

SAN DIEGO
MESA COLLEGE

Career Services

RESUME PREPARATION HANDBOOK



*MARKET YOURSELF BY OUTLINING
YOUR UNIQUE STRENGTHS*

2025-2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction

What is a resume?	1
Consider what you have to offer...	2

II. Resume Preparation

Preparing Your Resume: <i>Resume Content</i>	3
Preparing Your Resume: <i>Action Verbs</i>	4
Preparing Your Resume: <i>Applicant Tracking Systems</i>	5
Preparing Your Resume: <i>Resume Checklist</i>	6

III. Tips to Consider

Top Recruiter "Pet Peeves"	7
Resume DOs and DON'Ts	8

IV. Resume Types

What type of resume is "right" for you?	9
Sample Resume: <i>Chronological</i>	10
Sample Resume: <i>Functional</i>	11
Sample Resume: <i>Combination</i>	12

V. References	13
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WHAT IS A RESUME?

01

THE BOTTOM LINE

A resume is a concise and easy-to-read overview of your professional experience on paper. It serves as the “sales” tool to help you market yourself to potential employers.

A RESUME COMMUNICATES:

- Who you are as an employee
- Your employment and professional background
- Your strengths, accomplishments, skills, and abilities
- Why the prospective employer should call you in for an interview

EVERY WORD COUNTS!

The information you choose to list about your background and how you present it should confidently convince an employer to consider you as a prospective employee.



POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- 1) Resumes are used to get your “foot in the door” for an interview
- 2) Resumes act as a supplement to the data on your application
- 3) Resumes serve as an outline during the job interview

Creating a powerful resume is a challenging process that takes time, planning, and thought. Everyone's resume has its own "style" based on their education, experience, and training, etc.

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR RESUME

- 1) Who will be reviewing the resume?
- 2) What are you applying for? (i.e. job, internship, industry).
- 3) What are you intending to communicate about yourself through your resume?
- 4) Will the information you included secure an interview?
- 5) How can your resume set you apart from other candidates?

CONSIDER

WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER...

PROFESSIONAL ABILITIES

- What are your skills and qualifications?
- Examples: Computer skills, Bilingual, Time management

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

- How might your specific talents translate to the world-of-work?
- Consider skills you have developed as a student that can be transferred to the workplace.
- Examples: Working with difficult situations, Working with details/numbers/ideas, Experience with machines and tools, Leadership Ability, Communication Skills, Ability to Follow Directions

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

- Are you reliable, honest, approachable, and flexible?
- Do you demonstrate persistence, drive, and efficiency?

EXPERIENCE

- Consider paid experience, internships, and volunteer work.
- What specific actions did you take to accomplish your work?
- What were the results of your actions?

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- What honors, awards, and recognition have you received from past accomplishments?
- Showcase your achievements, completed projects, noteworthy accomplishments, outside activities, memberships, academic awards, etc



O*NET ONLINE'S JOB ENCYCLOPEDIA

O*NET Online is the nation's primary source of occupational information. Utilize this tool to research roles, analyze industry outlook, and gain an understanding of how your skill set is transferable into your desired employment opportunity/career. Scan the QR code to watch a video about the website!

RESUME CONTENT

03

Be sure that your voicemail message and email address are professional.

First Name Last Name

City, State ZIP Code

Phone Number | Email Address

Website

Increase visual impact with selective use of bold, underlining, and CAPITALIZATIONS.

Include if website is professional.

OBJECTIVE

The objective statement is optional. It should be 1-2 sentences and tailored specifically to a job or career field. Include relevant **Adjectives** that describe you, your **Career goal(s)**, **Skills**, and **Experience**.

A resume is not a complete work history. Relevant experience within the last 10 years is a general rule.

SKILLS

- Include foreign language skills.
- Emphasize computer software programs.
- Avoid listing general skills here (i.e., communication skills).
- Include skills specific to your field (i.e., laboratory skills).

Other sections you may use include: *Activities, Leadership, Athletics, Professional Affiliations, Community Service, Computer Skills, Relevant Courses, etc.*

WORK EXPERIENCE

Job Title

Dates of Employment

Company Name - City, State

- Include achievements or contributions made to an organization relevant to your target position.
- Describe your responsibilities. Start statements with active verbs.
- Make your descriptions energetic and short.

