

# Resume Tips

## What makes an effective resume?

Your resume is the foundation for your career search. It summarizes your academic, experiential, and employment accomplishments, showcasing the skills you have developed.

As your first point of contact with a future employer, your resume must make a positive impression, demonstrating your value to the team to increase your chances of being called for an interview.

## Top tips

- Tailor your resume with keywords, backed up by evidence of accomplishments, to demonstrate your area of focus for each application
- Keep it to two pages and prioritize quality over quantity
- Include your LinkedIn URL to provide access to more information about you
- Know your industry and use relevant terminology
- Write strong accomplishment statements using action verbs to highlight your capabilities instead of your tasks or duties
- Every experience counts – whether it's a one day job shadow, a weekend volunteering opportunity, or a part-time job, all have transferable skills
- Organize your sections to reflect what's most important to the hiring committee
- Leverage AI tools like ChatGPT to assist with resume updates, ensuring you personalize AI suggestions to fit your style and the specific job requirements. Click [here](#) to learn more about using AI for your resume and cover letter.

## Common mistakes

- Not tailoring your resume to your audience, or using keywords without supporting evidence
- Making your resume overly brief, which can be perceived as a lack of effort
- Including spelling and grammar errors
- Not using your education section to present skills and knowledge
- Only taking advice from one person or those working in unrelated fields
- Over-relying on AI tools such as ChatGPT without personalizing the content

## Access more support on your resume

- Attend one of SSC's resume presentations
- Drop in to an in-person chat to ask questions on Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:30-4 PM, Gilmour Hall 110
- Schedule an appointment on [OSCARplus](#) for a critique if you have additional questions

## Your Name



Current Address (include at least City, Province, Postal Code)  
 Phone Number | Email  
 LinkedIn URL

### Highlights of Qualifications (optional/job specific)

- X years of wxperience related to the position
- Relevant credentials/training/education
- Key skills, strengths or knowledge relevant to the position with qualifying statements to back it up
- Additional skills or strengths that could be considered assets to the position
- Work ethic or values or technical skills relevant to position

### Education

**Bachelor of Major area of study; Minor, Specialization** (in bold) Year – Present  
 McMaster University, Hamilton, ON

- Rrelevant courses with brief descriptions
- Key research or projects undertaken with brief description or results if applicable
- Notable academic awards

### Employment Experience

**Position Title** (in bold) Timeline (Month, Year)  
 Name of company or organization, city, province

- Describe relevant responsibilities and achievements (1-2 lines)
- Use action verbs to give your bullet points more impact
- Highlight at least one of the bullet points with an initiative you took or an achievement you had with results
- Emphasize your transferable skills (leadership, organization, team work, etc.) using the SAR formula (situation, action, result). (Refer to the Creating effective accomplishment statements section on Page 5)

### Extra Curricular Activities and/or Volunteer Experience

List the positions in student and volunteer organizations similar to regular jobs. Examples of extra curriculars can include: Job Shadow, MSU Clubs, Faculty Associations, etc.

**Position Title** (in bold) Timeline (Month, Year)  
 Name of club, charity, event, city, province

- Detail your contributions and achievements
- Emphasize your transferable skills
- Consider using SAR formula (situation, action, result)



## Technical Skills (optional)

Customize headings to be more specific or general (for example, Computer Skills, Language Skills, Business Skills, Additional Skills, Related Skills, etc.). This is where you add any relevant “hard skills” or knowledge areas. Depending on the importance to the position, this section may be better suited on the first page.

- Programming Languages: C/C++, Visual C++, Visual Basic
- Graphic Programs: Corel Draw, AutoCAD
- Office Applications: MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint

## Professional Development (optional)

This is where you can add additional relevant training (e.g. LinkedIn Learning courses) to showcase your interest to the industry/field.

**Name of Training/Course/Workshop/Conference** (in bold)

Timeline (Month, Year)

Name of company or organization, city, province (if applicable)

- State any license/certificate/designation received and expiration date (if applicable)
- A brief overview could be provided if the training title isn't self-explanatory

## Interests (optional)

- Tennis: Competed extensively through Canada in various junior and senior tournaments
- Drama: Took major roles in high school and university drama
- Public Speaking: Joined the local toastmasters group to improve speaking skills

\*Review the alternative resume section titles below to market your experiences most effectively.



