

Developing Your Resume

A workshop series
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Purdue University
Writing Lab

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The Objective Statement

What is an objective statement?

- A short section (usually 1-3 lines), often in the form of a sentence fragment, immediately below your contact information
- An “at a glance” picture of you and your career interests
- Other names: *Professional Objective, Resume Capsule, Career Goals, etc.*

Why write one?

- Emphasize key qualifications, skills and/or goals
- Help your readers find what they need to know quickly
- Make a good first impression



Q: Is this a *good* objective statement?

An internship allowing me to utilize my knowledge and expertise in different areas

- Well-written but raises too many questions
- For example: What kind of internship? What knowledge? What kinds of expertise? Which areas?

A good objective statement answers questions



- What position(s) are you applying for?
- What are your main qualifications?
- What are your career goals?
- What is your professional identity?

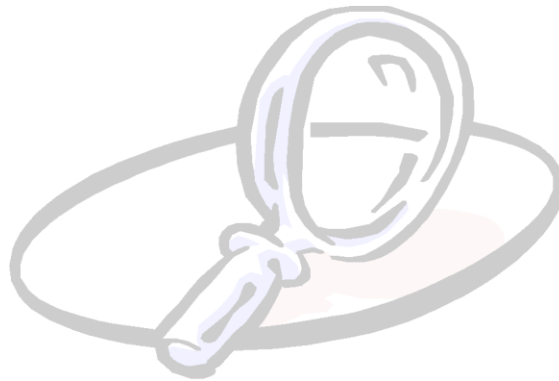
The importance of tailoring

- Sometimes one size does NOT fit all
- Each person and employer is unique in certain ways
- Aim for a custom fit when possible, but how?



Getting started...

- Reflect on your overall qualifications and career goals: In what ways are they typical? Unique?
- Research individual employers in your field: In what ways are employers alike? Different?



Questions about you

- What are your main qualifications, strengths, skills, and areas of expertise?
- What position(s)--or type of position--are you seeking?
- What are some of your professional goals?
- What type of organization or work setting are you most interested in?

Questions about employers

- What qualifications are most desired by employers in your field?
- What positions are available on the job market? What are they titled?
- What are some goals of the organizations that interest you?
- What kinds of organizations are now hiring?

“Instant” objective statements

- *For practice, fill in the parts in brackets*
 - To utilize my [qualifications, strengths, or skills] as a [position title]
 - A position as a [position title] for [company name] allowing me to develop my [qualifications, strengths, or skills]
 - An opportunity to [professional goal] in a [type of organization, work environment, or field]
 - [position title] with emphasis in [areas of expertise]

Which of your objective statements is “best”?

- The one that best...
 - Emphasizes your qualifications and/or goals
 - Appeals to employer expectations
- A trick question: You’ll probably need to write *more than one* objective statement.
- Tailor for each type of position that interests you and, for best results, modify for each particular employer (as necessary)

The Contact Information Section

What is a contact information section?

- Easy answer...
- A section that
 - provides information to help prospective employers contact you
 - presents a first impression
 - Is usually located at the top of the page



What may you include?



- Name, of course!
- Address and phone
 - Campus
 - Permanent
- Email
- Web address
- Fax number
- Any other means of contact

Q: Is this a good sample?

Your Name Here
1234 Streetname, #1
West Lafayette, IN 47907
765-555-5555

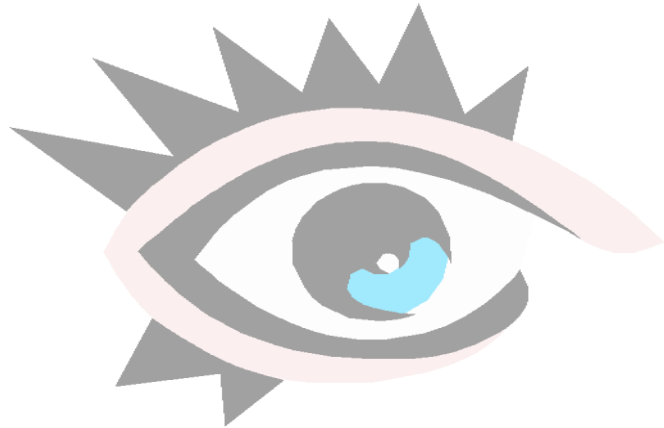


Moving beyond the typewriter

- Use design strategies
- Picking fonts
 - Size
 - Type
 - Highlighting
- Using layout
 - Alignment
 - Columns
- Adding a graphic element
- Coordinate with rest of resume



