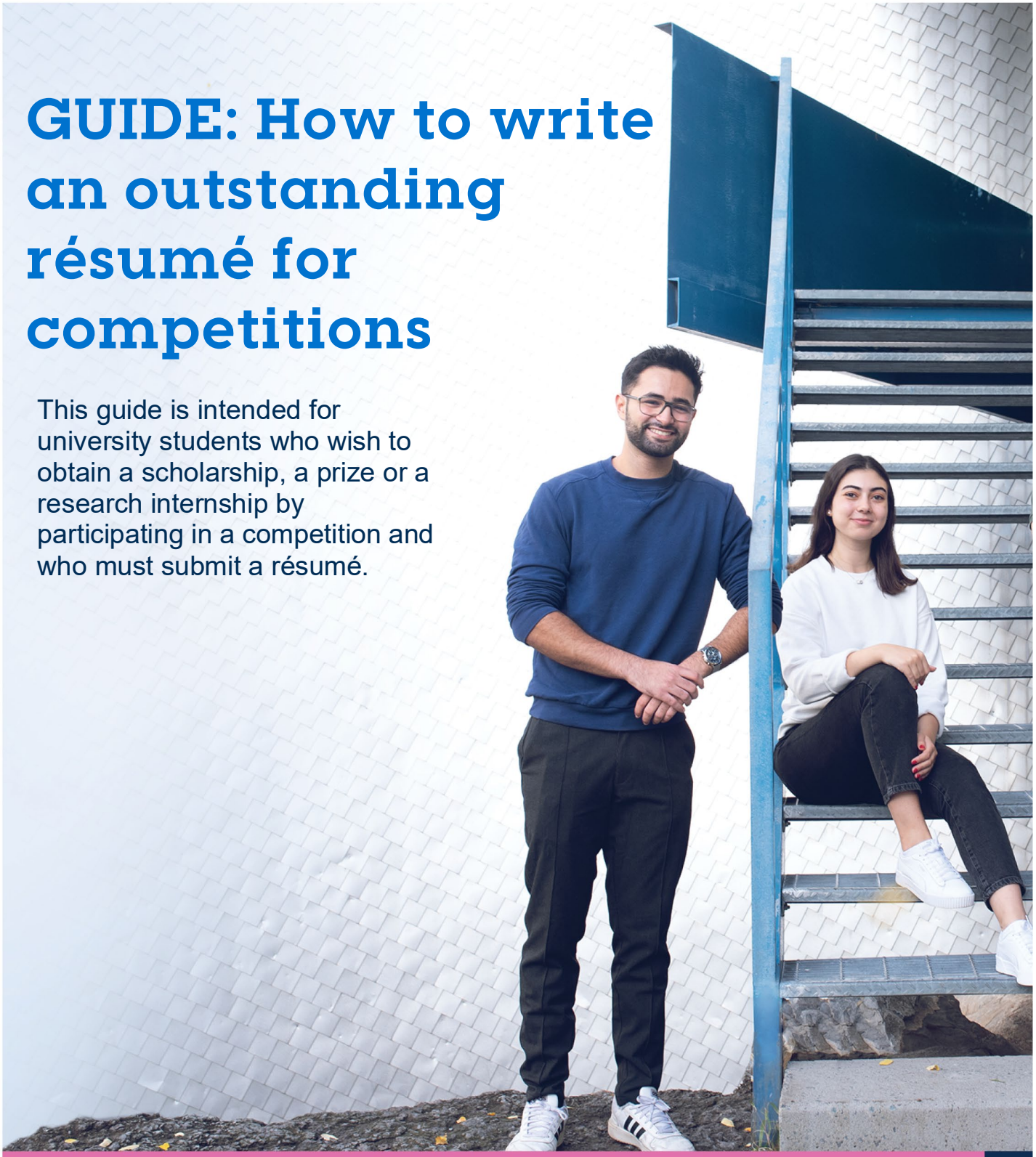
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GUIDE: How to write an outstanding résumé for competitions

This guide is intended for university students who wish to obtain a scholarship, a prize or a research internship by participating in a competition and who must submit a résumé.



Guide

HOW TO WRITE AN OUTSTANDING RÉSUMÉ FOR COMPET ITIONS?

