

# The Three Formats



## What are the three formats?

In resume writing there are three major formats you will see when researching. Each format has different benefits, but they are largely the same. The content of the formats does not really change and you should always base the content on the job description however, the arrangement of the content and emphasis differs between the three. The three formats are **Chronological**, **Functional**, and **Hybrid** (also known as **Combinational**).

## Chronological Resumes

Chronological resumes place emphasis on **experience**. Usually it is your work experience that is emphasized but it can also be your education if you have limited experience. This format is also considered the easiest for application tracking software (ATS) to scan when determining which applications will go to human hiring managers. They are, overall, the preferred type of format.

These kinds of resumes are good if:

- You have professional experience.
- You can demonstrate career/educational progression.
- You do not have gaps in employment history.
  - Though even that is not always an issue.

Typically, chronological resumes are formatted with the sections in this order:

- Contact Information.
- Work Experience.
  - In reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent experience.
  - Only include 3-5 work experiences/do not exceed 10 years into the past.
    - If you can, consolidate your positions if you have held more than one in a particular company, this could also be a good way to demonstrate career progression.
  - List gaps of employment.
    - Provide a brief explanation of the gap if possible.
      - You do not need to be specific:
        - Mental illness is still an illness and gaps because of that can just be listed as you were ill.
        - The pandemic caused many to have employment gaps, it is perfectly reasonable that you might have been affected too.
      - Never lie or mislead about the gap/try to cover it up. Be as honest as you can be.
- Education.
  - Could be included before work experience if you are a recent graduate.
- Skills.

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## Functional Resumes

Functional Resumes place emphasis on **skills** instead of experience. This format is helpful if you have significant gaps in your work history, have frequently changed fields, or if you are planning on changing fields. It can also be useful for more skills based professions, such as art, especially if being accompanied by a portfolio. This format however, comes with the most challenges and is strongly recommended **against**.

First of all, the format is hard for ATS to scan which means your resume is less likely to make it through to a human hiring manager. Second, the information that employers are trying to find is harder for them to locate on a functional resume, and many skip the skills section to go to work experience anyway. The functional resume intentionally downplays work experience and education to draw attention to skills, which employers might not like. For recruiters, work experience is what gives your skills context, so downplaying it might hurt your chances.

That is not to say you should never use a functional resume, just be aware of the risks and consider whether it is really your best option. If you choose to use it, here are our formatting guidelines:

- Contact Information on top.
- Followed by your Skills section.
  - This is the key part of a functional resume, make sure to go in-depth about your skills.
  - You should cover what each skill is, specific examples of how you demonstrated it, and any achievements from that skill.
- Next is your work experience section.
  - This should only contain the location, date, name of company, and name of your position.
- Last is your education section.
  - This should only include the name of your degree/diploma/certification, institution name, location, and date.

## Hybrid/Combination Resumes

Hybrid resumes place equal emphasis on **skills and experience**. The set-up looks similar to a functional resume, except more information is included in your work experience section, and less is included in your skills section to balance them out. This style is helpful for moving up in your current career, for career changers, and for reentering the job market after notable time off. While the hybrid resume sounds excellent and maybe even ideal, employers prefer the chronological style as of this writing (2022) and so unless you are confident that this is the style that will best suit your needs, you should probably use the chronological format. If you are going to use this format, here are our suggestions for how you should order it:

- Contact Information.
- Skills:

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- This will still be towards the beginning since something has to be.
- This time, while you still want to add a little bit of information to your skills, you will be putting more of the context in your work experience section.
- Work Experience:
  - This section gets a bigger focus, with 1-3 bullet points for each experience to help contextualize your skills.
- Education.

If you want to see examples of these formats, check out our resources section at [lakeheadu.ca/careerzone](http://lakeheadu.ca/careerzone) and be sure to see what other events, workshops, and resources we have available.