



When, Why, and How to Create a Resume

Resumes are useful for a variety of purposes, and the best template to use depends on the specific purpose. Students beginning the process of applying to college should consider creating a new one even if they already have one on their school's Naviance or in another format.

The old version of the common application allowed students to upload a resume to the "Additional Information" section, and many did so in order to explain their activities or highlight their talents and skills, but uploads are no longer possible with the new common application, and the word is out that many college admissions officers actually find student resumes annoyingly self-aggrandizing and redundant. So what is a student to do?

For college application purposes, everyone agrees that all students should use the "Activities" section of the application as fully as possible to list their sports, clubs, community service and employment experiences. The common application allows them to list ten such activities (including summer activities), with a maximum of 50 characters including spaces to identify the name of the activity and their "position/leadership" and another 150 characters including spaces to provide "details, honors, and accomplishments."

For students who have more than ten significant activities or who have activities that cannot be explained adequately in the space allowed, this can be frustrating. To find out if the schools they are applying to will welcome a resume and in what form they would like to receive it, applicants will need to look on each college's website or, if the information is not there, contact the individual admissions offices directly.

Some schools provide a space on their supplement where students may upload a scientific abstract or a paper with pictures and charts. Resumes can sometimes be uploaded there, or they can be pasted into the "Additional Information" section of the basic common application. When they are pasted in, though, the formatting will be lost, so it's essential to "Print Preview" to ensure readability. In some cases, schools prefer to receive them via e-mail to the admissions office.

Among the colleges that have publicly stated their willingness to accept resumes are: Brandeis, Brown, Bryant, Colby, Columbia (whose website includes some caveats), Dartmouth, Davidson, Lafayette, Oberlin, University of Pennsylvania, and University of Rhode Island.

Since some schools that are not on the common application simply tell applicants to attach a resume or list of activities, students may find themselves creating different versions of their resume for these schools and for the common application schools that are explicit about their desire to avoid receiving redundant materials.

Resumes may be worth creating for other purposes too. Applications for internships and summer opportunities sometimes require them, and many people like to have them on hand to give to admissions officers or interviewers when they meet them. A Syracuse University admissions officer has reported that when she visits various high schools in the fall to speak with interested seniors about Syracuse, she is impressed by the ones who introduce themselves to her and provide a resume after her presentation. The resumes, she says, help her to remember the students. Also, many schools provide only alumni interviews, and the alumni conducting the interviews do not have access to the candidates' applications, so providing them with resumes may help them understand and better remember the candidates when they write up their reports.

In general, a resume should group information in a format that helps the reader make sense of it. Thus, items should be categorized and grouped in a meaningful way. For instance, a student who has multiple sports, music, theater or community service experiences to report should consider creating a separate category for just those listings. Meaningful awards and special skills (i.e. fluency in a foreign language or with a specific computer program) should be listed, but padding with less meaningful achievements is a "no-no"; simply omit any categories for which you have nothing truly impressive to include.

Items within each category should always be listed in reverse chronological order, with the most recent first. For each item, dates should be provided, and all items under each heading should be formatted identically.

Many examples of resumes and templates for building them are available on the Internet. However, careful consideration must be given to the purpose of the resume when selecting a format and adapting it to fit the individual. Every resume should begin with your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address. Some of the samples online show grade point average and test scores, but it's preferable not to include those on resumes for admissions officers who have access to that information elsewhere. The reader should be grateful that you've helped him or her to make sense of the sometimes disparate items on your list, not

aggravated at having to read through an extra document that adds no further understanding of who you are and how you've been spending your time.