Present work experience positions in reverse chronological order (most recent first).

Job Title

Dates of Employment

Company Name - City, State

- Bullet format is preferred by many employers.
- Make sure you emphasize your responsibilities that translate into the type of job you are applying for.
- Focus on results, skills, leadership, initiative and teamwork. (Use quantifying numbers whenever you can.)

You may include paid, volunteer and intern positions in the experience section

EDUCATION

Degree Name

Exp. Graduation Date

San Diego Mesa College - San Diego, CA

- Include specialization, minor, overall GPA if 3.0 or above, any academic honors, honor societies, club membership or athletics.

DO NOT list references or include the phrase "References available upon request." Employers expect you to have references available on a separate sheet of paper.

UTILIZING ACTION VERBS

When writing about your job description and responsibilities in the experience section of your resume, it is essential to begin each statement with an action verb. Here are some important tips, followed by examples of action verbs listed by job type category.

1. Try not to use the same verb twice and vary the sentence structure.
2. Choose words of substance and power to describe your abilities and achievements.
3. Current positions should be described in the present tense, while previous positions should be described in the past tense.
4. DO NOT say "Responsibilities/Duties include:"

ADMIN/ MANAGEMENT

Advise	Mentor
Approve	Moderate
Guide	Supervise
Manage	Train

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Finance	Manage
Forecast	Market
Fund	Plan
Generate	Project
Handle	Purchase
Increase	Report

RESEARCH/ ANALYSIS

Analyze	Critique
Assess	Discover
Balance	Extract
Calculate	Investigate
Construct	Review
Consult	Survey

SALES/ PERSUASION

Arbitrate	Maintain
Consult	Market
Establish	Promote
Implement	

TECHNICAL ABILITY

Coordinate	Program
Forecast	Streamline
Operate	Upgrade

HELPING/ CAREGIVING

Encourage	Provide
Foster	Administer
Serve	Aid
Monitor	Empower
Advocate	Observe

COMMUNICATION

Address	Interview
Correspond	Interpret
Translate	Write
Schedule	Explain

HOSPITALITY

Agreeted	Coordinated
Served	Prepared
Managed	Supervised
Trained	Implemented
Developed	Resolved
Organized	

AUDITING

Analyze	Guide
Change	Endorse
Coincide	Review

OFFICE SUPPORT

Administer	Organize
Appropriate	Prepare
Distribute	Schedule
Formulate	Solve

EDUCATION

Chair	Evaluate
Collaborate	Generate
Coordinate	Lecture
Demonstrate	Listen

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Developed	Implemented
Engineered	Optimized
Tested	Analyzed
Debugged	

ART/CREATIVITY

Create	Curate
Design	Exhibit
Develop	Draft
Launch	Compose

SERVICE

Assist	Support
Advise	Resolve
Guide	Counsel
Listen	Reassure

ACTION VERBS FOR MANY INDUSTRIES

Accomplish	Assist	Lead	Research
Achieve	Collect	Organize	Reshape
Adapt	Communicate	Originate	Solve
Allocate	Evaluate	Perform	Strengthen
Appraise	Facilitate	Present	Streamline
Articulate	Launch	Process	Upgrade

APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEMS

05

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) are embedded softwares that assist companies with the hiring process. The ATS will filter through hundreds of resumes, do time-consuming tasks like interview scheduling, and assist hiring managers with fast-tracking the hiring process.

ATS systems can analyze your information, compare your resume to the job posting, and determine if your resume is qualified enough to be seen by an employer.

BENEFITS

Reveals attention-to-detail and presents a tailored resume to an employer

ATS-friendly resumes have less competition

BARRIERS

Qualified candidates are disqualified due to lack of key words

Unfair towards monolingual/ minority populations

In our resume appointments, the Career Peers will help you...

