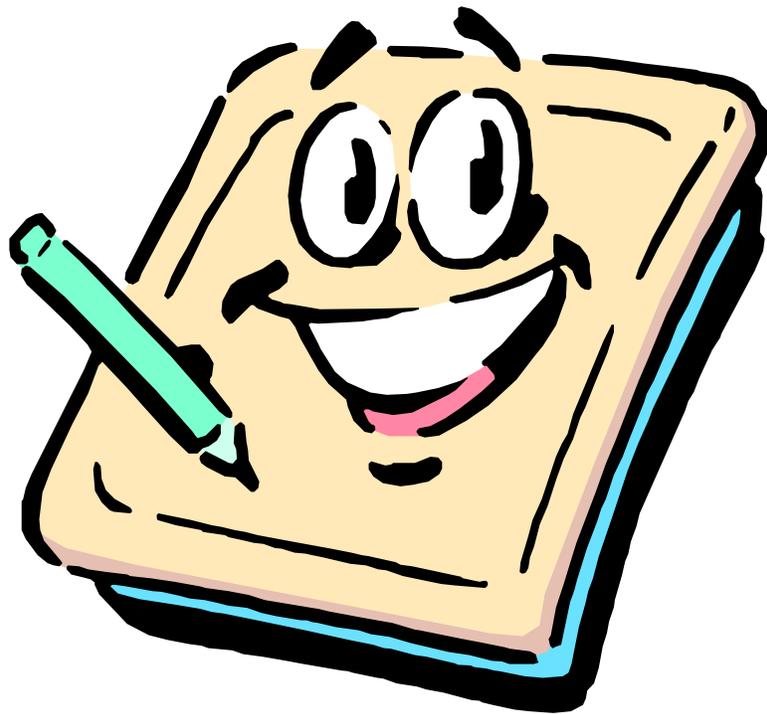


A Guide to Writing Your Resume



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A great resume is your marketing tool. It's your personal advertisement for success. It tells the potential employer how they will benefit from buying the product. So, the stated benefits must be clear, concise, easy to read, and enticing enough to get you the interview.

Businesses receive hundreds of resumes. This guide is intended to help you get them to read yours. Excellent candidates are often overlooked or simply not called for an interview because of poorly written or carelessly structured resumes. Use this to your advantage and get invited to interviews more often than folks that may be more qualified than you.

A resume doesn't have to follow strict rules. It's your way of communicating with someone about you. If you're applying for a job, it's your way of telling the potential employer how you will help their organization. Mostly, a resume is intended to open the door, so that you can get interviewed. This guide will help you achieve that goal. And, speaking of goals...

If you haven't yet written down your goals and objectives, do so first. This will help you in a number of ways. For starters, it'll help you decide what type of job you'll need to get you started or to further your current career. You may even find out that some additional training may be needed. You may even be able to get additional related experience with your current employer. Regardless, you need to know your direction. So, write down the goals. Right now would be a great time!

What if I don't know what I want to do? Then, your most likely not ready to write a resume, at least not an effective one. That is, you won't be able to aim your resume at the specific needs of the employer. Consequently, it won't be convincing. Then, if you're lucky, you resume will be the 10 to 20 seconds they usually get. That's about it! So, you need to know what you want to do or at least how the position will help you. Keep in mind that the position may be a stepping-stone, so analyze how it will help you either in a specific career or to get general experience in an area that interests you. In any case you need to consider questions such as:

- What main qualifications is the employer looking for?**
- Which are my greatest strengths? What makes me stand out?**
- What highlights of my career do I emphasize for this particular position?**
- What might impress them or folks in this industry?**
- What are my best/strongest skills? Expertise? Knowledge? Experience?**
- What are other skills do I possess?**
- Are they industry buzzwords that I should include? (don't overdo it)**
- What are my strongest characteristics? (Innovative, hard-working, etc.)**
- What are my greatest accomplishments? (quantify them, if possible)**
- What main or key skills were used in each of my previous jobs (or school)?**
- What did I do in each of the skill areas and the results?**

If you're not sure what to include, do some research. Ask successful friends or other working in the same job or industry. Any information obtained will be used in the first part of your resume. The first is the one most people omit. It's your advertisement. It's where you make re assertions or brag about your abilities, qualities and achievements. It's one of the few times that this is not only socially acceptable it's necessary. This is extremely important because you absolutely must get their attention immediately. You're somebody special! Let them know it!

The second part is necessary and the part most people think is the entire resume. It's where you provide the backup of your assertions with specific evidence about what you've done. It's where you describe jobs you've had, your education, the historical you. Let's go through the various parts of the resume.

OBJECTIVE

Start with an objective. This can be a completely separate item or included in a summary statement. If you're just starting out in the job market or are changing to a new field, you may want to have a separate section. The objective is where you start connecting yourself directly to the position available. It must convey that you are clear on your direction. For example:

As owner of a computer games company, you place an ad in the paper a salesperson and receive 600 resumes. The applicants have diverse backgrounds and you are completely confused. Then, you come across one with the following objective:

"OBJECTIVE - a computer games sales position where an extraordinary record of generating new accounts, exceeding sales targets and enthusiastic customer relations are needed."

