



What Resume Format Should You Use?

Your resume should be organized, targeted and error-free. According to the Employer Survey,

- Fifty-seven per cent of respondents said that they often reject applicants for an ineffective or confusing format;
- Fifty-three per cent of respondents said that they often reject applicants for spelling or grammatical errors;
- Forty-six per cent of respondents said they often reject applicants for a general or untargeted resume.

If an employer has asked you to use a template or included a sample resume that they want you to use, follow their template and instructions. This template is their preferred format. You can discover this information by visiting their website, asking their representatives at a career fair or employer information session about their preferences for resumes. Their preferences may also be listed on a job posting.

You may also receive advice from an employee of the organization—though you should make sure you are applying for a similar position and/or that your documents will be reviewed by the same hiring manager. Even though they work for the same organization, individual hiring managers, human resource officers and department managers may have different preferences for resume format.

The organization prefers: _____ (*Resume Formats on following page*)

How did you determine this information? *Select all that apply*

- The format is specified in the job posting
- You have worked or volunteered for this organization in the past
- You had an information interview with contact in Human Resources/Recruitment for this organization (*for more on Career Information Interviewing <https://bit.ly/2w878kK>*)
- You met with one of the organization's representatives at a Career Fair (*Career Fairs organized by the Career Centre <https://bit.ly/2LqGXND>*)
- You attended an Employer Information Session for this organization and they described the type of application documents they are looking for (*Employer Information Sessions organized by the Career Centre <https://bit.ly/2vPYnua>*)
- The employer has an online resume database that asks you to submit information into specific fields OR you may apply with your LinkedIn profile. A LinkedIn profile is an example of a *preformatted resume*.
- You found the information on the organization's LinkedIn Company Page
- Other

Resume Format

Reverse Chronological (40% of employers prefer this resume)

In the chronological resume, the emphasis is on your **past work experience**. Your past employment, including your position title and the name of your employer, are listed in reverse chronological order, which means starting with your most recent job, then working backwards. Under each job, you describe your relevant duties, explained by the skills you used to complete these tasks.

Combination (38% of employers prefer this resume)

In the combination format, the emphasis is on your **skills**. Based on your assessment of the job posting, you collect your relevant skills and group them into three broad, relevant categories. Following the Skills section, your **employment record**, in an Experience section, is listed in reverse chronological order follows your Skills section. Your employment record includes position held, name of employer and period of employment.

Pre-formatted (4% of employers prefer this resume)

We also included a new category called “**pre-formatted**” where applicants submit their resume directly into database according to the organization’s prepared formats and fields. You could consider that a LinkedIn profile is a pre-formatted resume.

Our sample resumes and training materials only include information on and samples of the **Reverse Chronological** and **Combination formats**. Since a pre-formatted resume is designed by the organization, it is difficult to predict from one organization or the other—especially if the submission area is password protected—what fields the organization will require. For example, one organization may ask for your GPA and a listing of relevant courses, while another organization may ask you to submit your transcript, so they don’t require a GPA or a list of courses on the pre-formatted resume.

Functional (4% of employers prefer this resume)

In the functional format, the emphasis is on your skills rather than your work history. It is based on the premise that it does not matter where or when you gained your skills, as long as you have them. Under each skill heading, you list specific duties you’ve performed, which illustrate that you’ve used and developed these skills.

Skill headings should be arranged in order of their importance. For example, if the most important skill you need for the job is research, then put it first on your resume.

In the past, organizations that responded to our Employer Surveys considered that Functional format was the least desired and a small minority described this format as a formatting “error” or deceptive. Use this format only if the organization has asked for this specific type of resume.

Fourteen percent of the respondents to our Employer Survey (2018) stated that they had no preference for a specific resume format.

