Building Your Acting Resume

Name, Stats, and Contact Info

Just like any other kind of resumé, your acting resume format should start with your name. Put it in big, bold letters at the top of the page.

Your name is followed by your height and weight. Some actors mention their hair and eye color too. But if your professional headshots are in color, and they're stapled to the back of your resumé (and they should be), you can omit that.

If you sing, put down your voice part. And if you belong to any of the unions, put down the acronym. (i.e: AEA, AFTRA, and/or SAG)

Finally, round it out with your contact info. Your cell phone number and email address specifically.

Theatre Credits

Most actors tend to list their theatre credits first. Why? Because casting directors know their theatre. Chances are, that's where they got their start. However, if you're aggressive about film and TV, then list those credits first.

Don't get carried away with this section. Your instinct will be to list every show you've ever done. *This is not necessary.* As you are starting out, feel free to include everything – experience is experience. However, as your resume builds, you can begin eliminating roles (for instance the silent tree you played when you were five). This helps the directors know how to cast you.

Other Credits

Beneath your theatre cred, you can list other mediums where you have experience. Film, television, voiceover, commercial, etc. The same rules apply from above. Don't get carried away.

Education and Training

If you have any arts-related education, it goes in the "Education and Training" section. This could be school classes, summer camps and programs, voice lessons, etc.

Special Skills

Sometimes, casting directors are looking for someone who can juggle, or do a back handspring, or simply has a passport. All of these abilities go under "Special Skills" at the bottom of the page. The more skills you have, the more marketable you are.

Acting Resume Format Tips & Tricks

- **One page only.** It's tempting to expand your resume beyond one page, but don't.
- **Eight by ten, please.** Your standard headshot is eight inches by ten inches. And since it gets attached to the back, your resumé should also be that size.
- **Professional credits go first.** Then come your educational credits, and then your community theatre credits. As you gain more experience, start to eliminate the amateur credits.
- **K.I.S.S.** - *Keep It Simple Stupid*. Don't complicate it with unnecessary info or details.

  This maxim applies to many things in life, but he was referring to my acting resume. It was overcrowded with every role I had played and every class I'd taken. I wanted to impress casting directors, but I was actually just turning them off. And making myself less likely to land an acting job.

  Don't make that same mistake. Remember: KISS KISS...

Acting Resumes and Headshots - Dos and Don'ts

DO

- Print or staple your resume to the back of your headshot. Print it, if possible. When all the headshots are in a pile, sometimes the staples catch on other headshots and resumes get stuck together. You do not want your resume lost in the shuffle!
- If you are stapling, trim your resume to fit the headshot. You do not it want to look sloppy.
- Make sure your headshot looks like you, perhaps a better, more glamorous you, but still you. I've had directors not recognize the headshot and not remember the person's audition.
- Make sure the head shot shows your face. I've seen headshots that are so close-up, it's hard to see the whole person.
- Make sure the contact information on the back is up-to-date. Create an email address just for your acting resume.
- Have at least five copies with you when you go to auditions. You never know who will want them.
- It's pretty easy to create and print resumes, so if you have a lot of experience, why not make three different ones. Have one that focuses on theater, one on film and one on commercials to take the appropriate audition.

DON'T

- Lie about your experience.
- Make up special skills or write things down just so you fill in the special skill area.
- Have a resume that is larger that 8 ½ x 11. An oversize headshot won't fit in a standard folder and will probably just get thrown away.
- Have a resume that is more than one page. If they want more information, they will ask for it.
- Staple reviews or clippings to your resume. They just get in the way.
- Make the type smaller than 10 pt. If you have that much experience, edit it down. If your resume is cramped and hard to read, no one will bother.

A lot of theater is about connections. If you worked a well-known theater like the Long Wharf Theater or the Guthrie, make sure that the name of the theater is on your resume. If you worked with a well-known director such as Sam Mendes or Mac Wellman, make sure their name is on your resume. One of the things that can happen in an audition is that a name on your resume is recognized, so it gets second look.

You do not have to list everything you've done. List the most important roles and events first.

The example resume has a place for everything including theater, tours, film, television and commercials. You don't have to have all these things on your resume either. Cutting a major theater performance, just to list a student film to demonstrate film experience is probably not worth it.
Just use common sense and don't worry if your resume doesn't have any large theaters or major experience on it. Everybody has to start at the beginning.
Some things you may want to consider for your resume…

- Age Range- Indicate eight to ten year range that you could be cast as
- Coach- Who guides your development in acting, singing, and dancing
- Contact number- Where you can be reached.
- Dance- The training and/or performances you have had in the field.
- Dialects- Different speech patterns found regionally or internationally
- Education- Your training, high school, college, or otherwise.
- Eyes- List color
- Experience- Everything, including…Broadway, children's theater, chorus, classical theater, co-starring roles, commercials (listed upon request), community theater, dance performance, day players, extra work (listed upon request), featured roles, film work, first national tour, game shows (especially since many now hire actors to be contestants), guest starring roles, improv, industrial films, lead roles, modeling, musical theater, music videos, repertory theater, representative roles, series regular, showcase, sit-com, soap opera, special business (a small role in a production that is unique or specialized, usually interacting with a principal), stage combat, starring roles, summer stock or straw hat, under five (U/5) television roles of 5 lines or less.
- Hair- List color
- Height
- No current conflicts- Meaning that you are not involved in another production.
- Recent Additions- You may consider leaving room for future endeavors to prevent redoing the whole resume.
- Training- Different than education. Reflects your professional training and your devotion to the field.
- Union Affiliation- For example, Actor's Equity Association (AEA), Screen Actor's Guild (SAG)
- Weight- May place you in a character type.

A final word of advice: The acting resume format is always different. Every actor's story is unique, and so every resumé is unique. Use these guidelines, but find a way to tell them where you've been and what you can do.