type of job, but realize that your only task for the first several chapters will be to focus on writing one single resume.
3. ***Have selected one specific type of job that will be the focus of the resume you will write.*** Do not skip this step. It is absolutely crucial to writing an effective resume. Every other decision you make about writing and formatting your resume hinges on this decision.

Chapter Three

What Type of Resume Should You Write?

Your Task for This Chapter:

Determine what type of resume will show your skills and experience in the best possible light.

Action Steps for This Chapter

- **Step One:** Know features of the three main types of resumes.
- **Step Two:** Know what type of job seeker benefits from each type of resume.
- **Step Three:** Understand that you may need to use more than one type of resume if you are looking for more than one type of job.
- **Step Four:** Determine what type of resume you will write.

*“Your persistence is your measure
of faith in yourself.” Proverb*

Step One: Know the features of the three main types of resumes.

While resumes can vary a lot in order to meet specific needs, there are only three main types of resumes.

Three Types of Resumes

1. Chronological
2. Functional
3. Combination

What Other Career Professionals May Say:

A few people who bill themselves as career experts will recommend writing your resume in a style that fits outside of these three main categories. Typically their rationale is that if you write a unique resume, it will stand out from the crowd and be noticed by employers.

However, anyone who has a significant amount of real world experience writing resumes for clients and helping people find work will tell you that resumes should be either chronological, combination and possibly functional in style.

Employers are used to reviewing these three types of resumes. They know where the information will be found on each type of resume, and, therefore, they can scan them quickly to find the information they want.

Features of a Chronological Resume

A chronological resume highlights your work experience. Although there are variations (which will be discussed), typically a chronological resume starts with a job objective, followed by your work experience, and finally your education. You will find a sample chronological resume in chapter 13.

Features of a Functional Resume

A functional resume is a resume that highlights your skills. This type of resume starts with a job objective and is followed by an extremely detailed list of your marketable skills. A functional resume does not include a list of your work experience or your education; it is simply a detailed list of your marketable skills.

Please be aware that I never recommend using functional resumes (you will find out why later in this chapter), but you should know they exist because they are mentioned frequently in resume writing advice. You will find a sample functional resume in chapter 13.

Features of a Combination Resume

A combination resume is a resume that allows you to highlight your skills and your work experience equally. It is a combination of a chronological resume and a functional resume.

While you can vary the structure to meet your own needs, a combination resume begins with a job objective, followed by a list of your most marketable skills or accomplishments, your work history will be listed next, and your education is usually listed last. You will find several sample combination resumes in chapter 13.

What Other Career Professionals May Say:

Occasionally it makes sense to write a resume that has an extremely detailed list of your marketable skills followed by a short section that very briefly outlines your past work history without describing the jobs in detail.

Some career professionals call this type of resume a functional resume. In my opinion, this type of resume is still a combination resume because it includes both a skills summary and an outline of work experience.

In this book, when I refer to a combination resume, I am talking about any resume that includes both a skills summary (no matter how long or short) and a work history section (no matter how long or short). When I refer to a functional resume, I am talking about any resume that contains a detailed list of marketable skills and no work experience section.

Other career professionals are not wrong; this distinction is just a matter of opinion.

Step Two: Know what type of job seeker benefits from each type of resume.

Back in chapter 2 you decided what type of job you were going to pursue. Keep this job in mind as you decide which type of resume is best for you.

Who Should Use a Chronological Resume

A well-written chronological resume will highlight your work experience. *Job seekers who have a strong employment history should consider using a chronological resume.*

Do you have a strong employment history? Characteristics of a strong employment history include:

- You have worked for several years doing a job that is the same or similar to the type of job you are currently seeking.
- You are not making a career change.
- You have not been out of the workforce for an extended period of time. It has been less than six months since your last paid employment.
- You do not have gaps in the last few years of your work history.
- You have not held several jobs in a short period of time.
- Your work history shows professional growth and advancement over time through promotions and/or increased responsibilities.

Limitations of Chronological Resumes

While a chronological resume can be a good choice when you want to highlight your work history, there are a few issues to be aware of if you choose to use this resume style including:

- Your work history is completely front and center on this type of resume, so if there are any weaknesses at all in your work history, they will be difficult to minimize if you use this resume style.
- Employers often review resumes to see if job seekers have the basic skills that they require. There is no single place to highlight your relevant skills on a chronological resume, so your skills can easily get hidden in this type of resume.
- A chronological resume can highlight your age if you are not careful. This issue can sometimes be a concern for more experienced workers (typically those 45 and older) as well as younger job seekers.
- A chronological resume can get repetitive. If you have held the same type of job at two or more different companies, describing each job in detail, as you would in a chronological resume, can quickly become repetitive.

