

The first step to creating a dynamite resume is to select a format that effectively communicates key information about you. Remember that your resume must speak for you and generate interest in you as a job candidate, so the format is important for clearly showing your strengths and attributes.

There are three major resume formats in common use today:

1. Functional
2. Chronological
3. Combination

We'll take a look at each of these in turn.

The Functional Resume

As the name implies, this format is set up to highlight your skills and abilities rather than the specific jobs you have held during your career. It is a very effective format for communicating your strengths if you have limited work experience, are looking for work in a different industry or profession, have a time gap in your work history, or have developed your skills through life experience, volunteering, or some other non-job related activity.

Start by making a list of your achievements, big or small. Examples might include:

- Volunteered as a reading tutor at the local elementary school for over ten years, resulting in an average improved reading score of at least one full grade level for each student.
- Designed and implemented marketing campaigns for a new product line, leading to first year growth that exceeded launch estimates by 15%.
- Led a team of employee volunteers to write, produce and distribute a branch office newsletter, contributing to a 10% increase in employee satisfaction as measured by an annual employee survey.

Each statement should be very specific, describing your action and a measurable result. Write and re-write your statements until they are clear and concise, then group them into categories based on the skill or attribute they illustrate. Examples of categories might include:

- Leadership
- Communication
- Budget Administration
- Community Involvement
- Management and Supervision

One of the best things about a functional resume is that you can tailor it very easily to highlight the skills and attributes you possess that match up with the skills and attributes needed for a specific job posting. Be

prepared to change up the order of statements or the order of categories as needed to better highlight why you are a good fit for a particular position.

The Chronological Resume

This resume format is very traditional and the most commonly used. With this format, list your experience in order, starting with the most recent and working your way back. This format is excellent if you have a strong work history, no gaps in employment, and are applying for a position in the same or similar field.

For each position you list, include several bullet points that indicate your primary functions and responsibilities while in that position. It is important to focus on accomplishments and achievements, clearly identifying your potential as a candidate and indicating the contribution you can make if successful in your application.

The Combination Resume

More and more, resume-writing experts recommend using a combination resume because it includes elements from both, the functional and chronological resume formats. It is an effective way to highlight your unique skills and clearly show a potential employer why you are qualified for a particular job, while still showing your work history. This is very reassuring to employers who are not as comfortable with a straight functional resume.

You can still tailor and customize a combination resume to fit a specific job posting. Perhaps you want to list chronological items first followed by functional items, or perhaps you want to reverse that order. In some cases you might want to list each position you have held, followed by the functional skill statements that describe your achievements while in that position.

The bottom line is that there is no one set format that each person must follow. The purpose of a resume is to communicate key information about yourself to a potential employer, so don't be afraid to move information around and create your own format that does the best job of showing your qualifications.