Table of contents

Step 1: Identify the target audience and determine the objective of the résumé 2

Step 2: Choose the sections of your résumé 3

Most important sections 3

Optional sections 6

Step 3: Tricks to enhance your résumé 9

Suggestions for attracting evaluators' attention: 9

Suggestions for the résumé layout: 10

We hope that these suggestions will be helpful to you. 10

Step 1: Identify the target audience and determine the objective of the résumé

Before writing a CV, the first step is to ask yourself the following questions:

Who will read my résumé?

- *Potential employer;*
- *Evaluation scholarship committee consisting of professors*
- *NPO professionals;*
- *Etc.*

What is the role of my résumé in the application file?

- *To help me obtain an interview for a research internship in a specific organization?*
- *To help me become selected for a scholarship in a specific field (e.g.: social innovation management, cooperative, family business)?*
- *To make my candidature stand out or to attract evaluators' attention in a national research scholarship competition?*
- *Etc.*

What should I highlight in my résumé to be selected?

- *Excellence of my academic record;*
- *My experience in research;*
- *Some specific skills (e.g.: teaching or technical);*
- *My leadership;*
- *My achievements in and outside of university;*
- *My social involvement;*
- *My publications;*
- *Etc.*

Your résumé should allow the evaluators to evaluate how your candidature **meets the objectives** of the scholarship program or the internship for which you are applying.

IMPORTANT:

- The résumé is one of the main tools used during evaluation of candidates. In order to prepare a winning résumé, you must first know and most importantly understand **the criteria on which the candidature is evaluated**. Therefore, you must seek to understand the hidden message behind the guidelines of a competition.

- It's also important to keep in mind the importance of including keywords based on the specific requirements of the competition.

Step 2: Choose the sections of your résumé

When you submit a résumé for an application, you must review the presentation and re-evaluate the elements to include in accordance with the requirements of the competition. This task cannot be overlooked. It helps to increase the impact of résumé and hence enhances the value of the candidature.

Based on the **criteria of evaluation**, the most important elements in a résumé should always be found on the first page and additional sections on the following pages. At undergraduate and master's levels, a résumé should not exceed two pages.

Most important sections

Following is a list of sections, which should normally be found in a résumé:

- **Personal Information:**

This information should be found on top of the first page and should not exceed three to five lines. Your full name should be found on the top of the following pages. One should see your name clearly.

- First name, last name and professional affiliations;
- Email address and LinkedIn address;
- Telephone number ;
- Written and spoken languages.

- **Profile**

This section aims to present your area of expertise at a glance. You can specify it here, for example:

- Your specialization (area of research);
- Your topic of research (e.g.: optimization and control of supply chains);
- Scope of your project (e.g.: health and social service);
- Your research interests (if you do not have anything well defined);
- Your technical and computer skills if they are relevant to your research field.

You should use a maximum of five lines. Use bullet points and a simple and direct language.

- **Education:**

Provide your current and completed academic training record starting with the most recent. Sometimes certain competitions also require all academic training to be listed on the résumé (completed, current or dropped). Pay attention to this particular point.

You should specify the following elements:

- Title of diploma;
- Level of education (Bachelor, Master, Specialized Graduate Diploma, etc.);
- Specialization, if any;
- Name of institution;
- Honor roll;
- Year of beginning and completion of studies (or mention in progress).

You can also add the information related to academic projects that you have undertaken as well as foreign exchange programs and foreign educational studies.

Tips:

1. *Generally, using tables without visible lines facilitates formatting this kind of section.*

2. Also, all the dates on the résumé should be positioned in the same place, aligned to the right margin, regardless of the section

- **Prizes, Scholarships and Recognition**
  According to the Czech proverb: "money attracts money" (1909).

During the evaluation of documents, the majority of committees attribute greater value to those candidates who specify their prizes, scholarships and recognition. It is, therefore, preferable to apply for a lot of prizes and scholarships, regardless of their monetary value. However, it is important for these prizes, scholarships and recognition to have a **competitive aspect**.

If you have points to add in this section, you must mention:

- Name of the organization or establishment which awarded the prize, scholarship or recognition;
- Name of the prize, scholarship or recognition;
- Date or period covered by the prize, scholarship or recognition;
- Amount in Canadian currency (foreign currency in brackets);
- A brief description (optional).

