

Building a Musician's Resume

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What is a Resume & What is It's Purpose?

A resume selects a handful of experiences from your background that are most relevant to a position or opportunity you are applying for. They allow the readers (employers, adjudicators, committees, etc.) to quickly scan your background so they can decide whether to invite you to the next round.

It is vital for musicians to have two separate types of resumes prepared. Just as you would never submit a list of teaching roles to a competition or audition, you cannot submit a list of performance experience to an on-campus job or internship.

<i>Regular Resume (2 pages)</i>	<i>Performance Resume (1 page)</i>
Used for most opportunities including on-campus jobs, internships, teaching, grants and more.	Used in the performing arts for opportunities such as festivals, competitions, or auditions.
<i>Purpose:</i> Describes experiences, skills, and accomplishments in various, relevant roles.	<i>Purpose:</i> Summarizes performance experiences relevant to the position.
<i>Formatting:</i> List each role, provide the organization name, location, your title, and dates in the role. Use 3 or more bullets to describe responsibilities, skillsets, and outcomes.	<i>Formatting:</i> List ensembles, location, your instrument/position, and dates. Rarely use bullets. When using them, highlight specific repertoire or a unique situation (i.e. conducted by...).

Steps to Writing a Resume

Step 1: Read sample resumes

Review sample resumes to better understand the format, category samples, example experiences, etc. See samples of resumes from Eastman students and alumni below.

Step 2: Maintain a List of Your Experiences

Keep a running list of all your unique experiences. This list will act as your professional catalog, allowing you to select appropriate experiences when writing your resume. Updating this frequently makes it easier to create materials quickly as opportunities arise. Once you've gathered your experiences, organize them into **specific, targeted categories**. Below is a list of common categories found in musicians' resumes. You do *not* need to include all of them and there may be other areas that may be relevant!

Common Resume Categories for Musicians	
<i>Regular Resume</i>	<i>Performance Resume</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education/Training/Certifications • Teaching Experience (be specific) • Leadership Roles (be specific) • Administrative Roles (be specific) • Community Engagement/Volunteer Positions • Projects, Research & Presentations • Published Works or Recordings • Professional Development • Awards/Scholarships/Grants • Professional Affiliations • Hard skills <p><i>Note: Avoid using categories that say just "Work" or "Experience". Be more specific. Even "Elementary and General Music Instruction" is better than "Teaching."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education/Teachers • Professional Auditions (if advanced) • Large Ensemble Experience (Orchestra/Band/Choir) • Roles & Productions (Opera/Theatre) • Festival/YAP Experience • Chamber Ensembles • Competitions & Awards • Recordings

Step 3: Write Bullet Descriptions (*regular resume only*)

For positions held (jobs, teaching assistantships, church director, etc.), you will need to describe your responsibilities, skillsets, and/or outcome of your work. This is crucial to telling the reader what you have accomplished. These are done in bullet format and should:

- Include a minimum of 3 bullets
- Start with a strong action verb. (Use present tense verbs if you are currently in the position and past tense if it was a previous position).
- Provide enough detail to paint an accurate picture (who, what, when, where, how)
- Use numbers or data when appropriate (i.e., how big is your studio?)
- Do not use pronouns (I, we, my, etc.)

Assorted Sample of Bullet Descriptions

- Instruct group and individual lessons for 6th grade band students performing at NYSSMA levels 1-4 weekly.
- Develop biweekly social media (Instagram, Facebook, & Twitter) posts to market our chamber ensemble and grow local and national audiences.
- Coach and conduct a community church choir (25-30 individuals) to perform 1-2 vocal pieces in English, Latin, and/or German at our weekly Sunday services.

Step 4: Know What You are Applying For

Over your career, you will apply to multiple opportunities. Resumes for graduate school application, a community music teaching position, and a Young Artist Program are three vastly different documents. Knowing what you are applying for and what *they are interested in seeing* will help you highlight the appropriate experiences. I.e., When applying to graduate school, scholarships are often awarded based on the full student package – student’s playing ability, academic success, and contribution to the school community. Therefore, you should include a wide array of experiences.

Step 5: Select Your Relevant Experiences

Select categories from your running list (Step 2) that best align with and are most relevant to the opportunity you are applying for (Step 4). Copy and paste these categories into a separate document and order them by priority. Ex. If you are applying for a Chamber Music Festival, do not start with a list of your large ensemble experience! *Hint: Although it may be tempting to just tweak a prior resume, it’s recommended to return to your full list each time.*

Step 6: Format & Proof

Once the content is developed, then go back and tweak the formatting so it is easy for the reader to skim. **Feel free to use our [Regular Resume](#) and/or [Performance Resume](#) templates!** Once developed, proof the document and send it to a friend or advisor to help you identify issues. If you are shy about sharing your resume, then it is not ready for an application!

Formatting Details

Header	Always put your name, email, and phone number at the top of the 1st page in larger font
Margins	Up to .5" (top, left, bottom and right)
Font Size/Style	11pt – 12pt in legible fonts
Aligning	Ensure that sections align (i.e. all Categories will be in the same space)
File Type	Save as a PDF, title it <i>YourName_Job Position_Resume</i>

Final Tips

Remember, writing a solid resume will take time, but it is a crucial part of the application process. To ensure the best product is created, remember these tips:

- ✓ Incorporate words and concepts directly from the job description
- ✓ Do not make assumptions about what the readers know (i.e. no abbreviations!)
- ✓ Do not double dip (don’t use the same bullet twice, nor have the same experience in multiple categories).
- ✓ Always fill the page