

CHRONOLOGY/JOB HISTORY

QUESTION: Do you always have to show dates of employment?

ANSWER: Yes. Employers are skeptical of resumes without dates. They raise a red flag that perhaps the candidate is trying to hide something. In some cases you may not need to report your entire chronology (i.e. when the earlier chronology has no relevance to your job target), or you may consolidate earlier experience into a brief overview paragraph under a heading called “early career” but generally it is always best to include employment dates.

QUESTION: When switching careers how far should you go back on your job history/experience if you are including your previous work?

ANSWER: The key is to include what is relevant and make the business case for how the skills you acquired in your previous positions are transferable to the requirements of the position you are applying for.

QUESTION: If you changed careers, and have worked in the new industry for a long time do you list your previous career?

ANSWER: I recommend having a very brief paragraph or even a sentence that explains what the former career was, so your reader has a full understanding of your chronology.

QUESTION: How do people list accomplishments if they have limited professional experience?

ANSWER: Focus on what you achieved in school if you are a recent graduate. List exceptional performance in school, involvement in volunteer activities, or roles on school sports teams. If you held any part-time or summer jobs, show how you met or exceeded the expectations of the job or did better than your peers. Show how you completed tasks on time, kept customers happy, reorganized a display to make it easier for customers to select merchandise, handled customer complaints, served customers quickly, did something for your supervisor to make his life easier, etc. Even a recent high school or college grad can show contributions.

QUESTION: How do you list a seasonal job in your job experience?

ANSWER: Put the word seasonal in parenthesis after you list the employment dates.

QUESTION: How should you handle gaps in your employment chronology?

ANSWER: If you did any volunteer or seasonal work during that time or took a temp job you can list that.

QUESTION: How do you handle having multiple layoffs and don't have lengthy tenure as a result? It looks like you job hop.

ANSWER: Write a brief explanation right on the resume following your dates of employment. You can write that the company closed, relocated, or downsized...depending on the situation. This shows the employer that you left because of a business situation, not because you were job hopping.

Resume Writing Tips with Barbara Safani

Career Expert & Owner of CareerSolvers

SHOWCASING JOB EXPERIENCE

QUESTION: If you have had lower level clerical, sales or retail jobs what accomplishments should you include on your resume? (Think the gang from the show “The Office”)

ANSWER: Think about what you did that contributed to the success of the team. For clerical jobs, did you improve the filing system, spot errors on invoices that saved the company money, troubleshoot copier issues so you didn’t have to call in the technician? For sales jobs, was your drawer always balanced at the end of the day, did you have less errors than your co-workers, did you help more customers than the expectation that was set for the job, did you win some sort of formal store recognition, did you keep the lines moving quickly even on busy store days...these are all accomplishments that can help differentiate your performance over others.

QUESTION: How do you make sure your email format – color, fonts, graphics – is compatible with employers.

ANSWER: Save your Word document as Text Only, reopen the document and clean up any alterations to the text. Convert the graphics into charts if relevant and save your “pretty” version for the interview.

RESUMES

QUESTION: What word processor format and template is best suited for downloading into a resume text box online?

ANSWER: Save your Word document as Text Only, reopen the document and clean up any alterations to the text. Convert the graphics into charts if relevant and save your “pretty” version for the interview.

QUESTION: Many city and municipalities do not accept bold or bulleted resumes. They want plain text. How can I make my resume stand out?

ANSWER: Make sure the content is strong and use the dash line and spacing to separate sections and make it easier to read.

QUESTION: How do you format a resume that is going to be attached to an email?

ANSWER: If you are including it as an attachment, your Word document will work. If you are placing the resume in the body of the email, convert it to plain text.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

QUESTION: Why should high school students work on a resume while still in high school?

ANSWER: A resume can be used to secure a great summer internship or a job in the community. Many employers require a resume even for entry-level jobs.

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QUESTION: Do you have any advice for high school graduates on making their resumes effective?

ANSWER: If you are a recent high school graduate, list your academic average, awards, Advanced Placement® courses*, and SAT scores if they were high. You can also list clubs, activities, sports teams, and volunteer activities through school to help you stand out. If high school is your highest level of education, but you are not a recent grad, list the high school and any awards.

QUESTION: If I'm a recent high school graduate with no work experience seeking a retail or general labor position, do I need a resume? If so, what do I put on it?

ANSWER: Many employers will still request a resume. See guidelines above for what to list.

RECENT COLLEGE GRADUATE

QUESTION: For a recent college graduate, is it irrelevant to include any major accomplishments from high school?

ANSWER: It depends. If you won a college scholarship or academic award, it may make sense to include this information on the resume. If you were a star athlete in high school, you can list that information as well.

QUESTION: If you are a college grad and your internship turned into a part-time job do you place that first?

ANSWER: If you are a recent graduate place the education first. If you graduated one or more years ago, place the internship/part-time job first if it is relevant to your target job. If it is not, keep the education first until you get some additional, more relevant experience under your belt.

QUESTION: If you transferred between schools, do you list both schools?

ANSWER: Not necessary. Just list the school you graduated from (or are currently enrolled in). Also if you earned an A.A.S. degree and then went on to earn your B.A. or B.S., just list the four-year degree.

QUESTION: As a recent college graduate, I do not have a headline or strong professional profile. Should my professional profile include school/internship accomplishments?

ANSWER: Your headline could be recent college grad and you could list your major; i.e. Recent College Graduate-Accounting Major

QUESTION: How do I include post-high school education that did not result in attaining degrees and included attendance at multiple schools including online course completion?

ANSWER: You could list the number of credits you have towards a degree if it was part of a college program. If it was a certification program list the certification and where it was attained. If it was a series of workshops or seminars, list them out separately, but only include them if they are relevant to your job target.

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STAY-AT-HOME PARENT RETURNING TO WORK

QUESTION: How do you write about core competencies if you are returning to work after child rearing for 10-15 years?

ANSWER: If you are returning to a similar field, the competencies you had before are still your competencies and should be listed. If you are changing careers, list relevant competencies. For example, as a stay at home parent, perhaps you were a class parent or organized school fundraisers. You can position this experience as having competency in project management, fundraising, or event planning. The key is to match your competencies to those of the job whenever possible.

CAREER CHANGERS

QUESTION: Can you give general tips for people making a career change?

ANSWER: Talk to a lot of people. Learn the pluses and minuses of what they do. Ask them if they can introduce you to others in the field so you can learn more about the career. Craft a resume that proves you have acquired skills from a past job that can help you be successful in the new job. Expect your job search to take longer than a search with a linear career path. Generally career changers need to have more conversations and knock on more doors to get in front of the right employers.

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