Who Should Use a Functional Resume

A functional resume is designed to highlight skills that you can offer an employer, while hiding any issues that may exist with your work history.

Because a functional resume does not include a work history section, people will sometimes use this resume style to try to:

- Hide the fact that they do not have work experience that is related to the job they are seeking
- Hide the fact that they have held several different jobs in a short period of time
- Hide gaps in their work history
- Hide a recent, unpleasant work experience that they would rather not have to discuss
- Avoid age discrimination by hiding a short or lengthy work history

Limitations of Functional Resumes

Using a functional resume, in my opinion, is almost never a good choice.

In theory, a functional resume is supposed to hide all kinds of work history related issues. However, in reality, functional resumes hide nothing, and they raise all kinds of concerns in the minds of employers.

Most employers do not trust functional resumes because they know this resume style is designed to hide work history related issues. When most employers see a functional resume, they immediately assume the job seeker is trying to hide something.

Also, while a functional resume allows you to outline your skills in great detail, it does not show the context in which you used a particular skill. If your resume says that you are able to multi-task and manage conflicting demands, that information is usually not enough for the employer. He or she typically will want to know in what context you have demonstrated those skills.

When Should You Use a Functional Resume?

The short answer to that question is *never!*

A functional resume is rarely the best format to use. I cannot imagine a situation in which I would recommend using a functional resume. In fact, I have written over one thousand resumes, and I cannot think of a single time when I wrote a purely functional resume for any client.

If you are thinking about using a functional resume to address some of the issues listed above (gaps in your work history, making a career change, concerns about age discrimination, etc.), please keep in mind that there are other, far more effective ways to address these issues. I will address these concerns throughout the book and show you how to minimize these issues by using a combination resume and a few subtle and effective techniques that do not raise concerns in the minds of employers.

Some people who believe they have absolutely no experience, such as students seeking their first job, consider using a functional resume. Keep in mind, it is extremely rare for people to have absolutely no experience to include on a resume.

In the very rare case that you truly have no experience to put on your resume, I would strongly recommend that you find ways (such as volunteer work or a school placement) to gain some experience. As soon as you start your volunteer work, you can put it on your resume, so it immediately improves your resume and your job prospects.

Functional resumes carry no credibility with employers. This is a profound weakness of this resume style, and in my opinion, functional resumes should never be used.

Although I am no fan of the functional resume, it is a style that some people use. Since it exists, I do want to describe it, so you will understand all of the pros and cons of using this style of resume. You will be able to make an informed choice about using a functional resume, and if you choose this resume style, you will be able to write the best functional resume possible.

Who Should Use a Combination Resume

A well written combination resume is very effective for highlighting both your skills and your work experience. Job seekers who want to highlight their marketable skills and provide clear information about their work history should consider using a combination resume.

A combination resume is an excellent choice for:

- ***Career changers*** – A combination resume will allow you to demonstrate how your skills from your previous job are relevant to the new job you are seeking.
- ***Recent graduates*** – A combination resume will allow you to highlight your skills and your education, which are probably bigger selling features than your work experience at this stage in your career.
- ***People reentering the workforce after an extended period of time without paid employment*** – A combination resume will put the focus on your skills while still providing the employer with the work history information they expect to see.
- ***People who have gaps in their work history*** – A combination resume will allow you to minimize the appearance of gaps by putting the focus on your skills.
- ***People who have held several jobs in a short period of time*** – A combination resume will allow you to minimize any perception of job jumping and highlight your skills before your work history.
- ***People who want employers to see their most important skills at a glance*** – Employers often scan resumes very quickly looking for evidence that job seekers have specific skills. A combination resume provides you with a place to highlight all of the most important skills that employers are seeking.
- ***People in high tech jobs*** – People in high tech jobs need to list their technical skills in a way that is easy to see at a glance. You cannot rely on describing your technical skills within your job description, and you cannot assume employers know you have certain technical skills simply based on the types of jobs you have held. Without a summary of skills section, crucial skills will be buried in your job descriptions, and you may lose job opportunities simply because employers could not find your technical skills at a glance on your resume.
- ***People who have done the same type of job at several different companies*** – A chronological resume can get repetitive if you describe the same type of job

several times. A combination resume allows you to bring your skills into one section and avoid repetition.

- ***People who are concerned about age discrimination*** – Highlighting your skills takes a bit of the focus off of your work history, which allows you to minimize the appearance of a lengthy work history.

Limitations of Combination Resumes

Combination resumes have very few real limitations. They provide an enormous amount of flexibility to allow you to show your skills and experience in their best light.

