

Liberty University School of Law
Center for Career & Professional Development

Resumé Preparation

Developing Your Resumé

Your resumé has two objectives: to catch a potential employer's attention and to prompt that employer to invite you to interview. Accordingly, your resumé must be concise and "scannable," and it must capture the reader's attention. Remember, when an employer is initially going through dozens of resúmes, the reviewer is looking for reasons to discard submissions, not to keep them. Here are a few tips to ensure that you are viewed as a good prospect.

1. Decide what format to use
 - a. The format used most often is the reverse chronological format. This format lists your most recent education or experiences first. The reverse chronological best serves most law students. Surveys show that 70% of employers prefer the reverse chronological format.*
 - b. You also have the option of the functional resumé. This format organizes the background by skill categories that specify what you will bring to the job (e.g., "Negotiation" or "Contract Writing"). This format should include a reverse chronological list of employers.

2. Decide how long to make your resumé
 - a. Unless you have extensive relevant career experience before law school, limit your resumé to one page.
 - b. If you have experience that is relevant to the position you are seeking and that can't be compressed into a single page, you may use a two-page resumé. Be sure to fill the second page; a partially full second page does not look professional.

3. Decide what information should be on your resumé
 - a. Contact information: Include your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address. Ensure that your e-mail address and voicemail message are professional.
 - i. Consider whether to use both your school address and home address (if they're different). If you are applying to an employer in your hometown, using your local address will establish your geographic connection.
 - b. Education: Include law school, any other graduate work, and undergraduate degrees.
 - c. Honors and awards: Do not include high school or non-academic achievements unless they are distinctive or particularly relevant, such as:
 - *Cum laude, magna cum laude, etc.*
 - Special scholarship or award
 - Membership in an honorary society
 - Participation in a scholarly writing or publication project

- d. Experience: Identify the practical skills you can bring to the organization. Volunteer work is appropriate to list under experiences. Include in narrative form the skills you used in each position. Do not use the personal pronoun “I.” Refer to current work in the present tense and previous work in the past tense, and use action verbs to create clear and engaging descriptions of your experience.
4. Make sure the resumé is easy to read
 - a. Use standard fonts (Times New Roman, Arial, Verdana) and choose a font size that’s easy to read. Most of your text should be in 12-point font, and nothing should be smaller than 10 point or larger than 14 point.
 - b. Be judicious in your use of bold font and underlined texts. They may be necessary to emphasize aspects of your resumé, but too much can look confusing.
 - c. Be consistent. If your titles are in bold for one section, then the other sections should have titles in bold as well. Also, if you abbreviate Bachelor of Science to B.S., be sure to abbreviate Juris Doctor to J.D. Be consistent with formats for dates and locations as well.
 5. Adapt each resumé
 - a. **Be specific** to the organization and job for which you are applying. Customize your resumé to present the qualities and abilities that will best fit each particular position.
 - b. Address the cover letter and package to the person who will be doing the hiring. Call the organization to obtain this person’s name and title and make sure the spelling is correct.

Do Not

1. Include an “objective” in your resumé. Your cover letter will identify your objective.
2. Include “References available on request.” It wastes space and conveys nothing.
3. Use bright, colored paper to print your resumé.
4. Misspell any words on your resumé or cover letter. Nothing will kill your prospects faster than a misspelled word, improper word, or bad grammar.
5. E-mail your resume titled “Resumé.”

Always

1. Use white, ivory, or a light grey paper that is heavy and substantive (min. 20lb, preferably 24lb bond).
2. Attach a cover letter. Eighty-four percent of potential employers say a cover letter should always accompany a resumé.*
3. Keep a separate list of references, using the same paper as your resumé and cover letter.
4. Proofread all of the documents and have others proofread them as well.
5. Use only Microsoft Word for the digital copy of your resumé. If you e-mail the resumé and cover letter, always send them as an attachment, not as the text of the e-mail. (71% of organizations accept resúmes by e-mail, and 88% accept resúmes by fax.*) Use the following format when saving and sending: “Smith, John M. – Resumé.”
6. Bring your resumé by CCPD for review and feedback.

* Results taken from a survey by Morris Associates, a D.C.-based outplacement firm. The survey was of 1,500 HR managers and executive recruiters on their resume preferences.