Examples of alternative resume section titles		
<b>Objective</b> Career Objective Professional Objective Career Focus Career Goal	<b>Profile</b> Key Competencies/Skills Highlights of Qualifications Career Profile Professional Qualifications Professional Profile	<b>Education</b> Academic Background Training Professional Education Additional Training Professional Development
<b>Experience</b> Relevant Experience Employment History Work Experience Additional Experience Professional Background Professional Experience	<b>Other Skills</b> Projects Career-Related Skills Computer Skills Technical Skills Certifications Specialized Skills	<b>Achievements</b> Accomplishments Awards Recognitions Scholarships
<b>Professional Affiliations</b> Associations Professional Memberships Professional Associations Memberships Affiliations	<b>Activities/Interests</b> Community Involvement Volunteer Activities Related Activities University Activities Professional Interests	<b>Academic Presentations</b> Publications Conferences Attended Conferences/Conventions Papers Presented Professional Presentations

## Creating effective accomplishment statements

Create an effective resume by tailoring it to the position to which you are applying, and create accomplishment statements that give a clear impression of your capabilities and success.

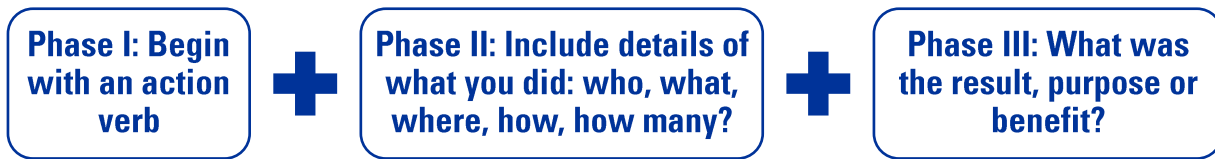
1. Identify your target audience and skills they want
2. Reflect on your achievements

Consider your past experiences from work, internships, volunteering, community involvement, etc., and identify your achievement(s). Think of times when you...

- Solved a problem
- Received praise/awards
- Created efficiencies
- Exceeded expectations
- Achieved a goal
- Initiated something
- Prevented an issue
- Improved something
- Demonstrated leadership
- Were selected for added responsibility or promotion



### 3. Follow the formula



#### Phase I: Begin with an action verb

Refer to the list of action verbs in this booklet. Take inventory of skills you used, then use asterisks\* to mark the skills that are most relevant to your target audience's needs.

For example: organized, initiated\*, developed\*, coordinated

#### Phase II: Relevant information

Briefly describe the relevant information such as: actions taken, time, people involved. Be particular in including information that provides the relevant context.

For example: effective filing strategy, including over 5 years of records, used by staff.

#### Phase III: What was the result, purpose or benefit?

Where possible, quantify your results.

For example: saved time for staff when solving client issues

#### Final accomplishment statement

Initiated and developed a more effective filing strategy for over 5 years of records, which saved time for staff when solving client issues.



## Example accomplishment statements

The following are pairs of statements identifying the same role. Consider how the second statement of each pair is written as an effective accomplishment statement.

- Provided customer service
- Provided customer service in a busy retail environment resulting in the creation of a loyal customer base and improved sales by 10%
  
- Initiated reorganization of file system
- Initiated reorganization of file system which made client information more accessible to staff of non-profit organization
  
- Initiated and completed system of data entry from manual to computerized
- Initiated and completed system of data entry from manual to computerized system, resulting in improved account analysis and report generation for tax and other purposes
  
- Maintained and updated files
- Maintained and updated patient files for rehabilitation clinic with approximately 340 regular patients
  
- Trained administrators and other staff
- Trained administrators and other staff at physiotherapy clinic on MS Excel, saving outside training expenses of more than \$1000
  
- Created manual for volunteers
- Created procedural and responsibilities manual for volunteers at a community agency, which reduced overlapping duties and increased efficiency.
  
