GENERAL

how to write a resume for teens

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How to Write a Resume for Teens: A Step by Step Guide for Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior Students

When you're still in high school, the idea of writing a resume can feel intimidating. You might think you don't have enough experience or that a resume is only for college graduates. In reality, a well crafted resume is your first chance to showcase your strengths, skills, and potential to employers, colleges, and volunteer organizations. Whether you're applying for a part time job, an internship, or a scholarship, a resume helps you stand out in a competitive landscape.

This comprehensive guide will walk you through every element you need to include, show you how to format your document for maximum readability, and provide practical examples that you can adapt to your own situation. By the end of this article, you'll have a polished resume ready to impress hiring managers and admissions officers alike.

Why Teens Need a Resume

Resumes are more than a list of past jobs. They're a marketing tool that communicates:

- Professionalism: A resume demonstrates that you understand how to present yourself in a formal setting.
- Organizational Skills: Employers value candidates who can structure information clearly and concisely.
- Self Awareness: Crafting a resume forces you to reflect on your achievements, interests, and career goals.
- Competitive Edge: Even a simple resume can set you apart from other applicants who rely solely on a cover letter or verbal pitch.

In addition to job applications, many colleges and scholarship committees ask for a resume to evaluate your extracurricular involvement, leadership roles, and community service. A strong resume can therefore open doors to educational opportunities as well.

Choosing the Right Resume Format

Three primary formats are commonly used: chronological, functional, and combination. For teens, the **combination format**often works best because it highlights skills and achievements while still providing a clear timeline of your experiences.

- Chronological: Lists experiences in reverse chronological order. Best for those with a solid work history.
- Functional: Focuses on skills rather than dates. Good for students with limited work experience.
- Combination: Blends both approaches, showcasing key skills followed by a chronological list of roles.

Below, we'll outline a typical combination resume layout that you can adapt to your personal circumstances.

Essential Sections of a Teen Resume

1. Header

Your header should include your full name, phone number, email address, and optionally a LinkedIn profile or personal website if you have one.

John Doe
(555) 123 4567
john.doe@email.com
LinkedIn.com/in/johndoe

2. Objective Statement (Optional)

A concise objective helps recruiters quickly understand what you're seeking. Keep it to one or two sentences and tailor it to each application.

Objective: Motivated high school junior seeking a part time position in retail to develop customer service skills and contribute to team success.

3. Education

Include your high school name, location, expected graduation date, GPA (if 3.0 or higher), and any relevant coursework. Highlight honors, AP/IB classes, or special projects.

High School of Science & Technology, New York, NY
Expected Graduation: June 2026
GPA: 3.8/4.0
Relevant Coursework: Advanced Placement Computer Science, Advanced Placement Biology, Business Management
Honors: National Honor Society, Dean's List (2024 2025)

4. Experience

List part time jobs, internships, or school projects. For each entry, include:

- Job Title (e.g., Sales Associate, Tutor, Club President)
- Company or Organization
- Location
- Dates of Employment (month and year)
- Bullet points describing responsibilities and achievements using action verbs.

Example:

Sales Associate, XYZ Clothing Store, New York, NY
June 2023 – Present
- Greeted an average of 50 customers daily, providing personalized shopping assistance.
- Achieved a 15% increase in sales during the holiday season by upselling complementary items.
- Managed inventory and restocked merchandise, reducing out of stock incidents by 20%.

5. Extracurricular Activities

High schools are a breeding ground for leadership and teamwork. Highlight clubs, sports, student government, and other activities. Emphasize leadership roles and quantifiable achievements.

Student Government, President, High School of Science & Technology
August 2024 – Present
- Organized fundraising events that raised $3,000 for school library renovations.
- Coordinated a student mentorship program pairing freshmen with senior volunteers.

6. Volunteer Experience

Volunteer work demonstrates responsibility and community engagement. Use the same bullet format as experience.

Volunteer Tutor, Community Learning Center, New York, NY
September 2023 – December 2023
- Tutored 10 students in mathematics, improving their average grades by 15%.
- Developed lesson plans tailored to individual learning styles.

7. Skills

List hard and soft skills relevant to the position. Hard skills could include software proficiency, languages, or technical abilities. Soft skills might cover communication, leadership, or problem solving.