- Be educated about ATS
- Create ATS-Friendly Resumes
- Tailor Resumes to each Job Application



RESUME CHECKLIST

DID YOU KNOW? Employers spend less than a minute evaluating your resume. Catch their attention by tailoring your resume to meet their needs. Here are some suggestions to help focus your edits!

FORMAT

- ☒ **Templates:** Avoid AI resumes and pre-filled templates. They are difficult to edit and do not allow you to present information in the most effective format.
- ☒ **Length:** For college students and recent college graduates, **create a one-page, one-sided resume.** Two pages is okay as long as all information is **directly relevant and related to the role.**
- ☒ **Font:** Choose a basic and easy-to-read font such as Times New Roman, Arial, or Georgia in **10-12 point size.** The point size can vary; your name should be in a larger point size than the other text (**16-19 point size**). Always use black ink! Color is an unnecessary distraction.
- ☒ **Paper:** If you're planning to print out copies of your resume, use **8½" x 11" resume-quality paper** in a light color, such as white or off-white.
- ☒ **Spacing:** Margins of ½ to 1 inch and double-spacing between headings improves readability. Base your spacing on the amount of content you have to include (for example, if content is limited use larger margins).
- ☒ **Format:** Use bullets, bold, capitalization, and underlining sparingly to call attention to the most important information, usually aspects of education or experience.
- ☒ **Layout:** The most common layout summarizes your experience with the following headings: Objective, Skills, Education, and Experience (work, internship, and volunteer). Under Education and Experience, list information in reverse chronological order with your most recent experience first.
- ☒ **Professionalism:** Eliminate all typos and misspellings by asking other people to proofread.

FUNCTION

- ☒ **Impression:** Decide what impression you want your resume to communicate. Does it show that you are a leader, a team player, an artist, a salesperson, or something else?
- ☒ **Content:** Select three core qualities that define you and are of importance to the position for which you are applying. Make sure your resume stresses the accomplishments and skills that reflect these qualities.
- ☒ **Style:** Start off sentences with action verbs to convey enthusiasm and achievement. Sample verbs are listed on the next page.
- ☒ **Avoid:** Do not list your own web site if it includes personal information. Never reveal confidential personal data such as social security, driver's license, or credit card numbers on a resume.

TOP 8 RECRUITER PET PEEVES

07

The following pet peeves represent the top ten results of the ResumeDoctor.com survey of over 2,500 recruiters in the US and Canada.

1) Spelling Errors, Typos, and Poor Grammar

- Proofread for incorrectly used words (their vs. there). Spell check doesn't recognize everything.
- Resumes reflect the experiences of professionals and serve as examples of communication style.

2) Too Duty Oriented – Reads like a job description or fails to explain accomplishments

- Provide specific examples of how the company benefited from your performance.
- When possible, accomplishments should be quantified in dollars or percentages.

3) Missing or Inaccurate Dates

- Many recruiters shared with us that a resume that does not include dates sends up “red flags” about a candidate’s background and is immediately tossed out.
- Be honest about your dates of employment...Lying on resumes is another area that recruiters and hiring managers alike despise!

4) Missing Contact Info, Inaccurate, or Unprofessional Email Addresses

- It is crucial that your complete contact info be easy to read and at the top of the page. This includes your full name, phone numbers, (home, cell, and a daytime number), and home and email addresses.
- Whenever your contact info changes, make sure any and all recruiters you are working with or have in the past, are updated.

5) Poor Formatting

Formatting issues to be aware of:

- Bullets should be aligned cleanly on the page and not indented all over the place.
- Using headers and footers is one of the worst things you can do! If the document is converted it is likely that your contact info won't be!
- No recruiter likes a resume overflowing of templates or tables.

6) Long & Dense Resumes – greater than 2 pages

- Recruiters are only reviewing the last 5-8 years of your career, 10 tops. Keep it short!
- Remember, a resume is simply a marketing piece, it must be short, concise, and hit the “hot buttons” of the employer – generally aim for one page in length.
- Use blunt, paraphrased bullet points.
- Use appropriate amounts of “white space” to help guide your reader.

