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## Functional style resume example

Your resume should be tailored to the role you're applying for. No sweat, right? The thing is, creating a customized resume for every job you have your eyes on is no easy task, especially if your work history isn't an exact match for the position you want. Wouldn't it be easier if you could just list all your skills out without having to worry about making your work experience look cohesive? Like, say, on a functional resume? Trending SearchesSEARCH ALL JOBS Below, we break down everything you need to know about a functional resume: what it is, when to use one, when not to, and, of course, how to write yours in a way that helps the hiring manager see how your unique set of skills matches their needs—and why you're the ideal person for the job. Get that resume out there! Browse open jobs on The Muse and find your dream job » A functional resume, sometimes called a skills-based resume, places the focus on your skills and areas of expertise, rather than on the details of your work history. Instead of simply listing your recent jobs and corresponding duties in reverse chronological order (like you would on a more traditional chronological resume), you'd select only the most relevant responsibilities from each of your past roles and combine them to paint a broader picture of your skill set. Like any other resume, a functional layout features your name and contact information at the top and lists your technical skills, interests, and education toward the bottom (unless you're a recent graduate—in that case it may be closer to the top). The difference is that the body of a functional resume highlights your most important skills—such as "administrative experience" or "customer service"—with three to five bullet points that show how you've applied those skills in various roles. Then your work history would appear as a simple list below your skills section, where you'd only include your job title, the name of your employer, the city where you worked, and your dates of employment. (Check out our example functional resume below to get a sense of how that works.) Because this layout places the primary focus on your relevant skills, functional resumes allow you to better tailor the content to a specific role you're hoping to land, without having to worry too much about job titles that don't sound relevant, gaps in employment, or an eclectic work history. In a chronological resume, you list your work history in reverse chronological order—from your most recent to oldest experience. This is the most common type of resume and is ideal for professionals with little to no employment gaps and relevant experience related to the job they're currently applying for. That's exactly what differentiates a reverse chronological resume from a functional resume. While functional resumes focus on skills, reverse chronological resumes highlight employment history and relevant experience—where you worked and what you accomplished there. A combination resume mixes elements of both functional and reverse chronological resumes. In this format, relevant skills are listed first, followed by employment history in chronological order, from newest to oldest experience. This type of resume is recommended for job seekers with diverse backgrounds and transferable skills relevant to the job opening. If you have other viable choices, probably not. Recruiters often see functional resumes as a red flag and might assume that the applicant behind the resume is trying to hide something, like a lack of qualifications. So although a skills-based resume might be an effective way to highlight your relevant experience, this resume format greatly decreases your chances of landing an interview. Recruiters want to learn as much as they possibly can about an applicant from their resume, so they're going to be looking to find out which companies you've worked at, your tenure in each role, and what you've achieved in each position. When you bury these details at the bottom of your resume (or exclude them completely), a recruiter is likely to assume that your background must not be a very strong fit. Recruiters are also notoriously short on time, often reviewing hundreds of resumes a day. They don't want to be forced to scour your resume for relevant details—your resume should, ideally, be very easy to scan. And because functional resumes aren't terribly common, a recruiter might have a harder time making sense of an alternative format. (Instead, you might consider using a combination resume.) Red flags aside, there are times when a functional resume may still be your best option. For instance: When you don't have recent experience: If it's been a few years since you last held a traditional job, you may not want your less-than-recent work history to be the first thing a hiring manager notices on your resume. Leading with your skills could be a good way to pique a recruiter's interest before they review your dates of employment. When you're making a major career pivot: If you've collected an array of transferable skills throughout your work experience but have never used them in the context of a single role, a skills-based resume might allow you to demonstrate how your unique abilities will translate into the next act of your career. When you don't have work experience: Functional resumes enable you to be a little creative with your work history and allow for some flexibility in the skills you choose to highlight. For example, you probably developed some great research skills as a student, solid scheduling experience when you headed the PTA committee, or exceptional customer service acumen that time you volunteered for that political campaign. When your work history is all over the place: If you've held a string of short-term positions or worked in a variety of roles (I'm looking at you, freelancers and temp workers—no judgment, I'm one, too!), using a functional resume may be a great way to organize your experience into a more cohesive story. When your relevant experience isn't rooted in traditional work: Say you've volunteered at a soup kitchen for the past few years and now you want to land a job as a server. You'd probably want to feature the skills you've picked up as a volunteer, while also highlighting your other, more traditional experience. A functional resume could be a great way to bring it all together. In certain circumstances, the traditional reverse chronological resume is definitely the best option. For example: When you can demonstrate career growth: In most fields, recruiters put a lot of value in experience and achievements. So if you have years of experience in the field and your employment history clearly demonstrates professional evolution, it should have the spotlight. When your recent work experience is relevant: Let's say your last job was in the same position you're applying for right now, but other than that, you don't have much experience. In this case, ditch the functional resume and use the reverse chronological format. When listing past employment is important: In some