Technical Skills: Microsoft Office Suite, Google Workspace, Adobe Photoshop, Python (basic)
Soft Skills: Effective communication, teamwork, time management, adaptability
Languages: English (native), Spanish (conversational)

8. Awards & Certifications

Include any recognitions or certifications that add credibility.

- Certificate of Achievement, Robotics Club, 2025
- First Place, Regional Science Fair, 2024
- CPR and First Aid Certification, American Red Cross, 2023

9. References (Optional)

Rather than listing references directly on the resume, you can simply state “References available upon request.”

Save space and protect privacy.

Writing Powerful Bullet Points

Each bullet should start with an action verb and include measurable results when possible. This technique shows tangible impact rather than vague duties.

- Use action verbs such as “led,” “organized,” “developed,” “improved,” “increased,” “coordinated.”
- Quantify achievements: “increased sales by 15%,” “managed a team of 5,” “served 200+ customers.”
- Keep bullets concise—ideally 1 2 lines.
- Avoid passive language; be direct and confident.

Formatting Tips for a Clean, Readable Resume

1. Keep it one page: Most teens have less than 10 years of experience, so a single page is sufficient.
2. Use a professional font: Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman, 10 12 point.
3. Consistent spacing: Use 1.15 line spacing and 0.5 1 inch margins.
4. Bold section headings: This improves scan ability.
5. Avoid excessive colors: Stick to black text on a white background.
6. Save as PDF: This preserves formatting across devices.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Including a photo (unless required by local regulations).
- Using overly casual language or slang.
- Listing every single activity; focus on the most relevant.
- Providing inaccurate dates or exaggerating responsibilities.
- Neglecting to proofread for spelling or grammatical errors.

Sample Resume for a High School Junior

Below is a fully formatted example you can adapt. Replace the placeholder information with your own details.

Jane Smith
(555) 987 6543 | jane.smith@email.com | LinkedIn.com/in/janesmith

Objective: Energetic high school junior seeking a part time role in retail to develop customer service and sales skills while contributing to team success.

Education
High School of Technology, New York, NY
Expected Graduation: June 2026
GPA: 3.9/4.0
Relevant Coursework: AP Computer Science, AP Economics, Business Management
Honors: National Honor Society, Dean’s List (2023 2024)

Experience
Cashier, QuickMart, New York, NY
June 2024 – Present

- Processed an average of 150 transactions daily with 99.9% accuracy.
- Trained 3 new employees on POS system and customer service protocols.
- Implemented a new inventory tracking system that reduced shortages by 10%.

Volunteer
Tutor, Learning Hub, New York, NY
September 2023 – December 2023
- Tutored 12 students in algebra, improving their average grades by 20%.
- Developed interactive worksheets that increased engagement.

Extracurricular Activities
Debate Club, Vice President, High School of Technology
August 2023 – Present
- Led a team of 8 to win state-level debate competition.
- Organized workshops on public speaking for freshmen.

Skills
- Technical: Microsoft Office, Google Workspace, Adobe Illustrator
- Soft: Leadership, communication, problem solving
- Languages: English (native), Spanish (intermediate)

Awards & Certifications
- First Place, Regional Science Fair, 2024
- CPR & First Aid Certified, American Red Cross, 2023

References available upon request.

Using Keywords for Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)

Many companies use ATS to screen resumes before they reach a human. To improve your chances:

- Read the job posting carefully and copy relevant keywords into your resume.
- Use standard headings (e.g., “Experience,” “Education,” “Skills”) to help the system parse information.
- Avoid using images or unusual fonts that ATS may misread.
- Include both the full job title and a synonym if appropriate (e.g., “Retail Associate” and “Cashier”).

Adapting Your Resume for Different Opportunities

While the core structure remains the same, you should tailor the content to each application. Here’s how to adjust your resume for three common scenarios:

Part Time Retail Job

- Emphasize customer service, cash handling, and teamwork.
- Highlight any sales achievements or inventory management.
- Include a brief objective that mentions a passion for retail.

Internship in a Professional Field

- Showcase relevant coursework, projects, or research.
- Include any certifications or software skills pertinent to the industry.

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