7) Unqualified Candidates

- Recruiters do not have time to sort through hundreds of resumes that are in no way a match for the requirements they are trying to fill.
- An easy remedy, when you are unqualified but want to submit your application to a company, is to provide a simple introductory statement: “While my qualifications do not match your requirements, please accept the attached for your files in anticipation of future, suitable opportunities.”

8) Personal Info Not Relevant to the Job

- You never want to include information that could be viewed in the wrong way or open up even the slightest temptation for prejudice or misinterpretation.
- Recruiters do not need to know your age, height, weight, marital status, sexual orientation, religious or political affiliations, or even your hobbies. They are trying to fill an open job requisition, not match you for a blind date.

RESUME DO'S & DON'TS

DO:

- ✓ Always print your resume on standard letter size, white or ivory resume paper.
- ✓ Be consistent in terms of formatting and abbreviations. Leave some space between paragraphs.
- ✓ If you have a cell phone number, include it! Make sure your voicemail greeting is professional.
- ✓ Proofread, and have others proofread it too to always make sure the resume is error-free.
- ✓ Tailor your resume to the position for which you are applying.
- ✓ List your extracurricular involvement with professional, trade, and civic associations if appropriate.
- ✓ Send a brief, customized cover letter with each resume.
- ✓ Re-read your resume before every interview; the interviewer probably did too.
- ✓ If you have to e-mail your resume, don't send it on its own. Add a 'subject' and message.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't abbreviate or use specific terminology unless you are sure the reader will know what it means.
- ✗ Don't try to over decorate, keep it simple and professional. This includes no folding or bending your resume.
- ✗ Never use exact dates; months and years are sufficient (you can use "Summer" or "Holiday Season" as well).
- ✗ You don't need to list your high school if you are a college graduate.
- ✗ Avoid listing your height, weight, or remarks about your physical appearance or health.
- ✗ Don't list references on your resume. Nor should you state "References Available on Request." It is assumed by employers that you will provide references separately at the time of application or interview. Create a separate document that lists your references.



Last but not least...

Never **LIE**! It could cost you the job offer or, if you've already been hired, it could cost you your job.

CHOOSING A RESUME FORMAT

There are three basic formats for resume preparation: **Chronological**, **Functional**, and **Combination**. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. Choose a format that best reflects your skills and experience at a glance.

CHRONOLOGICAL RESUMES

- Chronological resumes are the easiest to prepare and read, and the most commonly used.
- Information is organized according to time with most recent education and experience listed first.
- Demonstrates a strong job-related background.

FUNCTIONAL RESUMES

- Functional resumes are appropriate when there is a lack of work experience in an occupation area, a desire to change careers, or re-enter the job market after a lengthy absence.
- Information is organized according to types of experiences you have obtained with a focus on skills and qualities that can be translated to a variety of work situations (i.e. transferable skills).
- This format highlights key traits or qualities and detailed examples of those qualities rather than focusing on dates and time frames.

COMBINATION RESUMES

- Elements from both the functional format and the chronological format are combined into one resume.
- It stresses skills and capabilities, but adds positions, employers and dates.
- Appropriate when you want to show the potential employer where and when you have gained the skills you are highlighting.

SAMPLE RESUME: CHRONOLOGICAL

10

First Name Last Name

example@example.com | (555) 555-5555
San Diego CA 92111

OBJECTIVE

Detail-oriented Kitchen Manager with 5+ years of customer service experience looking to use her interpersonal skills, leadership, and multitasking abilities to deliver exceptional service to Starbucks guests as a Shift Supervisor.

SKILLS

- Excellent communication
- Ability to work in a fast-paced environment
- Strong multitasking
- Detail-oriented
- Excellent point-of-sales
- Effective teamwork and leadership

CERTIFICATIONS

California Food Handlers Card, Premier Food Safety Association 02/2020
Beverage and Alcohol Handling Certificate, National Bartenders School and Staffing 07/2019

EXPERIENCE

Shift Supervisor 09/2019 - Present

Chipotle Mexican Grill, San Diego CA

- Supervise and participate in kitchen and dining area cleaning activities creating an environment that is highly devoted to customers
- Maintain compliance with company policies, procedures for food safety, sanitation, and quality resulted with a customer retention rate of 95%
- Record inventories and report any shortages by collaborating with the designated personnel which improved customer services efficiency