Using fonts



- Size: how big is big enough?
- Two major kinds:
 - **Serif**
 - **Sans serif**
- Text highlighting: bold, italics, caps, underline, special effects

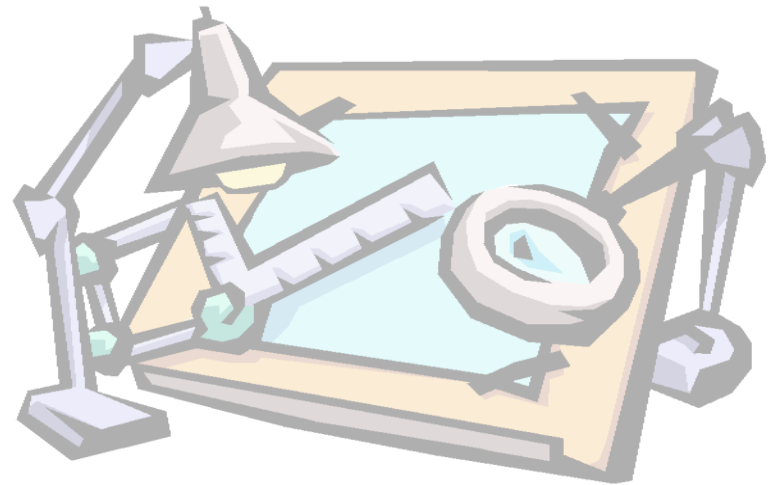
Putting it on the page

Aligning text

1. Flush left
2. Center
3. Flush right

Using columns

1. Both left and right
2. Left, right and center



Q: Is this sample better?

Your Name Here

Campus Address

1234 Streetname, #1

West Lafayette, IN 47907

765-555-5555

yourname@university.edu

Permanent Address

4321 Streetname

Anytown, IN 12345

555-555-1234

<http://univ.edu/~login>

Adding a graphic element

- May include horizontal line
- May possibly include a small graphic element



Creating a mock-up



- Sketch out how you would like your contact information to look
- Indicate
 - Possible fonts
 - Page layout decisions
 - Any graphic elements
- Give it the eye test

Coordinate design strategies

- Match design with rest of resume
 - Use same font types
 - Use consistent layout
- Match with cover letter
 - Make stationary template based on contact info
 - Use same paper for all application documents
- Aim for a professional package

Proofread with a magnifying glass

- Triple-check for accuracy
- One typo could cost you an interview!



The Education Section

What is an education section?

- A section that emphasizes your educational background and formal training
- Usually a major section for college students and recent graduates



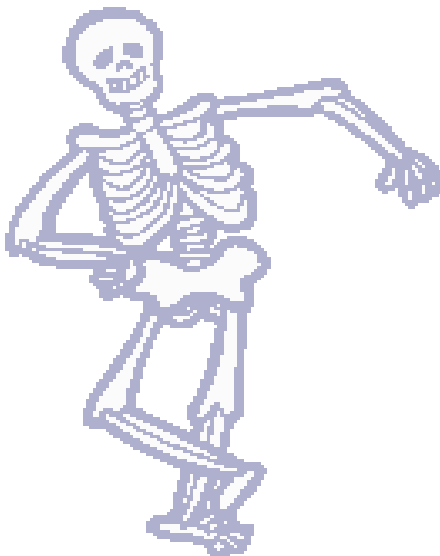
Purposes: to inform *and* persuade

- Give information about your schooling and training
- Persuade employers your educational background is relevant to the job, providing evidence of your qualifications
- Help your resume stand out from others in the stack

Where should you place this section?

- Above or below your experience section?
- It depends...
 - *Which is stronger, your education or your work experience section?*
 - *How much relevant work experience do you have?*
- Place strongest, most relevant section closest to top of the page

The “bare bones” education section



- Schools you have attended, including universities, community colleges, technical schools, etc.
- Location of school(s)
- Date of graduation, actual or anticipated
- Degree(s) earned or pursued
- Grade Point Average (GPA)

Are we done yet?

Education

B.A. in English

Purdue University

West Lafayette, Indiana

Anticipated Graduation: December
2004

GPA: 3.4/4.0

What else may be included?

