

The Empty Résumé

Stephen F. Austin State University | Center for Career and Professional Development

What if you have no experience?!

How do you write a résumé when you have no real job experience? This can be one of the biggest obstacles to finding your first job. It's a catch 22: you need experience to get a job, but you need a job to get experience. Luckily, there are ways around this.

Consider using the functional résumé format

There are several [résumé formats](#) to choose from. The functional layout is known as the best format for students who have no previous work experience and are applying for their first job. The functional résumé focuses on professional skills that may have been developed from a conglomeration of experiences such as class projects, involvement in organizations, volunteer work, etc. Sections in a functional résumé are skill areas that are clustered together under appropriate headings such as Management, Communication, Organization, Sales, etc. For ideas on functional résumé layouts, view samples: [Justin Timberlake](#) and [Jessica Simpson](#).

The trick to writing your résumé: focus on your education and college involvement. After your Objective statement, include a Summary of Skills section showcasing your strengths. List all achievements that indicate leadership ability. One of the best ways to fill a résumé is by volunteering.

Items to list when you have no job experience

- Summary of skills
- Academic awards
- Scholarships
- Coursework relevant to your degree
- Special class projects
- Presentations made in the classroom/at a seminar/workshop
- Trainings/workshops attended
- Internships
- Volunteer work
- Community activities
- Odd jobs (babysitting, yard work, etc.)
- Help out with a family business?
- Clubs/organizations memberships
- Extra-curricular activities/leadership positions
- Certifications (ex: CPR)
- Membership with professional associations