Crew Member 05/2018 - 09/2019

McDonald's, San Diego CA

- Handled payments during peak service hours to ensure all transactions are accounted for
- Maintained an average of 45 second "Out-the-Window" at the drive-through which decreased customer wait time
- Delivered friendly customer service with a positive mindset resulting with a 90% customer satisfaction score

Ride Operator 09/2016 - 07/2018

SeaWorld San Diego, San Diego CA

- Provided information about facilities and entertainment options which assisted customers with their plans while maximizing their time
- Monitored activities to ensure guest adherence to rules and safety procedures
- Directed patrons to rides, seats, or attractions to maintain organized event workflow

SAMPLE RESUME: FUNCTIONAL

11

First Name Last Name

example@example.com | 555.555.5555

San Diego, CA 92111

linkedin.com/first_lastname

OBJECTIVE

Dedicated campus leader and student advocate looking to use their client management skills, critical thinking, and leadership skills to gain professional child development skills as a Youth Program Leader with the YMCA.

EDUCATION

Associate of Science - Child Development

Exp Graduation: May 2022

San Diego Mesa College, San Diego CA

Certificate of Performance - Assistant Teacher

December 2020

San Diego Mesa College, San Diego CA

SKILLS

- Excellent counseling
- Strong leadership
- Advanced global and intercultural fluency
- Great client management
- Advanced problem-solving
- Bilingual (Spanish / English)

EXPERIENCE

Client Management

- Created personal babysitting schedule by communicating with 15+ clients and utilizing Microsoft Outlook and Microsoft Excel to organize appointments
- Managed student relationships via phone and email to obtain program applications, resolve inquiries, and promote campus events
- Regularly engaged students in open discussions and other team building activities that increased morale and contributed to a more energized learning environment

Leadership

- Facilitated weekly campus tours to groups of 15-20 High School students while escorting them to and from workshops and answering all inquiries
- Collaborated with classmates to delegate tasks and responsibilities for academic projects to ensure that all major and minor deadlines were met
- Implemented effective teaching strategies when babysitting children, ages 3 to 15, to assist with homework and class assignments

Problem Solving

- Effectively helped seven struggling students to improve their reading ability, resulting in all seven achieving grade-level targets within a year
- Incorporated digital technology for learning activities, including software applications like Learning Upgrade, SMARTY Ants, and iReady
- Supervised nieces and nephews while settling conflict and resolving complex issues between the children

WORK HISTORY

Peer Mentor

July 2018 - March 2020

San Diego City College, San Diego CA

Babysitter

March 2010 - Present

Self-Employed, San Diego CA

SAMPLE RESUME: COMBINATION

12

First Name Last Name

Atlanta, Georgia, 30301 | (555) 555 5555 | example@example.com

RESUME SUMMARY

Licensed realtor with 8+ years of residential and commercial real estate sales experience in the Atlanta metro area. Expert in campaign management, successfully increasing agency's new customer acquisition rate by 30% over 2-year period. Adept in drafting contracts, client analysis, market research, and knowledge of federal and local real estate law.

SUMMARIZATION OF SKILLS

Real Estate Sales

- Increased commercial and residential real estate sales by 30% in 2 years through creation and implementation of new online and in-person customer acquisition campaigns
- Close an avg. of 15 commercial and residential real estate sale transactions annually
- Brought in over \$2,000,000 in profits to agency in historically unprofitable territory

Customer Service

- Advise home sellers on techniques to make their properties more attractive, increasing avg. selling price by 10%
- Conduct client interviews, determining best properties to show customers based on their requirements. Increased customer satisfaction rate of new home buyers by 20% in under 1 year
- Assist clients in evaluating mortgage and other financing options, ensuring they get the best rates and terms. Saved customers an avg. of 5% overtime on new home purchases

WORK EXPERIENCE

Senior Real Estate Agent

Feb 2018 – Present

Lions Real Estate Firm, Atlanta, GA

- Implement GIS data demographic software for new site selection, saving the agency over \$5,000,000 annually in unprofitable commercial and residential properties endeavors
- Attend international conventions on behalf of agency, keeping up to date on best real estate practices and networking to gain clients
- Trained 3 junior real estate agents on client interview SOPs, and home listing & inspection techniques