You have just located someone who wants exactly the job you've advertised to fill. This is a great start, because this candidate would be happy filling the position. Also, you now know something about the person and why they would be great for the job.

If you're applying for five different jobs, write five different resumes. Tailor them with different emphasis. You're not lying you're simply highlighting your experience as it applies to each job. You should have a unique objective for each resume. Students just getting started should emphasize their direction, rather than where they have been.

SUMMARY or SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

This section should include several concise statements focusing attention on the most important qualities, achievements and abilities you have to offer. These are the reasons you should be hired instead of the other candidates. Entice them to keep reading. Don't be afraid to brag. They may not read any further, so make sure to get in all your greatest characteristics, such as self-starter, natural salesperson, exceptional interpersonal skills, extremely energetic, etc.

Get started by reviewing your answers to the questions you previously asked yourself. Review the qualities the employer will care about the most. Don't include everything. Highlight the best ones. Like this:

- Brief phrases that describes your profession or field
- Follow it by a statement of broad or specialized expertise
- Next include two or three additional statements related to:
 - Breadth or depth of skills, and/or
 - Unique mix of skills. and/or
 - Range of environments in which you have experience, and/or
 - A special or well-documented accomplishment and/or
 - History of awards, promotions, or superior performance commendations and/or
- One or more professional or appropriate personal characteristics
- A sentence describing professional objective or interest (can be a reiteration of the objective).

Summary Examples

Highly motivated, creative and versatile real estate executive with seven years of experience in property acquisition, development and construction, as well as the management of large

apartment complexes. Especially skilled at building effective, productive working relationships with clients and staff. Excellent management, negotiation and public relations skills. Seeking a challenging management position in the real estate field that offers extensive contact with the public.

Over 10 years as an organizational catalyst/training design consultant with a track record of producing extraordinary results for more than 20 national and community based organizations. A commitment to human development and community service. Energetic self-starter with excellent analytical, organizational, and creative skills.

Financial Management Executive with nearly ten years of experience in banking and international trade, finance, investments and economic policy. Innovative in structuring credit enhancement for corporate and municipal financing. Skilled negotiator with strong management, sales and marketing background. Areas of expertise include (a bulleted list would follow this paragraph.)

Health Care Professional experienced in management, program development and policy making in the United States as well as in several developing countries. Expertise in emergency medical services. A talent for analyzing problems, developing and simplifying procedures, and finding innovative solutions. Proven ability to motivate and work effectively with persons from other cultures and all walks of life. Skilled in working within a foreign environment with limited resources.

Commander - Chief Executive Officer of the US Navy, Atlantic Fleet. Expertise in all areas of management, with a proven record of unprecedented accomplishment. History of the highest naval awards and rapid promotion. Proven senior-level experience in executive decision-making, policy direction, strategic business planning, Congressional relations, financial and personnel management, research and development, and aerospace engineering. Extensive knowledge of government military requirements in systems and equipment. Committed to the highest levels of professional and personal excellence.

Performing artist with a rich baritone voice and unusual range, specializing in classical, spiritual, gospel and rap music. Featured soloist for two nationally televised events. Accomplished pianist. Extensive performance experience includes television, concert tours and club acts. Available for commercial recording and live performances.

SKILLS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This section is the same as the summary section, but contains more detail. The summary highlighted your credentials. Now you complete the story. Tell them what results you produced and what you are especially gifted or experienced at doing.

You may combine this section with the summary or it may be separate. For example, in a chronological resume it's the first few phrases of descriptions for the various jobs held. When it is separate, it can have several possible titles, depending on the situation:

"Skills and Accomplishments" "Accomplishments" "Summary of Accomplishments" "Selected accomplishments" "Recent accomplishments" "Areas of Accomplishment and Experience" "Areas of Expertise" "Career Highlights" "Professional Highlights" "Additional Skills and Accomplishments"

There are several ways to structure a "Skills and Accomplishments" section. Regardless, place your skills and accomplishments in order of importance aimed towards the desired career goal. If you have many skills, place "Additional Skills" last.

Examples:

SELECTED SKILLS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Raised \$1900 in 21 days in canvassing and advocacy on environmental, health and consumer issues.
- Conducted legal research for four Assistant US Attorneys, for the US Attorney's office
- Coordinated Board of Directors and Community Advisory Board of community mental health center. Later commended as "the best thing that ever happened to that job."

SELECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

National Training Project / Conference Management.

Director of "Outreach on Hunger", a national public education/training project funded by USAID, foundations and all the major church denominations - Designed, managed and promoted 3-day training conferences in cities throughout the US - Planned and managed 32 nationwide training seminars and a 5-day annual conference for university vice-presidents and business executives.

Program Design: Universities.

Invited by Duke University President Terry Sanford to develop new directions and programs for the University's Office of Summer Educational Programs, first Director of Duke's "Pre-college Program", first editor of "Summer at Duke". Designed and successfully proposed a center for the study of creativity at George Washington University.