1. **Extra information about your degree** (major, minor or selective GPAs, funding sources, honors, etc.)—usually listed or included in parentheses
2. **Specializations and special projects**—usually listed or described briefly
3. **Other relevant skills and training** (relevant coursework, computer skills, language proficiency, certifications, licenses, etc.)—may be subsections or separate sections

Questions to answer

- What are my major and minor GPAs?
- Any honors related to my degree?
- How is my education funded?
- What are my major(s) and minor(s)? What are my areas of emphasis, specialization, or concentration?
- What special course or degree-related projects may be relevant?
- What courses have I taken that are related to my career goals?
- With what computer programs am I most familiar?
- What language proficiencies do I have?
- Any certifications or licenses?
- Do I have any on-the-job educational training such as in-house training programs?

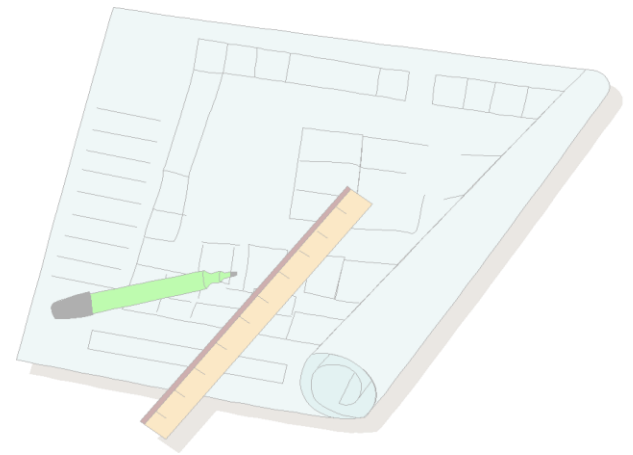
Selecting content for readers



- Consider how much space you have on your resume
- Read job ads closely
- Circle all educational experiences that may prove relevant to the job
- Select your most relevant educational experiences or those for which you have space

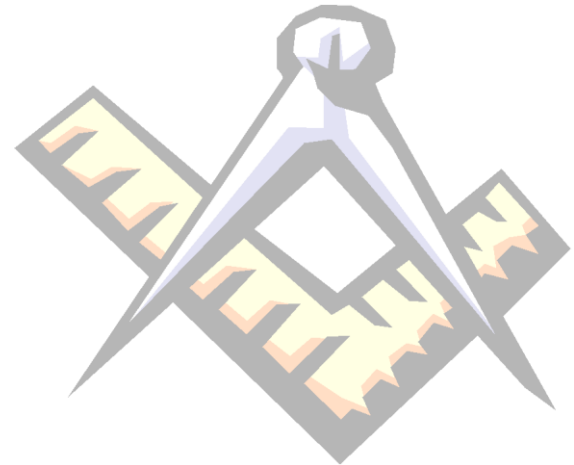
Organizing content for readers

- Organization depends on content selected and emphasis desired
- Do you need sub-sections?
- Do you need to develop content into separate sections?
- List in chronological order or in order of importance



Designing content for readers

- Consider using...
 - Subheadings
 - Indenting
 - Columns/tables
 - Parentheses
 - Bulleted lists
 - Paragraphs
- Match with rest of page



Are we done *now*?

Education

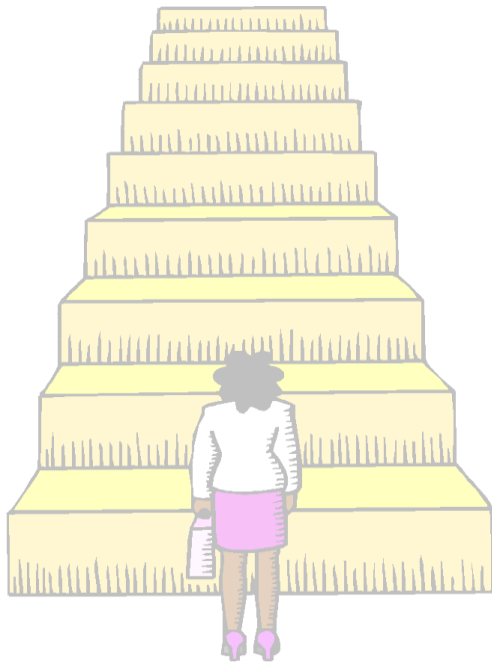
B.A. in Professional Writing, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, May 2001 (Funded 100% of Schooling)

Concentration: Business and Technical Writing

Select Coursework: Computer-aided Publishing, Writing for the Computer Industry, Business Writing, Technical Writing, Advanced Professional Writing

Overall GPA: 3.4/4.0 **Major GPA:** 3.7/4.0

What next?



