What's the best font for a resumé? Here's a guide to formatting your CV

When it comes to crafting the perfect resumé, every detail matters, even down to the font you use. It might seem trivial when your many achievements are right there, front and centre, but the font you choose can speak volumes about your professional nature and attention to detail. Remember, recruiters often skim through resumés in a matter of seconds, so you want every advantage you can get.

The world of fonts for resumés can be a tricky one to navigate. There are important factors to consider when choosing the right font for your resumé, including styles and serifs that might look pretty, but should be avoided at all costs.

If you're looking to create that perfect polished look that will make your resumé visually pleasing as well as easy to scan, keep reading. Whether you're updating your resumé for a new job hunt or just looking to give it an upgrade, this guide has got you covered. Here are the ins-and-outs of fonts for resumés.

Understanding the basics of fonts

Before we dive into the nitty-gritty of selecting the perfect font for your resumé, it's essential to grasp a basic understanding of fonts that goes beyond simply selecting one that looks good (though this is a great place to start!). Just a little more knowledge will help you appreciate those subtle nuances that different fonts bring to the table.

Serif versus sans-serif fonts

Let's start where all good font debates do: looking at the difference between serif and sans-serif fonts.

-

Serif fonts: these fonts have serifs – small decorative lines or 'feet' at the ends of letter strokes and stems. Examples include Times New Roman, Georgia and Garamond. They're your more traditional fonts, often used in print media, such as newspapers and magazines. Serifs can help your eye identify letters and make words easier to read in print.

- Sans-serif fonts: meaning 'without serif', these fonts lack those decorative lines and have a cleaner appearance. Popular examples are Arial, Helvetica and Calibri. They're often used for digital content as they're easy to read on screens.

Different font families and their characteristics

Fonts can be grouped into families based on shared characteristics. We've already touched on the two main ones: serif and sans-serif fonts, but here are a few more to explore.

- Monospace fonts: all letters in these fonts have the same width, giving them a uniform appearance. This style is often used in coding or technical documents. Examples include Courier New, Lucida Console and Monaco.

- Cursive fonts: these fonts are designed to mimic human handwriting. They can range from elegant and formal to casual and playful. They're usually not the best choice when it comes to fonts for resumés, but can be used for creative roles or specific sections to add a touch of personality. Some examples are Brush Script MT and Lucida Handwriting.

- Fantasy fonts: as the name suggests, these are decorative or playful fonts. They're often used for headings or logos, but tend to be harder to read. Examples include Copperplate and Papyrus.

Font size and spacing

It's not only the type of font you use that's important, you also need to look at font size and letter spacing to create an overall sense of balance. You want your resumé to have an overall polished and well-formatted look.

The ideal font size for a resumé is between 10 and 12 points. This ensures it's nice and easy to read without being too cramped or leaving too much white space. Your headings can be slightly larger; around 14 to 16 points. Use single spacing throughout to keep all the crucial information that sells your talents visually together, without putting too much space in between.

Factors to consider when choosing a good font for your resumé

Now that you know a little more about the types of fonts out there, it's time to take a look at how to select the right one for your resumé. While there's no one-size-fits-all answer, the following factors can guide you in making the right choice for you.

Industry and job type

The industry you're applying in can significantly influence your font choice. For example:

- Corporate roles: if you're aiming for a position in finance, law or other more traditional industries, it's best to stick with classic fonts like Times New Roman or Georgia. These convey professionalism and conservatism.

- Creative roles: for jobs in graphic design, media or the arts, you have a bit more leeway. Fonts like Arial or Calibri can work, but you might also consider sharing your creative flair a little more – as long as the font is still easy to read.

Personal brand and style

Look at your resumé as an extension of your personal brand. The font you choose should reflect the image you want to project. Are you aiming for a modern, innovative vibe? Sans-serif fonts like Helvetica might be your go-to. Prefer a more traditional, grounded feel? A serif font could be the answer.

Readability and legibility

No matter what industry you're in or your preferred style, your resumé's primary purpose is to communicate information clearly. At the end of the day, it's important that your resume is:

- Well organised: text should flow smoothly, allowing your potential employer to quickly skim through your creds.

- Legible: individual letters and characters should be easily distinguishable. This comes down to good spacing and kerning (the space between letters).

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)

Did you know that many companies use ATS software to filter resumés before they even reach a human recruiter? These systems scan for keywords and other relevant information that is vital for the role (this is why writing to the job criteria is so important!). Some fonts, especially non-standard or decorative ones, may not be recognised by ATS, which means your application could be completely overlooked from the get-go. Stick to popular fonts to ensure your resumé passes through these systems.

Best CV fonts

Choosing a good font for your resumé isn't quite as straightforward as it seems. In saying that, there are some fonts that have withstood the test of time and have been widely recognised for their readability, professionalism and versatility. Here's some of the top picks:

- **Arial:** a modern sans-serif font, Arial is clean and easy to read. It has a modern yet neutral look, which makes it perfect for most professional settings.