Real Estate Agent

Sep 2013 – Jan 2018

Fairweather Real Estate Agency, Atlanta, GA

- Performed market research, comparing market trends and new and old home prices to adequately price residential properties
- Coordinated with home inspectors and lenders to ensure all terms and conditions were met before closing
- Accompanied potential buyers during visits and inspections, ensuring clients were satisfied with the property value and condition

EDUCATION

B.S. MARKETING

Florida State University, 2013
Gainesville, FL M.S.

M.S. ACCOUNTING

Georgia State University, 2018
Atlanta, GA

CERTIFIED REALTOR

Real Estate License
State of Georgia, 2013

ALL ABOUT REFERENCES

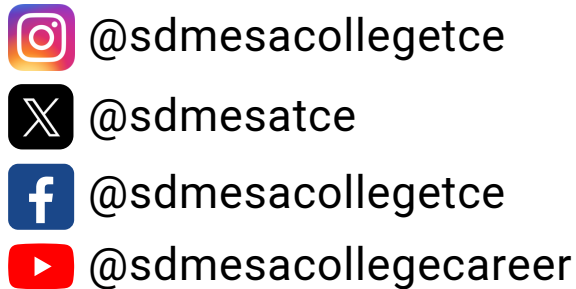
- Choose your references based on people who can address your performance, skill level, and reputation in relation to the job requirements. Do NOT choose references based on their name recognition.
- Ask permission before listing anyone as a reference.
- Make sure your references are comfortable speaking on your behalf.
- Provide each reference with a copy of your resume and the job description.
- Verify the contact information of your references before giving it to a potential employer. It is not a good thing for an employer to call an outdated phone number.
- Don't list your references' names and contact information on your resume! It is not necessary to state "References Available upon Request"; this is assumed.
- Don't wait until the interview to look up the contact information for your references.
- The reference page header (name and contact information) should be identical to the one appearing on your resume and cover letter.
- Print your reference list on quality paper and have it ready to present at an interview or when applying for a job.
- Keep your references informed of your application status.

CONSIDER A REFERENCE CHECK A GOOD SIGN!

SAN DIEGO MESA COLLEGE

Career Services

STAY CONNECTED!



CHECK OUT OUR OTHER HANDBOOKS!

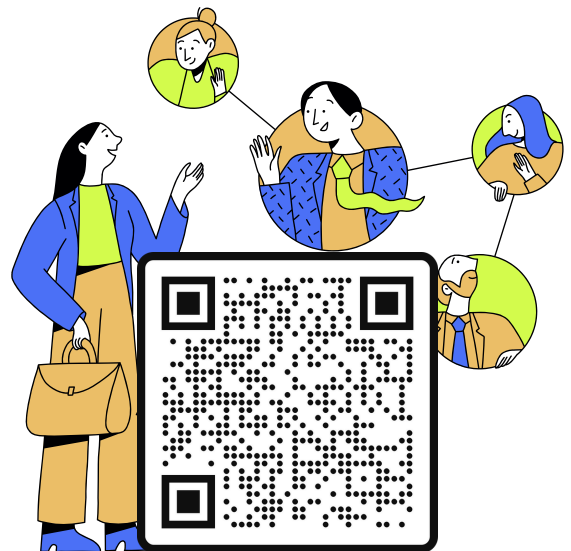
- Cover Letter Handbook
- Internship Handbook
- Interview Preparation Handbook
- Diverse Career Resources Handbook



linktr.ee/SDMesaCareerHandbooks

ACTIVATE YOUR **Handshake** ACCOUNT!

Handshake is our FREE online job board and one-stop-shop for kick-starting careers. By utilizing Handshake, you can book career appointments, apply for jobs, and build your network!



bit.ly/SDMesaHandshake

📍 Career Center I4-306 – Student Services Building, 3rd floor

☎ 619-388-2777

✉ mesacareer@sdccd.edu

🌐 bit.ly/SDMesaCareer