- **Contribution to Research and Development: Publications / Reports / Patents / Poster Sessions / Presentations / Conferences**

This section may not be relevant because it depends upon your specialization and your experience. However, note that the majority of research scholarship competitions attribute a higher score to publications and other contributions. Hence, it is strongly recommended including this section.

Tips:

1. *It is easy to believe that being at the beginning of their academic career, a few students have publications or other contributions.* ***False***

2. *If you wish to explore a research field or get a particular expertise, it is highly recommended joining a research team that publishes as soon as possible. You could also get a chance to be cited as a co-author.*

Presentation of Contributions

The presentation of publications or conferences must mirror the presentation rules of the organization that conducts the competitions. In case where there are no given rules, use the ones suggested by HEC Montréal:

http://libguides.hec.ca/citer

General example, author-date method:

Last name, initials of the author's first name. (Date of publication). Title. (Edition number). Place of publication: Editor.

Example of the article:

Last name, initials of the author's first name. (Date of publication). Title of the article. Name of journal, Volume, Issue: pp. - pp. Place of publication: Editor.

IMPORTANT: Please note that you must mention the conferences in which you gave a presentation or wrote an article.

Research Experience

You must mention your experience as a research assistant, adjunct researcher, research associate, etc. If your experience took place during an internship, mention it, too. Mention your **achievements**, research projects undertaken or in process.

You must mention:

- Title of your position;
- Name of the organization;
- Starting and finishing dates (month / year);
- Description of your main tasks;
- A résumé of your project work.

If you have an experience in teaching, you can create an **Experience in Teaching** section. This is often looked for in competitions of research scholarship.

Professional Experiences

You should also mention the professional experience relevant to the competition in which you participate. You may also include student jobs that are not related to the competitive exam to highlight your ability to balance work and studies, as well as the skills you have acquired (organizational skills, customer service, professionalism, interpersonal skills, priority management, etc.). However, it is recommended that you group these experiences together rather than listing each one in detail.

Example:

- **Other experiences:**
  Various sales and customer service experiences in the retail and entertainment industries (20XX–20XX).

For every experience, give a brief description of your main tasks. Also, mention all relevant achievements related to the evaluation criteria and general objectives of the concerned competition. Note that it is not mandatory to include everything in a résumé, but it is forbidden to add false information.

Thus, in this section, you must mention:

- Title of your position;
- Name of the organization;
- Starting and finishing dates (month / year);
- Description of your main tasks.

IMPORTANT: Experience of voluntary work and other extracurricular activities should not be found in this section.

Social Engagement and Volunteerism

This section should be used to mention all the experiences which could allow the evaluation committee to analyze your leadership skills, communication skills, outreach ability (inter or extra university) as well as your degree of involvement in the community (student or other).

They should also be able to assess your experiences in time, identify the organization in which you volunteered and learn about your main tasks and roles.

Example:

Volunteer at an NGO/NPO, mentoring, tutoring, member of a committee, member of a sports team, participant in a student-friendly competition, member of a community group, organizer of political activity, founder of humanitarian trip, etc.

Tips:

1. *Evaluators will try to identify your transferable professional skills, so be clear with your achievements.*

2. *Note that small achievements are of the same importance as the big ones. What matters is the degree of your involvement.*

Optional sections

Following is a list of sections that could be added depending upon the target audience and objective:

Professional Goals

This section can only be used in the context of looking for an internship or a job. The

description of the goal should be short and precise. It should be specific to each application submitted. This section should aim to meet the expectations of targeted position or requirements of the internship. Note that this is not relevant to a résumé intended for scholarship competitions.

Additional Training

This section should be used to mention training courses, accreditation or even non- credited additional training. You should mention all that is relevant for the competition. You must use the same type of presentation as you do for academic training.

Personal Qualities

This section can be included in a résumé for a competition or an internship, where the personality of the awardee is important. Be careful not to confuse personal qualities (which evolve) and skills (which are acquired).

IMPORTANT: A long list of personal qualities without concrete examples isn't ideal here. It's generally better to list fewer qualities but back them up with achievements or verifiable facts.

Examples:

- Performance- and results-oriented: Member of teams that have won competitions; recipient of awards and scholarships; selected for an international exchange program.
- Excellent interpersonal and teamwork skills demonstrated through academic competitions, projects, and extracurricular activities.
- Strong interest in discovery and a curious nature highlighted by internships and international exchange experiences
- Commitment to the values of integrity and ethics underscored by volunteer work, training in AI and EDI, and professional experiences
- Initiative, autonomy, and leadership demonstrated through involvement in student organizations, entrepreneurial projects, etc.

