

Building a Resume

Gather and organize information

The [resume worksheet](#) can help with this

- **Create a master list:** List every job, volunteer position, and internship you've had in the last 10–15 years, along with the company, dates, and responsibilities. Even seemingly unrelated experiences can reveal transferable skills.
- **Use the STAR method:** For each role, use the **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esult method to help identify and quantify key achievements. For example:
 - **Instead of:** "Managed a sales team."
 - **Try:** "Led a sales team of four (Action), which resulted in an 80% increase in quarterly sales (Result)".
- **Inventory skills:** Create a comprehensive list of hard skills (e.g., software, languages, certifications) and soft skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, leadership).
- **Compile education and training:** List all relevant degrees, certificates, and coursework. Recent graduates can include relevant projects or a strong GPA.

Choose the right format

The best format depends on individual experience level and career path. Any of these can be done with [Peterson's](#) resume tool.

- **Chronological:** Most common and recruiter-friendly. Best for candidates with a consistent work history in the same field.
- **Functional:** Focuses on skills and is useful for recent graduates, people with employment gaps, or those switching careers.
- **Combination/Hybrid:** Blends the chronological and functional formats, showcasing skills while also providing a work history.

Customize the content for the job

A generic resume is less likely to stand out, but it's a good place to start. Next, tailor the resume for every position (or industry) you are applying for.

- **Find keywords:** Examine the job description and pull out important keywords related to qualifications, responsibilities, and required skills. Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) often scan for these words. [Cypress Resume](#) and our word guides can help. Or use the [suggestions for AI prompts](#).
- **Target the summary:** Write a concise professional summary or objective that immediately highlights your most relevant qualifications for that specific job.
- **Align bullet points:** Use the achievements brainstormed earlier, prioritizing those that directly align with the job description.

Write and structure the resume

- **Create a clean header:** Include full name, professional email address, phone number, and city/state. Adding a link to a professional networking profile like LinkedIn is also a good idea. In [Peterson's](#), there is an option to turn the resume template into a website.

- **Use strong action verbs:** Instead of vague phrases like "responsible for," start each bullet point with a powerful action verb (e.g., *managed*, *developed*, *achieved*). [Action verbs and adjectives](#)
- **Focus on quantifiable results:** Whenever possible, use numbers, percentages, or statistics to demonstrate your impact.
- **Organize sections logically:** Arrange the sections (summary, experience, education, skills) based on the chosen format, with the most relevant information placed "above the fold," or in the top half of the first page. Here are some [ideas for skills](#).

Review and polish the final draft

- **Proofread multiple times:** Go over the resume to check for any spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors. Reading it aloud or backward can help spot mistakes.
- **Save as a PDF:** Download the final resume as a PDF to preserve the formatting.
- **Name the file professionally:** Use a clear file name like "JaneDoe_Resume.pdf".

Guide for those with limited experience

If you have limited work experience, focus on transferable skills and non-traditional experience.

- **Focus on academic achievements:** Showcase coursework, projects, or academic awards.
- **Include volunteer work:** Highlight volunteer positions that demonstrate relevant skills like leadership, teamwork, or problem-solving.
- **Leverage extracurriculars:** Any clubs, sports, or other activities where they held a position of responsibility can be used to demonstrate skills.
- **Consider a combination or functional format:** These formats can help de-emphasize a light work history and highlight skills.