

Whether you are looking for your first professional international job after graduating with a Master's or applying for your first internship or volunteer position abroad, you should be aware that international resumes are different from domestic resumes. Many think that understanding international resumes entails figuring out how to write a country-specific resume: a Korean resume, a Portuguese resume, or an Italian resume. This idea is based on a false premise. You will rarely be applying for international work with an employer based in a foreign country. Eighty-five percent of international jobs open to entry-level North American college students looking for professional international work will be with North American-based international organizations or employers. While these international employers understand the North American resume style, they will expect to see international resumes presented for international positions. Read on!

Three Big Differences

International resumes are different from domestic resumes because international employers place much more emphasis on your personality. They want to know that you will be effective in an international work environment, so they are interested in your international IQ. They are often less concerned with your technical skills.

There are three building blocks to an international resume: First you have to show your personality (and it should be organized to match the employer's "ideal profile"). Second, you need to emphasize your cross-cultural skills, especially in terms of the cross-cultural work environment. And third, there are a host of small details to include that are unique to international resumes, which we will discuss below.

Show Your Professional Personality

International resumes highlight your skills and group information so that you do the analytical work for the recruiter. Nothing is left to chance and employers see you the way you want them to. Here are a few specific strategies to put your personality into your resume.

- **Career Objective:** A career objective is a fundamental statement about your personality. It states what you want to do and what you like to do, and, therefore, what you will most likely excel at. Everything that follows in a resume is written to support the objective.
- **Personal & Professional Traits:** This breakdown helps international employers know who you are and why you are good at your work. Make sure each trait is backed up with concrete examples in your job descriptions. This tactic is especially useful for those who are new to the job market and may not have enough material or experience to write a full one-page Skills Summary.
- **Skills Summary:** This is the most powerful tool you have. It gives you full control to tell employers who you are. This element takes lots of self-analysis. Work hard on choosing sub-headings and write clearly and efficiently. See the advanced resume Quick Guide for more info.
- **Education:** If you are just graduating and have only a few professional work experiences, write up your education as if it were a job, listing three or four points under your degree. Tell employers who you are by listing "areas of interest" (not courses taken). Write about the "major projects" that you excelled at. Write about befriending international students and working in multicultural student groups. List tutoring, study abroad experience, and languages.
- **Professional Work Experience:** By segregating your professional jobs from non-professional work, you get to highlight jobs that support your objective. Employers appreciate this segregation. Write at least one third of a page on each of these important jobs.
- **Job Descriptions:** Include skills in your job descriptions, for example: *"this position required flexibility and versatility."* For important jobs, consider grouping descriptions into functional areas, for example: *"Marketing," "Administration,"* and/or *"Writing."* For each job, always list one item that states why you were successful or what you were known for. This tells the employer a lot about who you are and what makes you tick.

- **Other sections:** Show your personality in other sections of your resume. For awards based on merit, state why the award was given; for volunteer experience, state what you accomplished; for travel, provide details: *"Enjoyed the challenges of getting around and interacting with officials while visiting Romania and Albania."*
- **Order within sections:** There are many lists within your resume. Always sort these by order of importance to how they support your career objectives, with the most supportive item at the top. When writing a job description, do not list the most recent or even the largest task first. Instead list, the task that best supports your job description.
- **Group international experience together:** By grouping your international experience under one section, you are increasing its impact and minimizing the chance that any of your international experience is missed. Under the sub-title *"International Expertise and Understanding"* list international education or courses, cross-cultural and international experiences in North America and abroad (volunteer, intern or work), language abilities, and international travel.
- **Length of resume:** An international resume can be longer since it includes more information about your personality. A three- to four-page resume is normal. But don't forget: every word must count (efficient writing only!); and everything must be formatted to allow for speed-reading (use sub-headings in your Skills Summary, use functional job titles, and break long jobs down into functional areas).

Sell Your Cross-cultural Skills

Let employers know that you are aware of the unique set of skills required to be successful in a cross-cultural work environment. Below are examples of where and how to mention these skills:

- **Skills Summary:** *-Enjoys cross-cultural work environments.*
-Adept at and attracted to multi-cultural environments, both socially and at work.
- **Job Descriptions:** *-Positive attitude towards change and new environments.*
-Sensitive to the dynamics of a cross-cultural workplace.
-Ability to relate to people of different personalities and backgrounds.
-Tolerant, curious, and appreciative of different work patterns, while remaining committed to deadlines.
- **Education:** *-Completed projects within a multi-ethnic student team in order to gain cross-cultural work experience.*
- **Volunteer Experience:** *-Lived with a local family abroad and successfully adapted to cultural differences.*
- **Language:** *-Ability to learn languages quickly when traveling.*
- **Travel:** *-Adept at building relationships while remaining street-wise when traveling in developing countries.*

Address Other Differences

There are a host of small differences to note when creating an international resume. Options will vary for different individuals. Obviously, language and travel descriptions need to be quite detailed, but what about listing citizenship, especially if you have a foreign-sounding name? List marital status if you are single, have no dependents, and are available for travel. List your spouse's occupation if he/she has a mobile career such as teaching or nursing. Take care to provide a permanent e-mail address, since international employers sometimes contact applicants many months after applying.

A Last Word

It is much more powerful to write an international resume with a career objective. While the objective can be broadly based, it has to have a specific career focus. You will be successful if you build each section and write each description with the goal of supporting your career objective. Good luck with your search. International careers are exciting! Go more in depth with the rest of the *International Resume* section found in the *Finding Work* part of MyWorldAbroad.com!

An Overview of International Resumes

They are different from domestic resumes



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Article Version*

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