Summary of Skills

This section should not exceed six to eight lines. You should always refer to the evaluation criteria and implied expectations.

Here are a few examples of a group of skills:

- In research (e.g.: know-how in analytical strategies or techniques of specific data collection);
- In administration (e.g.: time management, team coordination, planning);
- In communication (e.g.: fluency in three languages, writing, facilitator);
- In leadership (e.g.: ability to lead initiatives with good final outcomes, self-management, persuasiveness, negotiation skills);
- In information science (e.g.: knowledge of particular software).

IMPORTANT: You can find examples of descriptions in the Career Management Service master's-level CV templates at this link:
➡ CV examples | CV and cover letter | Career Management Services | Support and resources | Students | HEC Montréal

Step 3: Tricks to enhance your résumé

For each time that you present your résumé, you share not only your strengths but also your weaknesses with the evaluators. In order to minimize the risk of being rejected, here is some advice that must not be overlooked:

Suggestions for attracting evaluators' attention:

Evaluators often do not have a lot of time to evaluate each file. They will assess your résumé quickly.

Here are a few elements to take into consideration to increase your chances of success:

1. The evaluators usually search for keywords, specific sections, number of publications, etc. If your résumé is easy to read, well-spaced, well-presented, the evaluators would be more likely to accurately assess your potential.

2. Your résumé is sometimes the only tool that permits you to introduce yourself and to show why you are an ideal candidate. Leave nothing to chance or avoid anything that can lead to confusion. Everything should be explained and demonstrated clearly. You should be convincing.

3. Respond to each evaluation and eligibility criterion by including clear and relevant information for each. You can be disqualified if you overlook a criterion. Remain concise and brief in your description.

4. Use a varied and precise vocabulary. Including numbers (e.g.: supervision of **12** students) can simplify evaluation and is greatly appreciated.

5. It is highly recommended getting your résumé verified by a colleague, a professor or a friend who already possesses this type of knowledge. This would allow you to get constructive feedback, making you understand what modifications are to be made in the résumé. Hence, you can make necessary corrections in order to respond more effectively to the criteria of evaluation and highlight your skills and qualities.

Following are a few important links demonstrating the importance of a résumé which could inspire you. Do not hesitate to consult these sites!

- Le Career management - HEC Montréal (HEC Montréal Career Management Services). (*Note that a job search guide for PhD students is available.)*
- Canadian Common CV, used for certain national competitions.
- FRQ descriptive résumé for postdoctoral competitive selection processes : Présentation PowerPoint (in French only)

Suggestions for the résumé layout:

Following are a few basic pointers to help you organize the layout of your résumé:

1. Your name should appear on the top of each page.
2. Important information that makes your candidature more relevant and distinguishes you in the competition should be placed first in the résumé.
3. Using 'bold' characters must be done carefully. Do not put any information in bold or in color except for essential information, such as your name or title of sections.
4. Avoid underlining the words; only internet links should be underlined. It crowds the page and hampers the ease of reading.
5. The most accepted fonts are: Arial, Calibri, Century, Courrier New, Verdana, Times New Roman. The selected font should be easy to read and plain. Font size between 10 and 12 is recommended.
6. You should use the same font in the nomination form as you have for other documents provided in appendix.
7. To maximize the use of available space, certain competitions authorize using margins of 'medium' type. Do not forget to check the rules of the competition. Normally, one-page résumé is recommended for undergraduate and master's students. For PhD students, it is common to see two-page résumés.
8. The same type of information should be found at the same place (ergonomics of the page), regardless of the section. For example, dates should always be aligned on the same side (preferably to the right). Be precise with the alignment and spacing.
9. Use preferably a classic layout, without decoration, that is easy to follow from top to bottom. Do not use stylish models that present the information in a personalized manner. The committee members should not have to look for information.
10. Using action verbs in the infinitive or action names can facilitate a better understanding of tasks that you have achieved. Your choice of words should be uniform. If you opt for infinitive verbs, then only use infinitive verbs.
11. Spelling and grammar mistakes are to be avoided.
12. Your résumé should be sent to the person in charge of the competition only in PDF format.

We hope that these suggestions will be helpful to you.

Good luck to all!