

A resume is a marketing tool—part of your overall job search strategy.

It should be a professional and concise document that summarizes information about your background, education, and experience that is most relevant for the career field you want to pursue. It is your first contact with a prospective employer and it must “stand out” and provide a positive impression. There is not a universal format, only guidelines. A resume is a flexible tool unique to your experiences and goals. Remember, the purpose of a resume is to get an interview, not the job!!

Use this guide as a resource to walk you through the process!

1. Know what career field you plan to target.

A “general” resume generally won’t get you very far. Target your resume to the career field that you are pursuing—and be sure to showcase the accomplishments, skills, courses, and experiences that relate to the kinds of things that employers in your field of interest are looking for.

Don’t know what you want? Try talking to the career counselor or begin browsing through the career library, the McDaniel College job bulletin, and other job listing sources to get some ideas.

Know what you want, but don’t know much about employers in your field? The career office is a great place to start. We can point you to updated printed information, alumni career contacts, and good web sites to begin your research.

2. Figure out what you have to “sell” to employers.

First, go through and write down information about ALL your college experiences—paid and unpaid—internships, volunteer work, courses, study abroad, college activities, independent research, honors, awards, summer and part-time jobs, skills you picked up along the way. You will need dates, duties, titles, promotions, leadership roles, accomplishments, results, courses studied, etc. You can put details in—you will be editing them later for the resume. Experienced candidates with a recent degree: you will probably want also to describe experiences before college as well. You can use this information for interview examples as well as possible resume items.

You can include high school stuff if it is especially relevant OR unique in some way OR if you are an underclassman using the resume for an internship or summer job.

3. Select your strongest selling points: most relevant and compelling.

Now, go back and highlight the parts of your experience **MOST** relevant to the career field that you want to enter. **NOTE** which ones are your strongest examples.

Remember, to do this you must have some clue about what employers in your field want. If you need help with this, see career services or start your own independent research to learn more about the career field and employer needs.

4. Organize your information.

Now you can begin to put the information into some kind of generally accepted resume format. First, start with some typical categories:

- **Your contact information:** Name, address (both school and home), phone number (with an appropriate greeting on your machine), and e-mail (check it often).
- **Career objective** (be cautious): A career objective should be a specific statement on what your goals are and what type of job you are looking for. It indicates that you are focused and have thought about your career. Be cautious – if you are considering various types of jobs, a career objective may limit your opportunities. Consider putting your objective on your cover letter. In this way you can tailor your objective toward the position you are applying for.
- **Education:** You should list the college you attended, your major/minor and your GPA if 3.0 or higher. Indicate when you received/anticipate your degree, not the years you have been in college. If you attended other colleges or have other degrees/certificates, they should follow. Naming your high school on your resume is not necessary since it is assumed you graduated from high school if you are in college. You can sometimes list 4-6 relevant courses as a subsection.
- **Related Experience** (describe paid or unpaid relevant experiences): You should list the name of the organization, your job/volunteer/internship title, dates you worked, city/state and **RELEVANT** duties and accomplishments. Do not include the street address or your supervisor's name. Supervisors and references go on a separate page.
- **Activities** (college groups, teams, leadership roles, etc. not used in related experience)
- **Honors and Awards** (can sometimes be combined with activities section)
- **Skills** (relevant computer, language, technical, or other demonstrated competencies)

NOT: **personal data** like age, gender, ethnicity, religion, marriage status, social security number etc. Do not list reasons for leaving past employment. Do not use pronouns like "I, my, me". This may open the door for discrimination.

Category names can be altered and grouped differently depending on what you have to emphasize and describe. The order of the categories can shift somewhat also: generally your contact information goes first, then education (except for experienced candidates), then related experience, work history, and other categories later.

Give enough information to highlight pertinent elements of your experience, but don't be too wordy in your descriptions. You will have to let go of the less relevant details but be sure to include relevant accomplishments and results in your descriptions.

Be honest—yes, this is marketing, but there has to be truth in advertising.

List experiences within sections from **MOST** recent to **LEAST** recent.

The **wording** in the work experiences sections is very important. The use of “Action Verbs” is strongly suggested; they add life and professionalism to your resume. A short list of sample verbs follows:

Administered	Composed	Implemented
Assisted	Coordinated	Initiated
Attained	Delegated	Maintained
Budgeted	Developed	Organized
Collaborated	Directed	Participated
Communicated	Facilitated	Presented
Complied	Identified	Supervised

If you are having trouble trying to figure out what job duties/accomplishments to include, think about your **transferable skills**. These are skills that can be used no matter what job you are performing. Some examples are speaking effectively, representing others, meeting deadlines, negotiating, handling multiple tasks, supervising, flexibility, teamwork, leadership, writing skills, delegating, managing time, motivating other, acting as a liaison, providing training, etc.