A combination resume combines all of the strengths of the functional and chronological resumes. ***This resume style works very well for most people most of the time.***

Step Three: Understand that you may need to use more than one type of resume if you are looking for more than one type of job.

If you are looking for more than one type of job, you might need to write more than one type of resume.

For example, if you have a solid work history, and you are looking for work that is similar to the type of work you have done in the past, but you are also open to making a career change, you may decide to write a chronological resume targeting the type of work you have done in the past and a combination resume targeting the career change job.

If you find yourself in this type of situation, and you want to avoid writing two resumes in completely different styles, then writing a combination resume is your best option. A combination resume works for most people in most situations, and it offers the flexibility necessary to change sections and content around to highlight different aspects of your skills and experience.

You will still need to write more than one resume if you are looking for more than one type of job, but if you use a combination resume, you will not have to write a completely different resume in a completely different style. You will be able to make simple changes to your existing resume in order to target different jobs.

While you may decide that you want to write more than one type of resume, do not get bogged down by this idea at this point in the resume writing process. Stay focused on writing the best resume possible for the type of job you are seeking (the one you chose in chapter 2), and choose the resume style that will serve that purpose.

Step Four: Determine what type of resume you will write.

If you are still unsure about what type of resume to write, I would suggest writing a combination resume. The vast majority of employers trust combination resumes, and they provide a lot of flexibility, which allows you to really control what information stands out.

Most of the resumes I have written for clients have been combination resumes. When I start to work with a client, I always consider using other formats; however, a combination style is usually the best option.

Combination resumes really do work for most people most of the time.

Assignment

Determine which type of resume will be most effective for highlighting your skills and experiences based on the type of job you are seeking.

Moving Forward

You are ready to move on to the next chapter if you...

1. Understand the features of combination, chronological and functional resumes.
2. Have thought through which of these resumes works best for someone with your specific background.
3. Understand that you may benefit from having two different styles of resumes if you are looking for two very different types of jobs, but realize that your main task for this chapter is to focus on choosing one single resume style that will work best for the job you chose in chapter 2.
4. Have selected the type of resume that will best highlight your skills and experiences based on the type of job you chose in chapter 2.

Remember, when in doubt, use a combination resume.

Better Job – Better Life

The quality of the job you find depends a lot on your job search skills, and the quality of the life you lead depends a lot on the job you find. The Resume Writing Guide teaches you how to prepare a resume that gets you one step closer to finding work so you can take more control of your financial future and build a better life. It breaks down the process of creating a resume and takes you from blank page to winning resume one small, manageable step at a time.

This sneak peek of The Resume Writing Guide contains just the first three chapters. You can buy the full version on Amazon here: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1502429322>

The Resume Writing Guide is the next best thing to having an experienced resume writer by your side.

You've decided what resume format is best for you; now it's time to get writing. The complete Resume Writing Guide will show you:

Chapter Four - Before You Start Typing...

- The most efficient way to format your resume so you don't waste precious job search time

Chapter Five - Contact Information

- What contact information to include on your resume and how to avoid common contact information mistakes that can stop your job search in its tracks

Chapter Six - Job Objectives and Profiles

- How to write an effective job objective or profile that makes employers want to read the rest of your resume

Chapter Seven - Summary of Skills

- How to describe your skills and accomplishments in a way that makes a strong, positive impact on employers

Chapter Eight - Work History

- How to write a compelling work history and show yourself at your best even if you don't have a “perfect” career history

Chapter Nine - Education

- How to show off your educational accomplishments and address specific situations and challenges related to your education

Chapter Ten - Volunteer Work

- Whether you should include your volunteer work and hobbies on your resume, as well as surprising information your volunteer work can give away about you

Chapter Eleven - Formatting Your Resume

- How to draw employers' eyes to the information you want them to notice first, plus resume writers' tricks for making your resume look great even if the information doesn't naturally fit well on the page

Chapter Twelve - Be Ready for Any Type of Job - Create Your Foundation Resume

- How to make it easy to write a new, targeted resume for each job you pursue

Chapter Thirteen - Sample Resumes

- 16 sample resumes that illustrate the concepts described throughout the book

Chapter Fourteen - Resources

- Additional resources to help with resume writing including lists of action words and descriptive words, and a link to a free grammar guide

The Resume Writing Guide is available at Amazon, and can be read on a Kindle, computer, smart phone or tablet. Get back to work with The Resume Writing Guide!

- **Learn More about The Resume Writing Guide here:**
<http://careerchoiceguide.com/ResumeWritingGuide>
- **Buy The Resume Writing Guide on Amazon:**
<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1502429322>