

The format of your resume is equally as important as the content. Your goal in formatting is to create a resume that allows the reader to absorb the maximum amount of information in a very short period of time (usually 20-30 seconds). The structure of your resume which was covered in the previous section establishes the framework for categorizing information. Listed below are formatting guidelines based on employer feedback on how the information should be visually presented in order to make a positive impression.

1. **Balance between text and white space** – Always makes sure there is a balance between text and white space on your resume. This rule impacts guidelines on font size, margins and tabs discussed below.
2. **Font** – Choosing a font for your resume should be simple and limited to traditional fonts that are professional in appearance such as Times New Roman or Arial.
3. **Text Size** – Ideally the main text on your resume should be between 11 – 12 point in size. It is acceptable to select a 10 point font size, but do not go any lower.
4. **Margins** – Consistent margins (i.e., same size for top, bottom, right and left) will create a nice even, framed look for your resume text. Margin sizes should fall with the range of .5” to 1”. Anything smaller will impact the balance between text and white space. Anything larger will impact your ability to keep your resume at a reasonable length.
5. **Length** – The length of your resume will be determined by the amount of relevant experience you choose to include. Ideally a resume should be 1-2 pages. Remember the employer will spend 20-30 seconds reviewing your entire resume – not 20-30 seconds per page so your mission is to be concise!
6. **Consistency in formatting** – In the last section, tips on formatting various sections of the resume were covered. You must ensure that you maintain the same format throughout your resume. Here are a few examples:
 - a. If you are bolding text for an employer name and italicizing text for a job title, you must make sure this format is used for all jobs listed on your resume.
 - b. Consistency also applies to dates and abbreviations. If you are listing months in numerical format, full spelling or an abbreviated spelling, you must ensure that all dates on your resume follow the same format.
 - c. If you have adjusted the font size for section headers or other items, make sure similar sections and items appear in the same font size.
 - d. Paragraph spacing should also be consistent throughout your resume. You may choose to increase the spacing between a section header and the section text. Make sure all section headers use the same spacing.
7. **Tabs** – Using tabs can be an effective way to create a balance between text and white space. You may choose to “right tab” dates and locations for each of the jobs listed on your resume so they appear closest to the right margin of the page. This also enables the reader to scan down the right margin and easily see this information.
8. **Paper** –When sending paper resumes and cover letters, choose good quality paper with a watermark, with a weight between 16 lbs. and 25 lbs., and with at least 25% cotton fiber. Select a traditional color - white, ivory, or off-white are most appropriate.
9. **Electronic versions** – When submitting your resume electronically you should convert your resume to a PDF version rather than send it in MS Word format. By sending a PDF version, you will guarantee how your resume will look when the recipient opens the file. You should also name the file using your first name, last name and resume (i.e., SmithJohnResume.pdf)