You can see resume samples in the following pages or you can visit the McDaniel College Career Library or the website for ideas about how your sections might begin to look for you.

Special note: electronic resumes require slightly different strategies. If your resume will be scanned into a database OR transmitted via e-mail or the web, there are some additional things to consider. Please refer to the Scannable/Electronic Resume section of this booklet.

5. Pick a style that showcases your best selling points.

There are 3 basic kinds of resumes, with lots of variations:

- I. Chronological resumes list experiences from most recent to least recent. This is the most traditional format, often used by college students. Headings are broad categories such as Work Experience, Activities, Honors, etc.
- II. Functional resumes highlight categories of skills and give brief “bullet” type examples to show how each skill was demonstrated. This type is used by someone who has little work/educational background, but whose broad experiences have provided the required skills. Work history is there, but in a much shortened form with little or no description beyond what is included in the skills sections. The categories are usually skill related such as Organizational Ability, Supervisory Skills, etc.
- III. Combination resumes are, well, a combination of the two types above. Some people use this style to highlight certain qualifications or transferable skills while maintaining the look of the traditional chronological resume.

6. What do I do about the new college name on my resume?

Remember, the new name didn't go into effect until July 1, 2002. So you don't have to recall all those resumes you sent out before that date. Here are some ideas about how you can work the new name in on your resume:

BA in English, McDaniel College, Westminster, MD
(founded as Western Maryland College in 1867)

BA in English, McDaniel College, Westminster, MD
(formerly Western Maryland College, 1867 – 2002)

For alums: BA in English, Western Maryland College, Westminster, MD
(now McDaniel College, effective July 2002)

7. Edit, Edit, Edit.

You need to make sure that spelling and grammar are perfect. You will probably need to cut down on words or figure out what is most relevant to keep or explain.

Try to keep it to one page if possible—there are still some employers out there who won't even look at a two-page resume if the person doesn't have years of experience. To them, it sends a signal that you either can't determine what is relevant or you can't present your information in a concise manner. Nobody has the time to read through stuff that isn't relevant to them — think about how much time you spend with mail that comes in your mailbox!

Don't list your reference names and contact information on your resume — save it for a separate sheet. Don't push supervisor names or street addresses on the resume — you will need the space for other information.

Run it through a spell check, and get lots of good people to proofread it for you. The career office will look it over for you and return it in campus mail with comments.

8. Make it look good.

Now is your chance to play around a bit with the visuals: letterhead style, borders, fonts, bullets, etc. Just be sure that you don't go too overboard. Most employers are still fairly conservative. Knowing your industry and what is acceptable helps here.

The bottom line is this: it has to be easily readable by the human eye. Hold it out at arm's length and look at it. What draws your eye? Is that what you want them to notice? Are there enough white spaces or does it look cramped and crowded? Is the font and type size easy to read (no smaller than 10 points, please)?

9. Print it.

Good resume paper is readily available at office supply stores. Conservative colors include off-white, ivory, and light gray. Be careful about too bright colors, paper that is much thinner OR thicker than most, paper with background designs, speckles, etc.

Get extra paper for those customized cover letters that will accompany EACH resume you send. Also, consider getting matching envelopes.

Use a decent printer (laser is better, but inkjets can be quite good) and be sure to use the right kind of paper for your printer.

Save all your stuff onto a disk and even consider having a backup one.

You don't have to change your resume for every job application, but if you are applying to widely different career areas, consider having an alternate version for the different areas you are pursuing. Example: a business management/sales resume and perhaps one with a more human services emphasis.

10. Send it out!

Having a beautiful resume is useless if you don't have anywhere to send it. If you haven't done your research on potential employers already, you will have to start now.

You can use resources from the McDaniel College Career Services office like the job and internship bulletin and web site, our alumni career network, campus and consortium job fairs, selected websites from the links on the McDaniel College Career Services homepage, information from the Career Library in Smith House, faculty, staff, family and friends AND/ OR an individual appointment with McDaniel College Career Services.

GOOD LUCK IN YOUR JOB OR INTERNSHIP SEARCH!!!