industries—think medicine or education, for example—it's crucial to list your past employment. Recruiters often ask for reference or recommendations as well. Once you decide that the functional resume format is the best choice for your application, you want to make sure you build it correctly. Writing a functional resume is much like any other resume style; it should still include your contact information, education, work or volunteer experience, and technical skills. The main difference is that your skills and achievements will be featured prominently in the body of the resume. If it makes sense, you can separate your skills into subcategories to make it easier to read. You may also want to consider including a brief resume summary to tie everything together. Follow these steps: The first piece of information on your resume should be your full name, followed by your contact information—which includes your email address, phone number, LinkedIn profile, and your address (limited to city, state, and zip code, for your safety). Writing a resume summary is optional, but when used effectively, this section provides recruiters with insights into who you are and what are your career aspirations. For instance, if you have an employment gap or are transitioning into a new field, the summary section can come in handy, so the recruiters don't have to figure it out by themselves. You can also use this space to incorporate relevant skills and achievements using keywords from the job description, making it easier for the ATS to scan. Two to three sentences are enough to summarize relevant information about your education, skills, achievements, and objectives. For sake of illustration, here's an example of a summary for a virtual assistant making a career pivot to social media: Dedicated and detail-oriented virtual assistant with three years of experience working with clients worldwide online. Skilled in social media management, copywriting, image and video editing, data entry, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Premiere, and Final Cut. Looking for a career pivot to social media management. The skills section is the most important section of a functional resume. Its goal is to help recruiters quickly understand how your skills match the job requirements. Instead of presenting a gigantic list of skills, it's a good idea to group them and use bullet points for each category. For example, if you're applying for an entry-level social media position and you're skilled in writing, filming, and editing, your section skills might look like this: Wrote over 30+ blog posts for my school's website, driving a 5% increase in readersWrote all posts and captions for the school's social media for two semesters, increasing followers by 10%Created the concept and wrote all posts for my personal blog and newsletter (www.greatsite.com) school events and interviews with students and professionals for social media contentCreated scripts, filmed, and directed educational videos for the school's website, increasing students engagement by 12% Used Adobe Premiere and Final Cut to edit and add special effects to videos for the school's social media and websiteUsed editing tools such as Capcut to make short versions of videos for the school's TikTok pageUsed Adobe Photoshop to edit images for the school's social media and website, as well as for my own blog and newsletter Include the name of your institution, degree type, year of graduation, and any relevant coursework or achievements, if applicable. If you have an impressive GPA, add that too. For example: B.S. Computer Science, Carleton College September 2007 - May 2011, Northfield, MN Graduated magna cum laude: GPA: 3.6 In a skill-based resume, work experience typically comes last, although you may also find functional resume examples where the education section is placed at the end. There's no right or wrong here—choose based on what information is most relevant to the position you're applying for. You don't have to include all the details about your employment history—remember, that's not your main focus on functional resumes. Just mention your job title, employer, and the dates you worked there. For example: Assisting Inc. | June 2021—Present Great Store | May 2019—March 2020 If you have certificates relevant to your field or the one you're trying to enter, consider including a dedicated section for them. However, if your certifications aren't related to the job you're seeking, you can skip this section. Same goes for awards—only add them if they're relevant. When putting all the steps above together, here's what your functional resume could look like: Download a Free Example Functional Resume If you're going to give drafting a functional layout a shot, keep in mind that the tried and true best practices of resume writing still apply. Here are a few pointers to keep in mind: Keep your resume to a single page (this is true for basically everyone except those decades into their careers—in which case a two-page resume isn't out of the question). Include clear, concise headlines (like "Areas of Expertise" and "Work Experience") to break up each section, thus making your resume easier to scan. Use compelling verbs to describe your skills and accomplishments (words like achieved, led, directed, streamlined, or solved). Tailor the content of your resume to the job you're applying for, including relevant keywords where appropriate (this is for the hiring manager to skim and for the ATS to give you the thumbs up). A functional resume highlights your skills. Unlike the reverse chronological resume format, where work experience comes first, in this format, the skills and achievements section stays right at the top of the page. This way, you make sure it's the first thing recruiters see when reviewing your resume. You should consider writing a functional resume if you lack work experience, have a diverse employment history, are making a career pivot, or have a significant employment gap. Truth to be told, employers generally prefer the traditional resume format with reverse chronological order, and a simple, clean layout. However, this doesn't mean they'll discard a functional resume outright. For entry-level positions, for example, a resume that focuses more on skills, achievements, and education rather than work experience is often expected. A functional resume can be described as a skill-based resume because it prioritizes your skills as the most important information. This contrasts with the traditional reverse chronological resume, where employment history is considered more relevant. Whenever possible, you should stick to a traditional resume to keep recruiters from making unfavorable assumptions about your experience. But if you know that a chronological layout won't properly tell your story in a compelling way, a functional resume may help. Just remember that you might be starting off at a disadvantage when it comes to your resume, so you'll also need to have a strong networking plan, a consistent application strategy, and an exceptional cover letter.Amanda Cardoso contributed to the latest version of this article.