- After brainstorming, select content for relevance
- Request transcripts to refresh memory and check for accuracy
- Develop plan for organizing and designing
- Integrate into rest of resume
- Seek critical feedback, especially from professionals in your field

The Experience Section

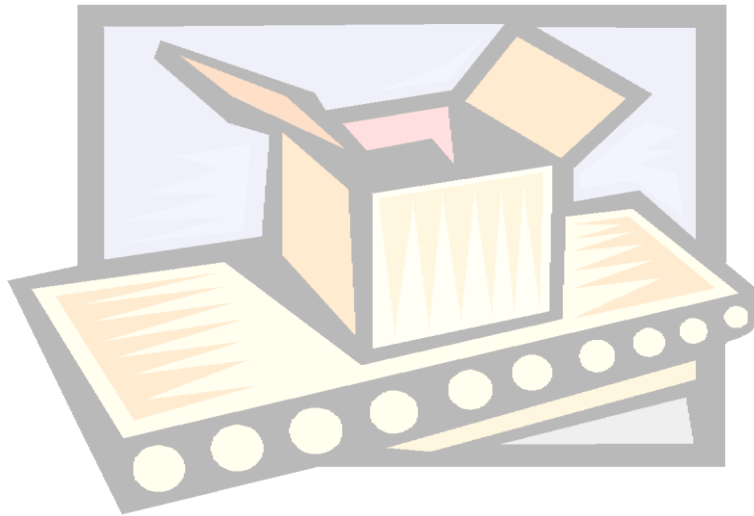
What is an experience section?

- A section that emphasizes your past and present employment and/or your participation in relevant activities
- Other common names: *Professional Experience, Work History, Field Work, Volunteer Work, etc.*
- Special names: *Technical Experience, Supervisory Experience, Aviation Experience, etc.*

Informing to persuade

- Provide information to help persuade prospective employers that your experiences make you qualified for the job
- Help your resume stand out from others in the stack
- Construct your professional identity

What goes into this section?



- Company or organization and location (city, state)
- Position title
- Dates of employment or involvement
- Descriptions of responsibilities, duties, achievements, etc.

Where should you put this section?

- Above or below your education section?
- It depends...
 - *How much work experience do you have?*
 - *Which is stronger, your education or your work experience section?*
- Place strongest, most relevant section closest to top of the page

Getting started...

List your past and present experiences.

Include:

- jobs
- volunteer positions
- appointments
- assistantships
- internships
- etc.



Describing experiences

- To tailor the content of this section, circle each item that is...
 - Related to your career goals
 - Asked for in job ads and descriptions
- Choose one experience you circled and describe briefly
- Strategies to be discussed in next slides
 1. Using action words
 2. Answering the journalistic questions
 3. Making descriptions parallel
 4. Viewing experiences as a professional

Developing your descriptions

- Use varied action words to describe experiences
- Answer the journalistic questions:
 - *Who? ...With whom did you work?*
 - *What? ...What duties did you perform?*
 - *Where? ...Where did your job fit into the organization?*
 - *Why? ...What goals were you trying to accomplish?*
 - *When? ...What timelines were you working under?*
 - *How? ...What procedures did you follow?*

Developing your descriptions

SAMPLE



Before:

- planned activities

Questions asked: *What kinds?, How?, When?, For Whom?*

After:

- planned arts, crafts, activities, and exercises weekly for physically-challenged children

Making your descriptions parallel

COLUMN A

- Recording OSHA regulated documents
- Material purchasing and expediting
- Prepared weekly field payroll
- Responsible for charge orders

COLUMN B

- Recorded OSHA regulated documents
- Conducted material purchasing and expediting
- Prepared weekly payroll
- Processed charge orders

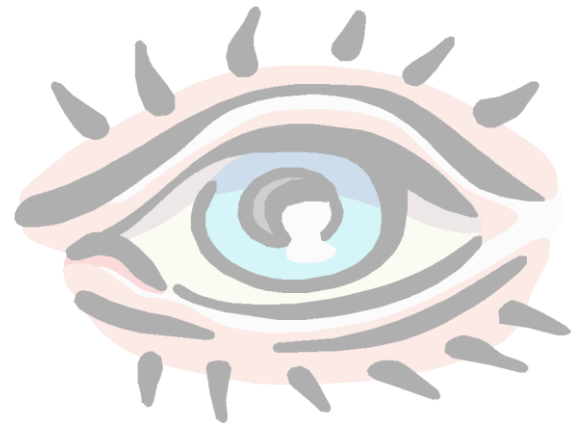
Try to see your experiences as a professional would

