

Technology-Friendly Resume Formatting Tips



What type of file should I save my resume as?

- Do save your resume in the most commonly used formats, such as Microsoft Word (.docx), Text File (.txt) and Rich Text File (.rtf).
- Don't use formats which may fail to convert when reviewed by many resume management systems, including .pdf, .html, and Open Office. PDF files, while great for keeping your formatting in place when transmitting your document electronically for review by the human eye, sometimes give broken text or fail to convert when reviewed by many resume management systems. Consider contacting the prospective employer and inquiring whether the resume will be reviewed by a resume management system before deciding on a file format. Never scan and send your resume as an image file (e.g. .jpg, .png, .tif, etc.)!

How should I format my resume?

Font:

- Do use common fonts like Arial or Times New Roman in standard font sizes (e.g. 10 pt., 12 pt.).
- Don't try to stand out by using "unique" fonts. Though common fonts may seem boring, they are safer because software is designed to handle them.

Layout:

- Do use layouts that space content out across the page evenly and include enough white space. Try right-justified tabs set to the right margin to align elements on the right as well as left side of the page. Always list a header at beginning of each section and make sure to use standard phrases (e.g. Education, Experience, Skills).
- Don't use tables because they can break the continuity of the resume when read by software. Don't use page number (and don't use footers for any other reasons either). Don't insert any extra spaces between characters of a word.

Images:

- Do consider using social media sites like Pinterest or a blog to use images to brand or market yourself.
- Don't insert image files into the resume document, which cannot be read by software.

Dates:

- Do use standard date formulas (e.g. 05/01/2012), which software will recognize (though customarily dates on resumes usually only include month and year). A better option may be to write it out (e.g. May 2012). Whichever option you select, use it consistently throughout the resume and list entries in reverse chronological order (most recent first, by end date, and working your way back).
- Don't abbreviate dates using the format May '12 or 05/12, which can't be properly interpreted by software.

Abbreviations:

- Do consider using extremely common abbreviations, such as GPA rather than Grade Point Average. If applying for a position for which you have specific, relevant experience, consider using abbreviations which are jargon in your field, to show that you are "in the know" (e.g. Attend ARD meetings).
- Don't use abbreviations in general just to save on space (e.g. "Univ." instead of "University" or "Grad" instead of "Graduation"). These abbreviations look less polished.

Heading:

- Do state your name clearly and continuously: First Name Last Name (or First Name Middle Name Last Name). You can use bold and/or italics to format your name. Do stick to the address format approved by the postal service. Consistently follow the same pattern for formatting all phone numbers (e.g. 512.863.1346). Do format your email address the usual way (e.g. student@southwestern.edu).
- Don't use any special characters such as ", ; / (!)"; don't use extra spaces between the characters of your name; and don't add any descriptor to your name (e.g. Ichabod Black – Outstanding Mascot). Don't use the email format student[at]southwestern[dot]edu.

Certifications:

- Do document certifications in a separate section.
- Don't include certifications within your Experience, Skills or other sections where they might be overlooked.

Experience Section:

- Do list the employing organization's full name, including any endings such as Inc., LLC, Ltd., etc. This specificity helps the resume management software identify the name of the organization.
- Don't list the employing organization's full address (e.g. Southwestern University, 1001 E. University Avenue, Georgetown, Texas 78626). Address details can be mixed up with those of the candidate.