Job Application Formatting Guide

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Résumé formatting is one area where many people fail to see the importance of their choices. When an applicant states that they have a strong attention to detail or great written communication skills, the first place to begin demonstrating those skills is in their résumé. If you are overlooking this opportunity to perform, you are missing a chance to avoid the dreaded recruiter's recycling bin of rejected applicants.

Please note that although this guide is based on Microsoft Word 2013, the principles can be applied regardless of the word processor used.

General Formatting Checklist

Formatting choices create a personal brand, and brands should be consistent. This can be achieved by using the same formatting and header throughout your application.
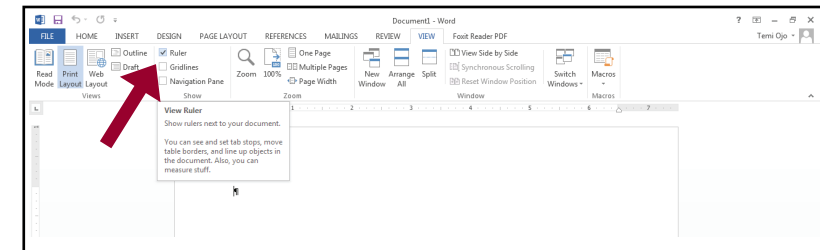
- **Use the same header on both your cover letter and résumé**
- **Use the same formatting (font, text colour, etc.) in both documents**
- **Use fonts similar to Arial, Times New Roman, or Calibri**

Formatting Dates
Within a new document

Step 1
> In your blank word document, click on the "**VIEW**" tab. In this tab will find "**Ruler**". Click the checkbox to enable this function.
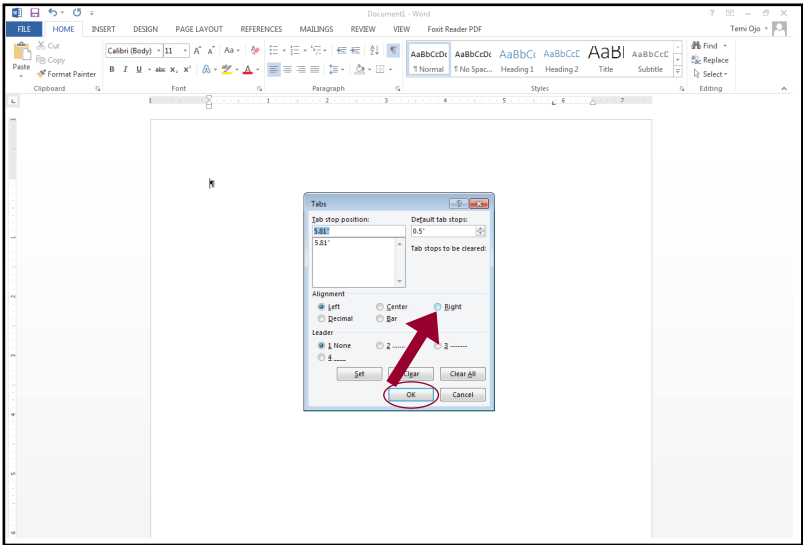

Step 2
> Click anywhere on the ruler that has appeared on the top of the page. Once you have clicked on the ruler you should see a black "**L**" appear. This is called a tab.

Step 3

Double-click on the "**L**". This will bring up a new window that is called "**Tabs**." In this window, click on the radio button beside "**Right**" in the "Alignment" section, then click "**OK**" to exit

Step 4

Find the tab you made earlier, then click and drag it to the right margin, illustrated by the upward pointing "arrow" on the right side of the ruler.
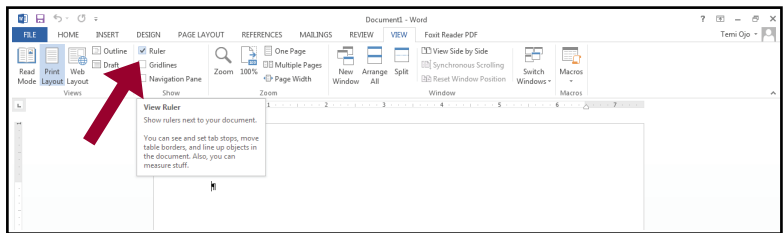
Step 5

Align your text to this margin by clicking the "**Tab**" key on your keyboard and typing your text.

