



Ready Reference E-14 Writing a Resume In Microsoft® Word

Why Not Use a Template?

Ever had your resume looked at and then been told to not use a template? Ever wonder why? It's because templates are used so often that they have become generic and rather cliché. But if you feel as though creating a resume on your own is too difficult and time consuming, or your word processor just won't cooperate and do what you want it to do, then this document is the one for you.

Setting Up Your Resume

Before you begin typing your resume, set up your document to meet a few general guidelines, a few of which are explained below (more can be found in Ready Reference E-4).

Margins: Margins are the surrounding border of whitespace around the edge of your document, and are generally recommended to be 1 inch all the way around. To set your margins, go to *Layout* → *Margins*.

Font: Make sure that the font you choose to use for your resume is professional looking and easy to read (Times, Times New Roman, Arial, Helvetica, Optima, and Tahoma are typical). Make sure that the font size is somewhere between 10 and 12 point for the body of the resume, and around 14 point for the contact information. Your name can be a slightly larger, 14 – 16 point.

Page Length: Limit your resume to 1 page.

Colors: This is an engineering resume, not a display of your artistic abilities. Leave out the fancy colors and graphics – use black ink only.

Filling in Resume Content

Formatting Features: When to use such features as **bold**, *italics*, underline, ALL CAPS, or a combination is up to you. Bear in mind that the use of these features is to enable and enhance the readability of your resume. Emphasizing certain types of text, such as section headers, job titles, and your name, are good places to start.

Bullet Points: Use bullet points to help describe the skills and accomplishments you achieved in your professional or academic experiences, projects, leadership roles, and volunteer activities. Bullet points help to draw the reader's eye towards these main points and are an effective method of describing the work that you did.

Filling in Resume Content

Tabs: Tabs offer a great deal of flexibility in your document writing, and are an ideal tool to use then formatting your resume. Tabs are text placeholders that allow you to begin writing text at a certain place within the document. In other words, tabs are a great tool to use for creating lists, such as a list of Activities or Previous Work Experience. They allow you to line up text throughout your document without having to use the spacebar on your keyboard, which often results in text that does not line up perfectly.

Example:

This text is Left tabbed

This is Center tabbed

This is Right tabbed

Using Left Tabs: In *Normal* and *Print Layout* views, there should be a small black L shape in a box right next to the horizontal ruler near the top of the screen. That L-shape represents the *Left Tab* option. When used in a document, left tabs allow text to be written at different places across the screen while remaining left-aligned. To use a left tab, click anywhere on the ruler at the top of the screen to insert a left tab at the point of insertion. From then on, whenever the Tab button is pressed on the keyboard, the text cursor will automatically be placed at that point, and then writing may resume as normal. Multiple left tabs may be placed on the ruler.

Using Right Tabs: Right tabs are similar to left tabs, but they right-align text as it is typed. To use a right tab, click on the L-shaped button near the ruler until you see a backwards L. That symbol represents a right tab. Then click anywhere in the ruler to set that right tab stop.

Using Center Tabs: Center tabs allow text to be centered out from the point of the tab stop. This differs from simply center aligning text because it only affects the selected text and can be placed anywhere. So you could place a center tab at 6 inch across the screen, and then for each line you press *Tab* on, the text will go to that spot and center itself across the tab as you type. In order to use a center tab, click on the L-shaped button next to the ruler at the top of the screen until you see an upside-down T symbol. Click anywhere on the ruler to place it into the document.

Tables: The advice is to leave this one to the pros! While tables can be useful for presenting data in reports, they do not make good formatting tools when it comes to laying out the content of your resume. The use of tables in a resume often affects the flexibility of the document's layout. They can also inadvertently add unwanted white space near the borders of your resume, causing it to become longer than planned. *Unless you're already an expert with this feature, ditch the tables and use tabs to properly format your text.*