SOFTWARE & TECH

How To Write A Music Resume

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How To Write A Music Resume: A Comprehensive Guide for Musicians

In the competitive world of music, your talent alone is not enough to land gigs, teaching positions, orchestra auditions, or industry roles. A well-crafted music resume is your professional calling card. It translates your years of practice, performance experience, and musical education into a format that hiring committees, bandleaders, and studio managers can quickly understand. Whether you are a classical violinist, a jazz pianist, a rock guitarist, or a music educator, learning **how to write a music resume**can open doors to opportunities that might otherwise remain closed.

This guide will walk you through every essential component of a music resume, from formatting and structure to content strategies that highlight your unique strengths. By the end, you will have a clear roadmap to create a resume that sounds as good as your music.

Why a Music Resume Differs from a Standard Resume

A typical corporate resume focuses on quantifiable achievements, promotions, and keyword-optimized job descriptions. A music resume, however, is an artistic document. It must balance technical proficiency with creative expression. Your audience might be a conductor looking for sight-reading ability, a venue owner seeking reliability, or a college admissions committee evaluating ensemble experience. Understanding these nuances is the first step in mastering **how to write a music resume** that resonates.

Unlike a standard resume, a music resume often includes sections such as repertoire lists, notable performances, recording credits, and relevant affiliations (e.g., union memberships). The tone should be professional yet passionate, with a focus on both your artistic journey and your professional discipline.

Essential Components of a Music Resume

1. Contact Information and Branding

Your name, phone number, email address, and location should appear at the top. Consider adding a professional website or online portfolio showcasing recordings, videos of performances, or a biography. If you have a strong social media presence relevant to your field (e.g., SoundCloud, YouTube, or a professional Instagram), include links. However, ensure everything is polished. A poorly edited demo can undo the good impression of your resume.

Also, include your professional headshot? While not always necessary, a high-quality headshot can be beneficial for performers and music educators. Use good judgment—if the role is strictly teaching, a headshot might be optional; for a band gig, it might help.

2. Professional Summary or Objective

A concise summary at the top of your resume gives the reader an immediate sense of who you are. If you have

years of experience, write a professional summary highlighting your most significant achievements. For example:

"Accomplished cellist with 10+ years of orchestral experience, including principal chair with the City Symphony. Passionate about music education and committed to engaging audiences through both classical and contemporary repertoire."

If you are a student or early-career musician, an objective statement can express your goals and enthusiasm. For instance:

"Dedicated jazz saxophonist seeking a performance position with an innovative ensemble. Trained in improvisation and composition, with experience leading a student big band."

3. Education and Training

Music is built on rigorous training. List your degrees, diplomas, and certificates in reverse chronological order. Include the institution, degree name, and graduation year. If you studied with renowned teachers or participated in masterclasses, mention those as well. For example:

- Bachelor of Music in Performance — Berklee College of Music, Boston, MA (2021)
- Associate Diploma in Piano — Royal Conservatory of Music (2018)
- Studied under Dr. Jane Smith at the International Summer Academy

If you hold multiple degrees, prioritize the most relevant ones. For a classical position, a conservatory degree is crucial; for a session musician role, practical training and studio experience may be equally valued.

4. Performance Experience

This is the heart of a music resume. List your most significant performances, tours, and gigs. Include the ensemble or event name, your role, and dates. Be specific about the venue or occasion when it adds prestige. For example:

- Lead Guitarist — "Electric Horizon" European Tour (2023): 25 shows across 8 countries, supporting album release
- First Violin — Metropolitan Lyric Opera, seasonal production of Carmen (2022)
- Guest Performer — NPR Music Tiny Desk Concert (2024)

Use action verbs like "performed," "toured," "recorded," "soloed," or "collaborated." If you have notable appearances (e.g., festivals, television, radio), highlight them.

5. Teaching Experience

Many musicians work as educators. If you have taught private lessons, masterclasses, or group classes, detail that experience. Mention age groups, instruments taught, and any notable student achievements. For example:

- Private Piano Instructor — Self-employed (2019–Present): 25 students, ages 5–70. Prepared 10 students for ABRSM exams, all achieving merit or distinction.
- Adjunct Faculty, Guitar — Harmony Music Academy, Los Angeles, CA (2022–2023): Taught beginner to advanced guitar, developed curriculum for ensemble class.

6. Recording and Studio Work

If you have been involved in recording sessions—whether as a session musician, producer, or engineer—include this section. List the project name, your role, and the studio. This is especially important for commercial musicians and those in the contemporary music scene.