Within an existing document

Step 1

In your blank document, click on the "**VIEW**" tab. In this tab will find "**Ruler**". Click the checkbox to enable this function
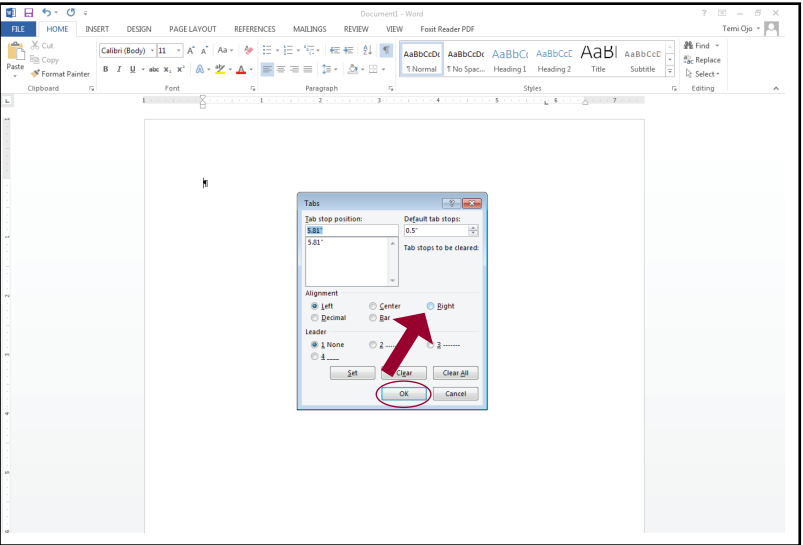

Step 2

Highlight the line which has the date you want to format. This can be done by clicking to the left of this line (you will see an arrow cursor when you have moved far enough to the left of the line).

Step 3

Click anywhere on the ruler that has appeared on the top of the page. Once you have clicked on the ruler you should see a black "**L**" appear. This is called a tab.

Step 4

Double-click on the "**L**". This will bring up a new window that is called "**Tabs**." In this window, click on the radio button beside "**Right**" in the "*Alignment*" section, then click "**OK**" to exit
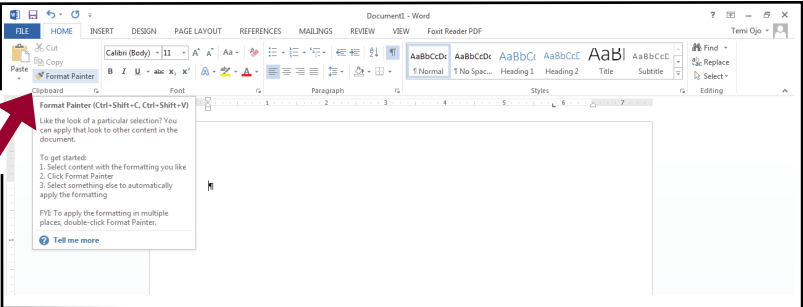

Step 5

Find the tab you made earlier, then click and drag it to the right margin, illustrated by the upward pointing "arrow" on the right side of the ruler.

Step 6

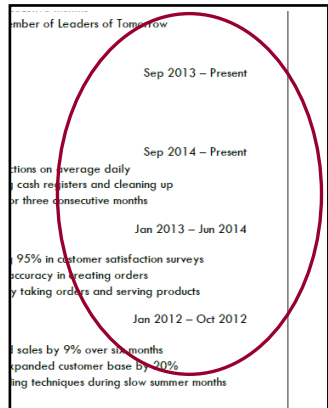Align your text to this margin by clicking the "Tab" key on your keyboard and typing your text.

Step 7

Highlight the line you just formatted and double-click "*Format Painter*" in the "**HOME**" tab, located within the "*Clipboard*" section. Highlight the lines you want to have the same formatting

Checklist for Dates

• Use reverse chronological order

Note: The **most recent** position is **first** and as you go down the page you see the older positions. If you have more than one current position you can put the **most relevant first**.

• Use the same layout for all of the dates **(e.g. Jan 2017 or January 2017 or 2017 – choose one format and keep it consistent throughout)**

• List your dates with your start date first and then your end date or note it as current **(e.g. May 2013–September 2015 NOT September 2015–May 2013)**

Allign Bullets and Other Information

Follow the same steps that were used to align dates, moving the tab to the appropriate position. You do not need to adjust the tab alignment to "**Right.**"

Hyphen, En Dash and Em Dash

People often don't realize there is a difference in size and meaning between the hyphen, en dash, and em dash. As successful written communicators, it is important to recognize this difference and ensure that you are using the correct tool for the job. **Here is a quick summary of usage:**

Hyphen "-"
  • Connects closely-related words (e.g. peer-to-peer)
  • Use the **hyphen key "-"**

En Dash "–"
  • Indicates a range (e.g. 2014–2017)
  • On Windows, hold the ALT key and type 0150 on the number pad
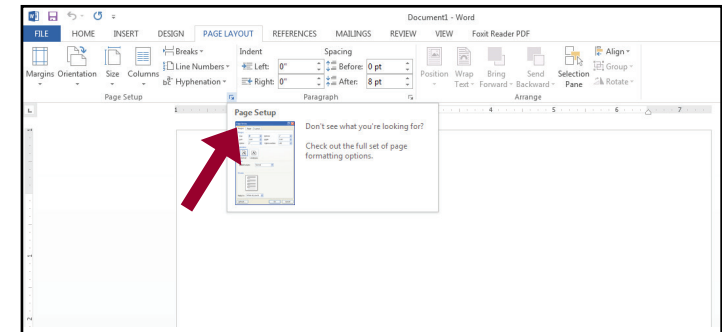 • On MacOS, press the **Option/**ALT key **+ the hyphen key**

