

The Empty Resume

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

WHAT IF YOU HAVE NO EXPERIENCE?!

How do you write a resume 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 resume format

There are several [resume 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 resume 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 resume are skill areas that are clustered together under appropriate headings such as Management, Communication, Organization, Sales, etc. For ideas on functional resume layouts, view samples: [Justin Timberlake](#) and [Jessica Simpson](#).

The trick to writing your resume: 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 resume 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