UChicagoGRAD Résumé Guide

The résumé is the cornerstone of most job applications. It is a **curated** document highlighting the best—and most applicable—of a candidate's experience for a position. It is **tailored** to each job and written in sections. Unlike the CV, a résumé is limited to **one page** (though there are some exceptions for some roles). Professionals with more than 7-10 years of experience may consider using a longer résumé. **UChicagoGRAD** provides résumé review in one-on-one advising sessions. Meetings are most efficient when students and postdocs first consider the advice in this guide!

PLEASE NOTE: there are no "hard and fast" rules to writing a résumé. This document includes best practices for UChicago graduate students and postdoc. There are exceptions to every rule. It is always best to have someone review your résumé before submitting it anywhere.

(Students and postdocs interested in converting a C.V. to a résumé should consult the C.V. versus résumé guide at gradcareers.uchicago.edu alongside this document.)

Five Things to Get Started

Having trouble getting a résumé started? Here are some things to check off to get going:

- ❑ **Collect information:** take notes on dates, awards, employers, test scores, and GPA's

- ❑ **What did you do?:** think about a "day in the life" at each of your previous jobs or in graduate school. It can help to make an hour-by-hour sketch of a typical day. Don't leave anything out!

- ❑ **Think about graduate school as a job:** break up your day-to-day responsibilities as a graduate student. Teaching, researching, writing, editing, and advising all count as work experience.

- ❑ **Describe in terms of quantities:** résumés argue more effectively when each bullet point includes quantifiable info (see below).

- ❑ **Write everything down:** in your first résumé draft, it's more important to get everything on the page before cutting.

Tailoring Your Résumé

A strong résumé is always responding to a specific job ad or position:

- **READ** job descriptions with a pen and highlighter. Make note of repeated desired competencies and qualifications?

- **RESEARCH** the hiring organization's mission statement. Who do they serve? What is their mission? Can you mirror this language in your résumé to show similar commitments?

- **TRANSLATE** your experience into the language of the job ad. The best résumés highlight skills and experience in the language of the given job ad. (It's OK to be overt about this: use similar language in the résumé as appears in the ad).

Contact Info

Don't waste space! Your name and contact information should only take two lines at the top of the document!

Education Section

For current graduate students, education section of a résumé should go immediately beneath contact information. Postdocs can elect to put their education at the top of the document, or lead off with their current role.

ALWAYS INCLUDE:
- Name of all universities attended
- Name of degree and program
- Undergraduate institution and degree(s)

SOMETIMES INCLUDE:
- University-wide and "name brand" awards
- Study Abroad institutions and programs
- Dissertation or thesis title
- Advisor names (only if very well-known)
- GPA/GREs (for some finance/consulting jobs)

Experience Sections and Bullets

What kind of Experience Do You Want to Highlight?

Each heading on your résumé is a chance to demonstrate a particular set of competencies or experiences. Rather than stick to headings like "Work Experience," "Volunteer Experience," or "Professional Experience," UChicagoGRAD recommends using headings as an opportunity to tell the reader something that addresses a particular set of requirements in the job description.

Example headings include: Leadership & Management Experience; Communications Experience; Consulting Experience; Technical Experience; Analytical Experience; Research Experience; Writing Experience; Teaching & Mentoring Experience; Laboratory Experience; International Work Experience; Curatorial Experience; Museum Experience; Nonprofit Work Experience etc.

Project, Purpose, Impact: Writing Effective Bullets

Bullet points should be written in the first-person singular (in the present tense for current work, and the past tense for completed work). These one-line statements should lead with strong verbs (see below), and ideally should articulate for the reader the *kind of project* you were engaged in; the *purpose* of the project; and the *impact* that resulted from your participation in the project.

- **PROJECT:** what was the nature of the work?
- **PURPOSE:** what did the work aim to achieve?
- **IMPACT:** in quantifiable terms, what did you contribute that made the work successful?

Note: not every bullet will have all three elements! But it's helpful to think of each bullet as an opportunity to describe at least one or two of these elements.

Graduate Research Experience

Graduate research work *counts as work experience*. Think of common graduate student and postdoctoral activities in terms of strong résumé bullet points:

- **Managed** year-long thesis project; **Wrote**
- **Led** lecture and seminar-size class sessions (15-30 students); introduced
- **Conducted** archival research on 1500-year old primary sourcse
- **Developed** novel procedure

Quantification on a Résumé :

Quantification of experience helps present a more complete picture of the experience that you have, and of the size/shape/scope of your projects. This can mean the size of budgets, classes taught, and grant money raised (for example).

But it can also mean *frequency*. Tell the reader how often you had to teach, attend meetings, write blog posts, conduct analyses, etc. Use of quantification gives the reader a concrete sense of the work.

Strong Verbs:

Leadership: managed, led, oversaw, trained, taught, tutored, mentored, drove

Outcomes: produced, developed, created, innovated, completed, published

Analytical: analyzed, researched, investigated

Communication: wrote, edited, presented, communicated, taught, tutored, mentored

Planning/Logistics: planned, coordinated, executed, facilitated

Details: maintained, tracked budget

Technical: coded, programmed, hacked

Verbs to Avoid (less descriptive): helped, assisted, did, worked on, went to, etc.

Formatting Best Practices:

Contact Info.
Fit contact info on two lines to save valuable space

Fonts
Fonts matter! UChicagoGRAD endorses Garamond, Palatino Linotype, Georgia, Century Gothic, Gotham light or bold, and a few others (see below)

Bolds, Etc.
Limit use of italics, bold, and all-caps. Make sure that when using emphasis, the information being emphasized actually matters!