Em Dash "—"
  • Adds a thought outside the scope of the sentence within which it's embedded (e.g. The sky is blue—I need to buy milk)
  • On Windows, type two hyphens without spaces between the connecting words
  • On MacOS, press **Option/ALT + Shift + the hyphen key**

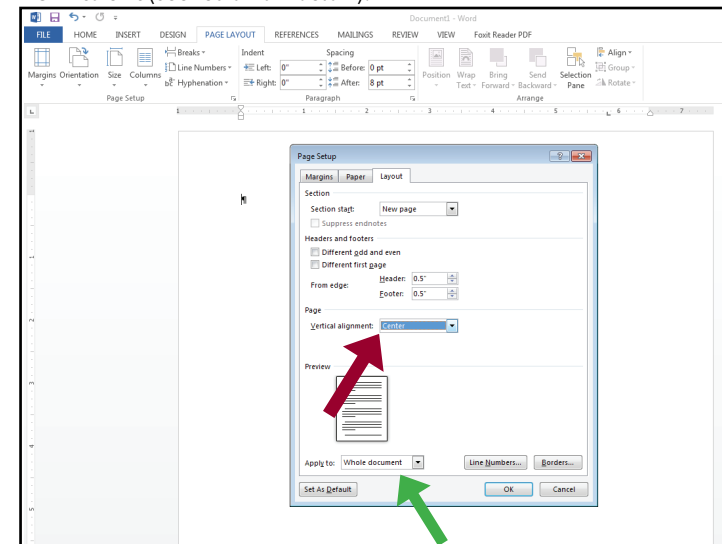*Note that there are no spaces on either end of any variation of the hyphen or dash.*

Centre text on page

Centring text on the page can help reduce excess white space and balance the page.

Step 1

Click the "**PAGE LAYOUT**" tab and click the "arrow" in the bottom-right corner of the "*Page Setup*" section

Step 2

Click on the "**Layout**" tab at the top of the window to find the "*Page*" section. In this section, set the vertical alignment to "**Center,**" then click "**OK**" to exit (see red arrow below).

If using section breaks in your document, you will need to adjust the "**Apply to**" section to "*Whole document*" instead of "*This section*" (see green arrow above).

Tips to reduce white space

• Centre your text on the page (see steps above)

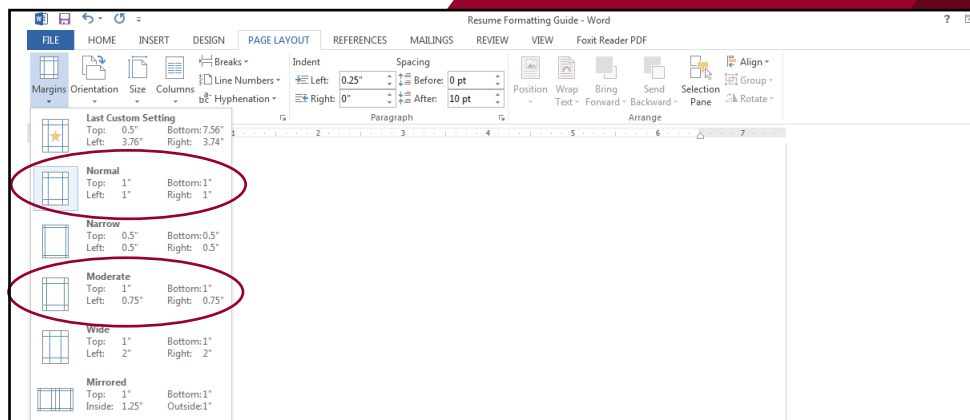• Look for areas that could use some more context or examples of successes. Start with your work and volunteer experience sections, then your education and courses, highlighting relevant skills. **Keep the number of bullets to 2–6.**

• Make your name the largest piece of text in the page header. Your name is what sets you apart to recruiters that are quickly skimming through hundreds of applications, so stand out by making your name large enough to be noticed!

• Check your text size. The body text in your résumé should be **9–12 points,** while section titles should be no larger than **14 points.**

• Include centred page numbers at the bottom of the page. This helps to end the page with a definitive marker and tricks the eye into thinking that there is more information than there is on the page.

• Check your margins. Are you using "*Norma*l" or "*Moderate*" margins? You can adjust your margins in the "**PAGE LAYOUT**" tab by clicking on the "**Margins**" drop down menu (see below).

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