- **Calibri:** the default font for Microsoft Word since 2007, Calibri is a safe bet for any resumé. It's easy to read at any size.

- **Cambria:** this serif font was designed for on-screen reading and offers a touch of elegance.

-

Helvetica: a favourite among designers for its versatility, giving off a modern, professional vibe.

- **Garamond:** a traditional serif font, this is a great choice for those looking to be a little more formal.

- **Georgia:** designed for screen readability, this font combines the classic look of serif fonts with the clarity needed for digital displays.

- **Verdana:** with its wide spacing and clear characters, Verdana is highly readable, making it a great choice for your resumé.

- **Book Antiqua:** a less common but classic choice, Book Antiqua offers a traditional feel.

- **Times New Roman:** a classic font that's been used for decades, this one's a safe bet. On the flip side, some might view it as a little old-fashioned or traditional.

- **Trebuchet MS:** a modern sans-serif font with a bit of flair, Trebuchet MS strikes a balance between personality and professionalism.

Fonts to avoid in resumés

Just as important as choosing the right font for your resumé is knowing exactly which ones to avoid. Some fonts, despite their popularity, simply don't convey the professionalism and readability required for a resumé. Whether it's because they're overused, hard to read or not professional enough, here are some fonts that are best left off your resumé:

- **Comic Sans:** often seen as informal and childish.

-

- **Papyrus:** while Papyrus might evoke a sense of adventure, it's overused in a number of contexts, from movie posters to restaurant menus. It's definitely one to steer clear of in a professional setting.

- **Curlz MT:** with its whimsical design, Curlz MT looks great on a birthday invitation, but can be far too playful for a resumé.

- **Impact:** as the name suggests, Impact is a bold font designed to grab attention. While this might be what you're looking for with your resumé, its thick characters can make the text too heavy and hard to read.

- **Courier New:** while Courier New has its place as a monospace font, especially in coding, it can give your resumée an old-timey typewritten appearance.

It might be tempting to use a unique or quirky font to stand out, but it's essential to remember that readability is of utmost importance. Stick to the best CV fonts, which are recognised for their professionalism and classic good looks – and avoid those that might [give the wrong impression](#).

Tips for using fonts in your resumé

A standout resumé goes beyond just listing your qualifications and experiences. The way you present this information, down to the font choices and styling, has a big impact.

- **Consistency:** while it might be tempting to mix and match fonts, it's best to stick to one or two that complement each other. This gives your resumé a polished look. You might choose a professional font for the resumé body and a different one for the headings, but avoid introducing multiple fonts that can make your resumé visually busy and cluttered.

- **Bold and italic styles:** bold and italics are great tools to emphasise specific sections or points in your resumé. Use bold for headings or to highlight achievements, and italics for subheadings or for specific roles. Just be sure to use these styles sparingly to maintain a clean look.

- **Incorporating colour:** while traditional CVs stick to black and white, introducing a subtle colour can make your resumé pop. Consider using a muted shade for headings or to highlight specific sections.

- **Capitalisation and underlining:** ALL CAPS can come off as 'shouty' and aggressive, so steer clear of overusing them. At the same time, while underlining can emphasise specific points, it can also make text harder to read. Stick to bold or italics for emphasis.

[Crafting the perfect resumé](#) means showcasing your skills, experiences and achievements in a way that's polished, professional and easy to read. Choosing the right font for your resumé is a subtle yet powerful tool in ensuring it stands out for all the right reasons. In a competitive job market, every detail counts, and the right font can be the finishing touch that sets your application apart.

Remember: your resumé is a reflection of you, so make sure it's presented in the best possible light.

FAQs

Can I use more than one font in my resumé?

Absolutely! Using more than one font can help create a visual hierarchy, guiding the reader's eye to key sections. You might choose a bold, impactful font for headings and a more basic, easy-to-read font for the body text. However, use caution when using more than one font. It's important to strike a balance – too many fonts can make your resumé appear cluttered and chaotic.

Should I use a different font for my name and contact information?

Using a different or slightly larger font for your name can help it stand out. Your name is an important element of your resumé, and giving it a subtle emphasis can make it memorable. For contact information, consider a simpler, cleaner font to ensure it's easy to read.

Can I use a decorative font for my resumé?

While decorative fonts can be eye-catching, they might not be the best choice for a professional resumé. These fonts can often be hard to read and might come off as unprofessional or out of place, especially in more traditional industries. If you're keen on using a decorative font, perhaps use it for your name or for section headings.

How do I know if my font choice is ATS-friendly?

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) are software tools used by many companies to filter resumés. Some fonts, especially non-standard or decorative ones, might not be recognised by ATS, which means your application could be overlooked. To avoid this, stick to popular and standard fonts such as Times New Roman, Arial, Helvetica and the like.

Is it okay to use a font that is not commonly used in resumés?

Using a less-common font can make your resumé stand out, but make sure the font is still professional, readable and appropriate for the industry. While it's okay to share a little of your personality, always prioritise readability and professionalism over playfulness. Before finalising your choice, it's a good idea to seek feedback from friends for a second opinion.