Bullets
UChicagoGRAD suggests using square bullets (they take up less space than the circles!)

Spacing
Use consistent and simple spacing throughout. UChicagoGRAD suggests one blank line between sections and ½ line between each entry.

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EDUCATION

University of Chicago (Chicago, IL): *MA Social Sciences*   Expected June 2016
- Relevant Coursework: History of Higher Education; Statistical Methods
- Thesis Project: "Graduate Education at a Crossroads: an Ethnographic Study of Graduate Students"

University of Virginia (Charlottesville, VA): *BA English Language and Literature*   June 2012
- Completed second major in Spanish Language and Literature
- Graduated *summa cum laude* with departmental honors in English

Universidad de Sevilla (Seville, Spain)   June – July 2010
- Completed 8-week intensive Spanish language institute; additional coursework in Spanish history

RESEARCH AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE

Department of History, University of Chicago (Chicago, IL)   September 2014 – Present
Research Assistant, Emily Osborn
- Identifies and writes summaries of research materials (5-10 articles/book-length works per week)
- Manages MS Excel database of 500+ relevant research items; enters information on new items
- Copy-edits book chapters and advanced drafts of journal articles prior to publication
- Provides regularly progress updates via email; completes as-needed administrative tasks
- Supervises 2 Masters students and 6 undergraduate research assistances on a daily basis

Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago, IL)   May 2013 – July 2013
Summer Project Intern
- Collaborated with development team to produce successful NEA exhibition grant application ($5k funding)
- Attended regular departmental staff meetings; assembled meeting materials

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Organizing Information on the Page

- ❑ Each section should be arranged in reverse chronological order

- ❑ Within each individual job or experience, place the **most important** tasks toward the top of the entry. Read the job description and make note of what qualifications and experiences seem most important. If you have experiences similar to those required by the job description, move these higher in each section.

- ❑ The most important information on each line should be as far left as possible. UChicagoGRAD recommends moving dates to the right-hand side of the page. Typically, dates are less important than the content of each experience and skill.

- ❑ It's great to be able to include items in a Skills section, but it's better to show the employer *how you developed a skill* or *where you employed a skill*. That is, use your work experience sections as an opportunity to talk about software, web, language, and database skills.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Because academic training is focused on product and contribution rather than process and procedural context, it's often difficult for students and postdocs to identify and articulate the generalizable skill sets they have cultivated. Here are examples of PhD skills sets and some plain language in which to describe their value.

Research, Analysis & Problem-Solving Skills: Managing long-term research projects; project planning, international grant experience, coordinating access to archives, etc.

Written & Oral Communication: writing in many genres, presenting research at conferences, writing blog posts, writing for multiple audiences, communicating in multiple languages

Leadership and Interactive Skills: managing research assistants, coordinating workshops, planning conferences and events, project management (lab, research, etc)

Entrepreneurial Skills: winning research funding, running a lab, designing a conference or event

Other Sections:

- **Volunteer Experience:** to volunteer shows a commitment to service that can be beneficial, especially at mission-driven organizations. At the same time, don't rule out inclusion of volunteer experience in other professional sections.

- **Languages:** be sure not to exaggerate language abilities. It's preferable to include only *fluent* language skills (conversational ability can work, as long as you are confident enough to conduct an interview in the language!).

- **(Technical) Skills:** it can seem silly to put down that you know how to use MS Word or social media, but these skills are valued in the workplace!

- **Interests and Hobbies:** keep this section very brief. Avoid general interests like "cooking" or "reading." These will not contribute to your profile as a candidate. Interests or hobbies should most often only be listed if they help you stand out, or if they are backed by certifications, awards, or recognition (ie: black belt in karate; award-winning horseback rider, etc.)

Writing a Good Summary of Qualifications:

Several industries (specifically tech, finance, some consulting firms, and others) have begun to value a "Summary of Qualifications." Unlike an "Objective," which is less in-fashion at the moment, this section states *very briefly* (no more than 2-3 lines) the main skills and competencies that make a candidate a good fit for a job. Use a Summary of Qualifications to highlight your core strengths—or to make a kind of main claim about the reason you are a strong candidate for a job, given the description.

Honors & Awards

Typically, honors and awards are less important on a résumé than professional experience. Tailor the awards you include the same way you are tailoring experiences!

Graduate Awards:
Include nationally and internationally recognized awards; explain any university awards.

Undergraduate Awards:
Include university wide awards. Exclude minor awards, dean's list recognition (in most cases), and high school awards (unless they were for nat'l/int'l competitions)

LinkedIn vs. Résumé?

LinkedIn can be a great supplement to a résumé. A strong LinkedIn profile can be listed in your contact information.

But moreover, LinkedIn has become the single most important social network for professional connections. It's important to have a LinkedIn profile that is as updated as your résumé.

Other social networks like academia.edu can be useful as a repository of academic publications and presentations.

Before You Submit:

Don't forget these important steps before submitting your résumé:

- ☐ Save as a PDF and check for formatting errors (things sometimes change
- ☐ Proofread / Copy-Edit (be sure to give to a friend outside of your program)
- ☐ Read the job description one more time and check for submissions guidelines.
- ☐ Run it by staff at UChicagoGRAD

Get the most out of your UChicagoGRAD meeting:

Career Development Staff at UChicagoGRAD are here to help you get your résumé written!

- ☐ Follow the advice in this guide to start
- ☐ Print out or share job descriptions prior to any appointments
- ☐ Come to any appointment with a first draft (it doesn't have to be pretty!)