- Worked on product layouts
- Revised merchandise layout and recommended changes that resulted in increased product visibility and increased sales by 33%
  
- Work well in a team environment
- Collaborated with team members to complete a group marketing project for final year commerce class ensuring tasks were identified and completed by the team members on time



## Action verbs synonyms to use in your resume

### Communication and people skills

Addressed	Debated	Interviewed	Publicized
Advertised	Defined	Involved	Reconciled
Arbitrated	Developed	Joined	Recruited
Arranged	Directed	Judged	Referred
Articulated	Discussed	Lectured	Reinforced
Authored	Drafted	Listened	Reported
Clarified	Edited	Marketed	Resolved
Collaborated	Elicited	Mediated	Responded
Communicated	Enlisted	Moderated	Solicited
Composed	Explained	Negotiated	Specified
Condensed	Expressed	Observed	Spoke
Conferred	Formulated	Outlined	Suggested
Consulted	Furnished	Participated	Summarized
Contacted	Incorporated	Persuaded	Synthesized
Conveyed	Influenced	Presented	Translated
Convinced	Interacted	Promoted	Wrote

### Creative skills

Acted	Designed	Founded	Originated
Adapted	Developed	Illustrated	Performed
Began	Directed	Initiated	Photographed
Combined	Displayed	Instituted	Planned
Composed	Drew	Integrated	Revised
Conceptualized	Entertained	Introduced	Revitalized
Condensed	Established	Invented	Shaped
Created	Fashioned	Modeled	Solved
Customized	Formulated	Modified	

### Data and financial skills

Administered	Budgeted	Forecasted	Projected
Adjusted	Calculated	Managed	Qualified
Allocated	Computed	Marketed	Reconciled
Analyzed	Conserved	Measured	Reduced
Appraised	Corrected	Netted	Research
Assessed	Determined	Planned	Retrieved
Audited	Developed	Prepared	
Balanced	Estimated	Programmed	



## Helping skills

Adapted	Contributed	Familiarized	Rehabilitated
Advocated	Cooperated	Furthered	Represented
Aided	Counselled	Guided	Resolved
Answered	Demonstrated	Helped	Simplified
Arranged	Diagnosed	Insured	Supplied
Assessed	Educated	Intervened	Supported
Assisted	Encouraged	Motivated	Volunteered
Clarified	Ensured	Prevented	
Coached	Expedited	Provided	
Collaborated	Facilitated	Referred	

## Management and leadership skills

Administered	Delegated	Incorporated	Presided
Analyzed	Developed	Increased	Prioritized
Appointed	Directed	Initiated	Produced
Approved	Eliminated	Inspected	Recommended
Assigned	Emphasized	Instituted	Reorganized
Attained	Enforced	Led	Replaced
Authorized	Enhanced	Managed	Restored
Chaired	Established	Merged	Reviewed
Considered	Executed	Motivated	Scheduled
Consolidated	Generated	Navigated	Secured
Contracted	Handled	Organized	Selected
Controlled	Headed	Originated	Streamlined
Converted	Hired	Overhauled	Strengthened
Coordinated	Hosted	Oversaw	Supervised
Decided	Improved	Planned	Terminated

## Organizational skills

Approved	Distributed	Ordered	Routed
Arranged	Executed	Organized	Scheduled
Catalogued	Filed	Prepared	Screened
Categorized	Generated	Processed	Submitted
Charted	Incorporated	Provided	Supplied
Classified	Inspected	Purchased	Standardized
Coded	Logged	Recorded	Systematized
Collected	Maintained	Registered	Updated
Compiled	Monitored	Reserved	Validated





## Research skills

Analyzed	Diagnosed	Inspected	Reviewed
Clarified	Evaluated	Interviewed	Searched
Collected	Examined	Invented	Solved
Compared	Experimental	Investigated	Summarized
Conducted	Explored	Located	Surveyed
Critiqued	Extracted	Measured	Systematized
Detected	Formulated	Organized	Tested
Determined	Gathered	Researched	

## Teaching skills

Adapted	Developed	Individualized	Taught
Advised	Enabled	Informed	Tested
Clarified	Encouraged	Instilled	Trained
Coached	Evaluated	Instructed	Transmitted
Communicated	Explained	Motivated	Tutored
Conducted	Facilitated	Persuaded	
Coordinated	Focused	Simulated	
Critiqued	Guided	Stimulated	

## Technical skills

Adapted	Debugged	Operated	Restored
Applied	Designed	Overhauled	Solved
Assembled	Determined	Printed	Specialized
Built	Developed	Programmed	Standardized
Calculated	Engineered	Rectified	Studied
Computed	Fabricated	Regulated	Upgraded
Conserved	Fortified	Remodeled	Utilized
Constructed	Installed	Repaired	
Converted	Maintained	Replaced	

