

Resumes

Frequently Asked Questions



What is the difference between a resume and a CV?

Resumes and CVs have distinct meanings internationally, but in Australia these terms are often interchangeable.

- A resume is a summary document and often the one employers will request. Resumes need to be concise and targeted to the position.
- A CV or Curriculum Vitae is a more comprehensive document and used where a role requires extensive professional experience, for example higher degree research candidates.

How long should my resume be?

Generally speaking, a new graduate's resume will be around 2-3 pages long. Keep in mind the following:

- Follow the application instructions - employers may stipulate a maximum length.
- Your resume should be concise and targeted. Employers are most interested in recent, relevant and valuable information about you.
- If you are applying for a role overseas, be aware that application processes may differ in other countries.

What should I include in my resume?

For a detailed breakdown of the essential and optional elements of a resume and tips to complete each component, check out our guide – [Level Up Your Resume](#).

What if I don't have any relevant work experience to add to my resume?

Many students will work in part-time jobs while studying. If these roles don't immediately seem relevant, consider how the skills you have gained are transferable to the role you are applying for:

- Customer service roles can provide you with problem solving skills and the ability to deal with conflict.
- Working in a team can help with your interpersonal skills and negotiation skills.
- Studying, working and volunteering can show your time management abilities.

If you have had an opportunity to undertake work experience as part of your course, make sure you highlight the key achievements and skills gained there.

At JCU work experience can come in many forms:

- Clinical placements
- Practicums
- Professional placements
- Work Integrated Learning subjects
- Field work
- Internships
- Projects
- Vacation work

I've had lots of similar part-time jobs - how do I describe them on my resume?

The aim of your resume is to get the employer interested in meeting with you. Your resume needs to be interesting and easy to read. Rather than repeating similar duties, responsibilities or skills, consider listing your job title, all employers grouped together and then summarising the skills and experience you have gained under this. For example:

Barista, The Coffee Club and Juliette's, Townsville (Casual) March 2021 – Present

- Delivered exceptional customer experiences through efficient service.
- Assisted with training new staff in point of sale transactions, coffee making and workplace health and safety.
- Performed daily inventory audits and weekly product and supply orders.

Do I need to include my interests / extracurricular activities?

You should include information which adds value to your application and reflects positively on you in relation to the position. You can use your interests and other activities to present yourself as a well-rounded candidate. You may be asked about them in an interview, so be prepared to elaborate on them. Think about the skills you have gained through team sport, volunteering, clubs, societies and fundraising etc.

Who can I list as referees in my resume?

Consider your choice of referees carefully. Select people who can comment on your professional or employment-related skills. They may be asked to provide a written or verbal report on your abilities.

Always obtain permission to list each referee and keep them informed about what jobs you are applying for so they can be prepared when an employer contacts them for a reference. Use the following to guide your choices:

	Referee	What they can contribute
Most impactful → Recommended	Current / recent employer or supervisor in a relevant industry or role (including placements)	Insights into technical knowledge and skills, and workplace behaviour
	Academic supervisor or lecturer Professional mentor	Insights into academic performance, intellectual rigour and discipline-specific skills
	Current / recent employer or supervisor in an unrelated industry	Insights into workplace behaviour and transferable skills e.g. teamwork, communication, problem solving
Least impactful Avoid	Current / recent colleague or peer in a professional setting	Supportive commentary on workplace behaviour, but without the authoritative weight of a supervisor
	Personal character reference	Supportive commentary on your character This type of referee is least preferred – only use if no professional or academic options are available

What is the correct format for a resume?

There is no “right” way to set out your resume. Everyone’s idea of a good resume is different.

Choose a simple, professional layout with subtle design accents such as colour for headings to create visual appeal without distraction. Ensure consistent formatting throughout, including:

- Vertical alignment of bullet points
- Sufficient white space to enhance readability e.g. page margins are not too narrow, 1.5 line spacing
- A simple sans-serif font e.g. Arial, Calibri, Verdana, Helvetica, Tahoma
 - Size 12-16 for subheadings and size 10-12 for body font
 - Selective use of bold and italics

Use bullet points where possible rather than lengthy blocks of text. This makes your resume easier for busy recruiters to skim read or scan for the information they are most interested in.

Reorder the sections of the resume to suit your purpose. Aim to keep the most relevant information closer to the beginning of the resume. For graduate resumes, this typically means having your career objective, education and placements first, often followed by voluntary work (if relevant to the role) and paid employment. Order other optional sections in a sequence that seems most logical for the role and for readability. Referees always go at the end of the resume.

What do I need to know about Applicant Tracking Systems?

Some employers use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to filter applications during the shortlisting process. Use our Big Resume feedback tool to check if your resume is compatible with these AI screening systems. Upload the job advertisement to get targeted feedback about your alignment with selection criteria and language, helping to increase your match. Put your resume to the test by visiting [Big Resume](#). This is just the first step though. Gain more targeted and personalised feedback by connecting with the Careers and Employability team.

Seek expert support from the JCU Careers and Employability Team

Book your personalised one-on-one appointment for tailored assistance with job seeking, resumes, cover letters or preparing for interviews through our [CareerHub](#).

