



Faculty of Engineering  
and Applied Science

## RESUME VS. CV

When applying for a job, employers usually request a resume (also spelled *résumé*) or a C.V. (*curriculum vitae*). While you may see these words used synonymously in some contexts, they are actually two different types of document in North America. This resource describes each type and clarifies the differences between them.

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### ABOUT RESUMES

Resume (or *résumé*) comes from the French word for “summary.” That is essentially what a resume is: a summary of your experience. Resumes are tailored to the specific job for which you are applying. As a result, you sometimes add or delete information on your resume. For example, if you are applying for a part-time job at a retail outlet and you had previously worked in a department store, that information should be included on your resume. If you have had five previous engineering work terms and you are applying for a job as a civil engineer, the fact that you worked in a department store might not be as relevant, so you may choose to omit it to focus on the more relevant experiences. If, however, you have little field experience, you might want to keep the department store job on your resume and be ready to describe how the skills you acquired there are transferrable to this job.

In addition to adding and removing previous work experience, you might also make other changes to make your resume a better fit for the job advertisement. Your resume should also contain the degrees and diplomas that you have received. Once you graduate from university, your high school education is no longer as pertinent. The same goes for volunteer experience: select experience that contains skills that would transfer over to the desired job. If you are lacking in work experience, you may choose to list your education first. If you have held several positions, you may want to begin with those instead. Other skills, awards and achievements can be included if relevant to the job. The entries on your resume usually start with the most recent first and are listed in reverse-chronological order within a section.

Most resumes, as the translation indicates, are short. They can be as short as one page and should not exceed two pages.

### ABOUT CVs

A CV (*curriculum vitae*) comes from the Latin “course of life.” As such, a CV is meant to contain all your life accomplishments, including education, work experience, volunteer work, awards, and achievements. A CV is built upon throughout your life: you add to it, but you do not remove anything from it. The relevance of experience or an accomplishment to the job for which you are applying is inconsequential. This document should be a detailed account of your life accomplishments up until this point. A CV is chronological in nature, and it typically begins with educational qualifications.

Because of the nature of the document, a CV can be long. In fact, a three-page CV would be considered relatively short. CVs are regularly five or more pages in length. When you see a document online listing a person’s accomplishments, it is most likely a CV.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RESUMES & CVs

These terms can be used interchangeably in some parts of the English-speaking world. However, excluding the province of Quebec, Canadian and American employers consider these documents to be different. These differences are outlined below:

|                          | RESUME                                 | CV  |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Length                   | 1-2 pages                              | Usually 3+ pages  |
| Order of accomplishments | Varies, listed reverse-chronologically | Begins with education, listed chronologically               |
| Detail                   | Includes relevant accomplishments only | Includes all accomplishments regardless of relevance        |
| Usage                    | Job applications                       | Academics or professional situations where detail is needed |