UNDERSTATED

- Answered phone
- Wiped tables

PROFESSIONAL

- Acted as liaison between clients and legal staff
- Created healthy environment for customers and maintained positive public image



Ways to tailor this section

- Select content that supports your qualifications and matches job description
- Consider organizing by order of importance
- Use professional wording, integrating job-specific terms

A formula for success



- Use appropriate headings
- Included required content
- Organize your section strategically
- Develop your descriptions
- Make your descriptions parallel
- See through professional eyes
- Tailor for your audience

The Honors and Activities Section

What is an honors and activities section?



- A section that emphasizes your participation in relevant activities and any honors you have received
- Other names: *Awards, Memberships, Volunteer Work, Hobbies*

Why bother?

- Fill up white space
- Provide additional evidence of your qualifications
- Give employers a sense of who you are outside of school and work

Where does this section go?



- Usually last section on the page
- Sometimes omitted
- May follow this section with “References Available upon Request”

What goes into it?

Draw three columns, one for each of the following:

1. Titles or positions
2. Sponsors or affiliated organizations
3. Dates of involvement (M/Y-M/Y or Y-Y)



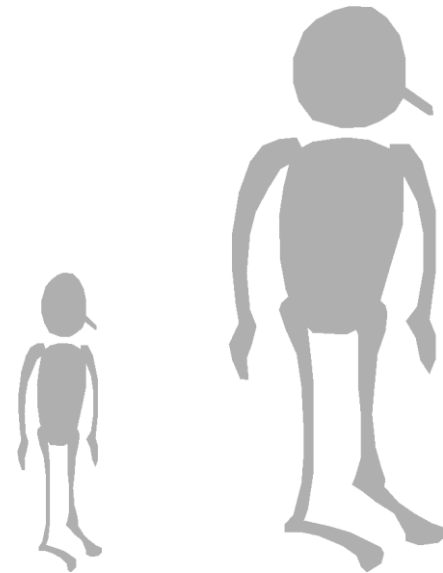
Exploring content possibilities



- Extracurricular activities
- Awards, grants, prizes, and special honors
- Memberships in professional clubs and organization
- Volunteer activities
- Hobbies

Big or little? Major or minor?

- How relevant are your honors and activities?
- Which honors and activities would most interest prospective employers?
- How much space do you have?
- May be short list at bottom
- May be a major section, resembling work experience



Two approaches

Minimal approach

Photography Club, University of Illinois, January 1999-Present

Elaborated approach

President, Photography Club, University of Illinois,
January 1999-Present

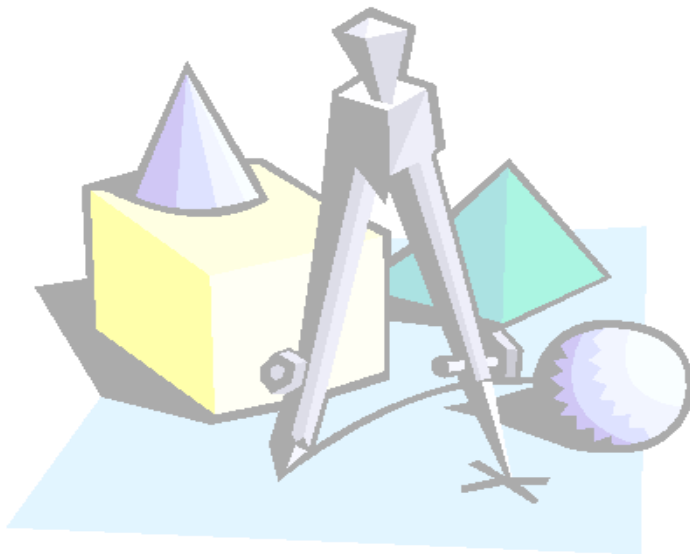
- Organized campus contest
- Increased membership with promotional efforts

Using visual design

- Simple list
- Columns
- List with bulleted descriptions
- Coordinate with other sections



Plan of attack



- Brainstorm
- Decide what to include based on relevance, interest-value, and space considerations
- Match organization and design with rest of resume
- Seek critical feedback

For More Help Developing Your Resume...



Contact the Purdue University Writing Lab

- Heavilon 226
- Grammar Hotline:
(765) 494-3723
- Check our web site:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu>
- Email brief questions:
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