

# Get it Right the First Time: An Introduction to Creating Your Artist Résumé

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An artist résumé is an absolute necessity for every professional artist. Just as an employment résumé outlines employment history, experience, and skills, an artist résumé details your accomplishments, endeavors, knowledge, and abilities as an artist. The artist résumé is used in conjunction with the search for exhibition, performance, screening, and publication opportunities, as well as with certain grant and funding applications.

Like artists, artist résumés come in all shapes, forms, colors and sizes. However, there are many common conventions that all professional résumés should follow. Remember an artist résumé is not an artistic résumé. You want to present yourself and your accomplishments in a professional manner. The following are suggestions on what to include in an artist résumé. Not all suggestions will apply to all artists.

The artist résumé is different from a cv or artist bio. The cv or curriculum vitae is a record of all professional activities within academic careers and is intended for use in academic situations only. An artist bio, while containing similar information as the artist résumé, is presented in a different format than the résumé. An artist bio is most often written in the third person and in paragraph form while the résumé is not.

Typically an artist résumé is one to four pages in length. Most artists have two versions of their résumé prepared, a long version and a one-page version. Your résumé should be easy to read, typed, and printed on quality paper. Résumé paper should be either white, off white or ivory in color. Font size should be no smaller than 10 pt. and should be a font type that is easy to read such as; Arial, Times Roman, Helvetica, etc. Be sure to proofread your résumé carefully. You may find it beneficial to have a friend or colleague read over your résumé.

I find it helpful to include a date in the upper right hand corner of my résumé. The date helps remind me when I last updated my résumé and it also lets others know if my résumé is current.

Some artists format a version of their résumé to drop into or attach to an email message. Since you may be emailing across platforms and to email programs/applications that are different from your own, you should design a résumé with very simple formatting and select a font that is universal in nature like Arial, Times Roman, Courier, or Helvetica.

Update your résumé regularly. It is so much easier to apply for grants or other opportunities when you have your résumé already prepared for that potential prospect. Remember too, that your résumé will forever be evolving along with your development as an artist. There will come a time when you will need to edit out old or irrelevant information.

Generally artist résumés are organized by headings or categories that outline your particular art making activity. Under each heading - listed by date with the most recent event first -- is where you list and then summarize the necessary information. Headings should stand out and can be bulleted, bold, underlined, or italicized. The specific categories you include depends upon what artistic discipline you are involved with.

## **All artist résumés should contain:**

Your Name and Contact Information -- Your name should be somewhere at the top of the page and should be larger than the rest of the information presented in the résumé. Other information included here is your mailing address, home and studio phone numbers, fax number, email address, and website address if appropriate.

Education -- Education is usually the first heading listed. List all the academic degrees earned, noting honors. Also include periods of study at schools or universities attended without completing a degree. If you do not have an art related degree, you can list workshops or classes attended and notable artists /teachers you have studied with.

Honors and Awards/Grants -- This category is usually a list of honors and awards. Some artists make a separate category for grants. Under this category you want to list all recognitions of merit, prizes won in competitions, grants, fellowships, scholarships and other special recognitions. You may also want to include artist-in-residences or special workshops attended.

Bibliography -- The bibliography is a record of material about you. Articles, reviews, catalogues, radio and television interviews, etc. are placed under this heading. For visual artists, the bibliography category not only includes material written about you but also lists the inclusion of your artwork in books, magazines, newspapers, and catalogues. This category should not be confused with the publications category. The publications category describes material (articles, reviews, etc.) you have written not material written about you.

Professional Affiliations -- List the professional organizations, national, regional, and local, to which you belong. If you held a position within the organization or served as a volunteer, note this as well.

Related Experience/Related Work Experience/Professional Experience -- This category is worded differently on various résumés. Many artists include on their résumé experience they feel is relevant to their professional art making career such as: teaching art; jobs held in their field; technical experience related to their artistic discipline; or lectures, workshops and presentations given as an artist. Some artists also include information under this heading that does not neatly fall into other categories on their résumé.

## **Visual artist categories can include:**

Exhibitions -- List the title of the exhibition, the exhibition space, and the city and state where the exhibition was presented. If your exhibition experience is extensive you may want to divide your exhibitions into separate categories of exhibitions - solo shows, group shows, juried exhibitions, invitational exhibitions, touring exhibitions, museum shows, etc. As well, if notable, the curator or juror of the exhibition is often listed.

Collections -- This category can be divided into private collections, corporate collections, permanent public collections, etc. It is considered proper etiquette to ask permission to list a private purchaser/owner of your work if you intend to list them on your résumé.

Other categories -- Visual artists may also include categories such as: commissions, residencies, and installations on their résumés.

## **Performing artist categories can include:**

Performances/Recordings/Productions -- No matter what type of performing artist you are, you need to devise a way to categorize your experience. Many musicians categorize experience based on recordings, compositions, and performances. Choreographers and dancers use choreography, performances, and productions as categories. Always list the title of the piece, your role in the work, where performed, other collaborators or performers if appropriate, and any other relevant information. If the piece was commissioned you want to indicate this as

well, although many performing artists list commissions in a separate category.

Collaborations -- If you have extensive work with others, you may want to list your collaborative work in this category. Clearly indicate your role in the collaboration and list other collaborators and their roles.

Commissions -- Again, if a substantial amount of your work is done via commission you could include your commissioned work in its own category.

## **Literary artists can include:**

Publications -- Listings should contain the title of the piece, and where published or the publishing press. Some literary artists separate out publications into fiction and nonfiction, fiction and poetry, or separate out book length works from magazine/newspaper publications, etc.

Readings -- In this category you can list any public readings or presentations of your work. List the title of the work presented, and the venue.

## **Media artists can include:**

Films/ Videos/Shorts /Digital Media /TV -- Media Artists should include information about completed and in-production works. If you have a significant amount of work you can divide this category into separate categories that are tailored to your experience. Some media artists divide their experience according to their artistic role in the work -- as an actor, director, writer, etc. Other media artists categorize their experience by the different types of work they do -- video, TV, feature film, short, etc. In all cases, list the title of the piece, your role in the work, other collaborators if appropriate, screening location and any other relevant information.

Screenings/Festivals -- If your work has appeared at several screening locations or has been included in numerous festivals you can list the various screening locations and/or festivals in which your work has appeared. You may also want to note any awards or special recognition your work received at a particular festival, if you have not already included these achievements in the honors and awards category.

## **For Further Reference:**

*Art Marketing 101: A Handbook for the Fine Artist* by Constance Smith

This book contains information about résumé, portfolio preparation, marketing, legal concerns, contracts, and other important business topics for artists. While this book is intended for visual artists, most of the information is relevant to artists in all disciplines.

[www.collegeart.org/caa/career](http://www.collegeart.org/caa/career)

The website of the [College Art Association](http://www.collegeart.org) has a great section on career development, that includes recommended conventions for the artist résumé as well as the curriculum vitae. The College Art Association is a membership organization comprised of individuals, who by vocation or avocation, are concerned about and/or committed to the practice of art, teaching, and research of and about the visual arts and humanities.