

## Your Resume Education Section: Top or Bottom?

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If you are in school, just graduated, or have been out of school for less than three years, your education information should be at the top. After three years, it needs to go on the bottom. And the longer you are out of school, the shorter your education section should become. If for some reason in the three plus years you have been out of school, you have not accumulated a lot of impressive work experience to outshine your educational background, you may consider keeping your education section at the top for a couple more years; but it would be more prudent, of course, to consider garnering more work experience to strengthen the overall effect of your resume. After you've been out of school for ten years, no one is going to care about what you did in college.

It's important for students and recent graduates to place their educational experience at the top because recruiters and employers are going to want to know where you are coming from and what you know. If you are still in school or just out of college, they are going to want to know that up front and, accordingly, what you can contribute. In most cases, obviously, students and recent graduates don't have a lot of experience yet, and their education is their trump card.

Just be mindful of what specifications are involved in the types of jobs for which you apply. If there is one skill you gained, specific course you took, or training you undertook during school that is relevant to your search, definitely add that to your education section.

### Tips

#### Resume Length

If you are a recent graduate, your resume should not exceed one page. Period. You might consider two pages if you did a dozen internships throughout school at a broad range of employment venues and did a vast array of career-specific duties other than filing, answering phones, and buying birthday gifts at Barnes and Noble. Even if this is true, you should then consider editing your resume per search and only include relevant duties done. Besides that, even professionals with more than 20 years of experience should consider one-page resumes, since the hiring world is more demanding and fast-paced these days. Of course, every recruiter or employer is different personality-wise and works under different professional and personal conditions from day to day, but if he or she has a stack of resumes to skim in a short period of time, your one-page resume will more than likely be better appreciated.

#### What to Include in Your Education Section

- Universities, community colleges, and trade schools
- Cities and States of each school
- Date of graduation— actual or anticipated. Writing both the month and the year is preferred, but year alone is acceptable (just consider consistency regarding how you approach dating your work experience and other details throughout the resume)
- Degree(s) earned—majors are a must; minors can be included if relevant or spacing permits (if you graduated *cum laude*, place that between the degree and date). Degrees can be spelled out or abbreviated (but be consistent).

- GPA
- Honors programs and awards
- Certificates earned
- University papers or journals: participation and/or publication
- Organizations
- Fraternities or sororities
- Related coursework or senior projects
- Special training, workshops, and seminars

Example:

**University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA**    *B.A. in Humanities*, May 2007

- GPA: 3.7
- Dean's List, Spring 2005; Fall 2006
- Member: Humanities Honors Society, Spring 2004-Spring 2007
- Participant: Literary Debate League, Fall 2004

### **Dates**

List the months and the years; days are not necessary. Writing "Jun. 2007-Dec. 2007" is specific, concise, honest, and won't raise any red flags to an employer. Writing "2007-2007" looks strange and doesn't really mean anything. If you worked at one job from "2006-2007" and the current one from "2007-Present," you can get away with that, but keep in mind that the persnickety employer will wonder if you quit your last job in January of 2007, went to the Bahamas for two seasons, and started your new job in September.

### **GPA**

The GPA should come first in a list of achievements under the school information.

- Only list your GPA if you are a student or recent graduate. The longer you have been out of school and accumulating work experience, the more you should be offering up space from your Education section to your Experience section. *Same applies with all other honorable mentions under your list of schools.*
- Only list your GPA if it's 3.0 or higher.
- Only list your GPA if it's going to be obvious to the employer—if your school did not use the standard scale, consider carefully how you will present it otherwise.
- If your GPA is not high enough and the employer requests it, you'll have to bite the proverbial bullet and spit it on there. Not doing so, of course, will have worse consequences like indicating to the employer that you are hiding something or don't pay attention to directions.

### **Academic Honors**

Again, definitely include this information if you are a student or recent graduate. List awards or honors programs in bullets underneath the school information. Mention "cum laude" honors after your degree/major.

### **Lacking Educational Credentials**

If you don't have the degree required by the position to which you are applying but have relevant ongoing training, create a "Professional Development" section above Education and list any seminars, classes, and conferences in which you participated.

### **Abandoned Program**

Only mention that you started a program at certain school if the study is applicable to your current chosen career. For example, if you started studying health law and decided to earn a degree in medicine and want to put that in your resume, then you would write the school, city, and dates on one line and a bullet underneath with mention of your studies (i.e.—"Studies included Health Law").

### **Community College**

Only mention community colleges if:

- You are currently enrolled there
- You earned an AA and are not seeking higher degrees
- You studied something relevant to the job you are seeking

### **High School**

Never add your high school to your resume even if you are still earning your BA. No one cares. Everyone will assume you graduated if you are going to college. If you really want to emphasize that you once were the reigning Dungeon Master at your High School's well-reputed D&D Society, you should just create an Interests section for your resume at the very bottom and add "Role Playing Games" to it. There are only three instances where it's okay to place your High School on a resume:

- You are still in High School
- You have a High School diploma and have no intention of ever enrolling in college or some sort of trade school.
- You are 100% certain that the person to whom you are sending your resume will be absolutely thrilled to discover that you were once a student there.