- Session Drummer — "Midnight Echo" EP by Luna Vega (2024): Recorded at EastWest Studios, LA
- Co-producer / Bassist — Independent album "Wanderlust" (2023): Managed arrangement and tracking

7. Repertoire and Skills

Classical musicians often include a repertoire list of major works they have performed. Contemporary musicians might list genres they are proficient in (jazz, funk, pop, etc.) or specific techniques (slap bass, fingerpicking, beatboxing). Also, include technical skills such as sight-reading, improvisation, transcription, and proficiency with notation software (Finale, Sibelius, MuseScore).

Consider a bulleted list of skills:

- Advanced sight-reading (score and lead sheets)
- Transposition and arranging for small ensembles
- Proficient in Logic Pro X, Pro Tools, and Ableton Live
- Fluent in music theory and harmony
- Languages: English (native), French (conversational)

8. Awards, Competitions, and Grants

Honors and recognitions separate you from other musicians. List any competitive awards, scholarships, or grants you have received. Include the awarding body and year.

- First Prize — International Young Pianist Competition (2022)
- Artist Grant — National Endowment for the Arts (2021)
- Featured Artist — "Rising Stars" series, Lincoln Center (2023)

9. Professional Affiliations

Being a member of recognized organizations shows commitment and credibility. Common memberships include the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI), or a specific teacher's association (MTNA). Also list any orchestral or ensemble memberships you hold.

Formatting Tips for a Music Resume

Keep It One Page (Unless Necessary)

Most music resumes should fit on one side of a page, especially for performers. Educators and composers with extensive experience may require two pages, but be ruthless about relevance. Every line should serve a purpose.

Use Clean, Readable Fonts

Stick with classic fonts like Times New Roman, Garamond, Arial, or Helvetica. Font size should be 10–12 points for body text. Your name can be slightly larger (14–16 points) and bold. Avoid overly decorative fonts that distract from content.

Organize with Clear Headings

Use bold headings for each section. Maintain consistent spacing. Use bullet points for lists—they are easy to scan. Avoid dense paragraphs. Remember, a hiring manager might spend only 10–15 seconds scanning your resume initially.

Tailor Your Resume for Each Opportunity

No two music jobs are identical. If you are applying for a teaching role, emphasize pedagogy and curriculum development. For a symphony audition, highlight orchestral playing and principal chairs. For a session gig, underscore your recording experience and versatility. Research the specific venue or organization to understand what they value most.

Include a Repertoire Appendix (Optional)

For classical auditions or college applications, you can attach a separate page of repertoire you have mastered. However, this is often submitted as a supplemental document rather than part of the main resume. Use

discretion based on the application instructions.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Overloading with jargon: While technical terms show knowledge, too many can confuse a non-musician reader (e.g., a venue booker). Strike a balance.
- Listing every gig: Quality over quantity. A regular gig at a coffee shop is fine, but you don't need to list 30 similar small performances. Instead, group them as "Regular engagements at [Venue]."
- Ignoring proofreading: A typo in your contact information or a misspelled piece title can cost you an opportunity. Read your resume aloud and ask a colleague to review it.
- Using an unprofessional email: Avoid "coolguitarist@..." Your email should be simple: firstname.lastname@provider.com.
- Being too vague: "Performed at many venues" is weak. Instead, say "Performed over 50 shows at venues including The Blue Note and Joe's Pub."

How to Write a Music Resume for Specific Contexts

For a College or Conservatory Application

Admissions committees want to see your dedication and growth. Highlight private study, masterclass participation, summer programs, and any leadership roles (e.g., principal chair in a youth orchestra). Include your GPA only if it is strong. Also list any community outreach or volunteer performances, as these show character.

For a Gigging Musician (Band or Freelance)

Focus on your stage presence, adaptability, and reliability. List notable venues, festivals, and notable collaborations. Include a link to a video reel. Emphasize your gear list and ability to travel. If you have original music, mention streaming numbers or press coverage.

For a Music Instructor or Professor

Emphasize your teaching philosophy, student success stories, curriculum development, and continuing education workshops. Include any publications (method books, articles) or presentations at music education conferences. Memberships in organizations like NAfME are valuable.

For a Composer or Arranger

Your resume should highlight commissions, premieres, and recordings of your works. List the ensembles that have performed your pieces. Include links to scores or recordings. Mention any awards from ASCAP, BMI, or other bodies. Also note your proficiency in notation software and digital audio workstations.

The Importance of Keywords in a Music Resume

Many organizations use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to screen resumes. While music industry hiring is often more personal, some larger institutions (orchestras, universities) do use software. Study the job description carefully and mirror its language. For example, if the posting says "requires strong sight-reading skills," include that exact phrase in your skills section. Keywords such as "collaborative," "rehearsal technique," "stage presence," "music history," and "educator" can increase your chances of passing automated filters.

Conclusion

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