Director of Sales and Marketing

DELAWARE TRADE INTERNATIONAL, INC. Wilmington, DE

- Promoted from Sales Representative within one year of joining company to Director of Sales and Marketing. Responsible for international sales of raw materials, as well as printing and graphic arts equipment. Oversaw five sales managers. Was in charge of direct sales and marketing in 17 countries throughout Europe and the Middle East.
- Recruited, trained and managed sales staff. Developed marketing strategy, prepared sales projections and established quotas. Selected and contracted with overseas sub-agents to achieve international market penetration.
- Negotiated and finalized long-term contractual agreements with suppliers on behalf of clients. Oversaw all aspects of transactions, including letters of credit, international financing, preparation of import/export documentation, and shipping/freight forwarding.
- Planned and administered sales and marketing budget, and maintained sole profit/loss responsibility. Within first year, doubled company's revenues, and produced \$7-9 million in annual sales during the next eight years.

EXPERIENCE

First, decide which is more impressive your job titles or the names of the companies where you've worked. Use the more impressive first in each of your descriptions. Whichever you choose to go first, do it consistently. The jobs should be listed in reverse chronological order.

Focus on the most recent jobs. The older a job the less you should go into detail about it. You may be able to include a number of older jobs in a summary paragraph.

Dates should be in italics and placed at the end of the job title to de-emphasize them. Keep dates in years, unless you worked a really good job for less than a year. Definitely include any military service, internships, and/or major volunteer jobs if they provided relevant experience. The section is "Experience" even if you weren't paid for it.

Use a different heading if you'd like, but use one that conveys a higher level such as "Professional History" or "Professional Experience." Avoid titles like "Employment" or "Work History" because they sound like lower level positions. Avoid them even if your experience was lower level. Remember, you're selling yourself.

EDUCATION

Education is listed reverse chronological order. Degrees or licenses first, followed by certificates and advanced training. Degrees should be set apart so they stand out. Boldface whatever is the most impressive. Include majors and awards. If you are still in college or recently graduated, you may include your grade point average, but only if it's 3.5 or higher. List specific a course if it will help convince the reader of your qualifications for the specific job. Include advanced training, but be selective with the information, summarizing the information and including only what will be impressive for the reader.

If you're still working on a degree, include it with the expected completion date in parenthesis (expected 2001). If you didn't finish college, start with a phrase describing the field studied, the school, and then the dates (the fact that there was no degree may be missed). Other headings might be "Education and Training", "Education and Licenses", "Legal Education / Undergraduate Education" (for attorneys).

OTHER POSSIBLE SECTIONS

AWARDS – (school awards go with Education). Mention what it was for or just "for outstanding accomplishment" or "outstanding performance." This section is essential, if you have received awards. If the commendations or praise are from very senior sources, call this section, "Awards and Commendations." Name and quote the source.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS – If current, relevant and impressive. Include leadership roles if appropriate. Can be combined with "Civic / Community Leadership" as "Professional and Community Memberships".

CIVIC / COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP - Include if related to the target job and show skills acquired. For example: a loan officer hoping to become a financial investment counselor who was Financial Manager of a community organization charged with investing its funds. Any Board of Directors membership or "chairmanship" is good to include. Generally avoid political affiliations.

PUBLICATIONS - Include only if published. Summarize if there are many.

COMMENTS FROM SUPERVISORS - Include only if very exceptional. Heavily edit for key phrases.

PERSONAL INTERESTS - Can indicate a skill or area of knowledge related to the goal, such as photography for someone in public relations. Can show well roundedness, good physical health,

or knowledge of a subject related to the goal. Can create common ground or spark conversation in an interview. Can be a disadvantage if the wrong things are included or if irrelevant to the job goal and resume purpose, such as "TV and Reading" or "Fund raising for the Hell's Angels". Do not include a personal interests section unless it would powerfully move the employer to understand why you would be the best candidate. May also be called "Interests and Hobbies", or just "Interests."

REFERENCES – Do not include references. It is assumed that you will provide if requested.

MAKE THE RESUME LOOK GOOD

Visually appealing. Simple, clean structure and easy to read. Symmetrical, balanced and un-crowded. As much white space between sections of writing as possible; sections of writing which are no longer than six lines, and shorter if possible. Maximum use of italics, capital letters, bullets, boldface, and underlining, with uniformity and consistency. Absolute parallelism in design decisions, for example: if a period is at the end of job dates, a period should be at the end of all job dates; if a degree is in boldface, all degrees should be in boldface.

Absolutely NO errors: typographical, spelling, grammar, syntax, or punctuation errors. No errors of fact.

All basic, expected information. Must have: your name, address, and phone number at the top of the first page. A listing of all jobs held since beginning your career, in reverse chronological order, educational degrees including the highest degree received, in reverse chronological order.

Jobs listed should include a title, the name of the firm, the city and state of the firm, and the years. Summarize earlier jobs and extra part-time jobs can be omitted. If no degrees have been completed, include some education (professional study or training, partial study toward a degree, etc.) acquired after high school.

It is targeted. A resume should be targeted to your goal - to the ideal next step in your career. Be clear on your job goal and what the ideal position or positions would be. Then, figure out what key skills, areas of expertise or knowledge, or body of experience the employer will be looking for. Gear the resume structure and inclusions around this target, proving these key qualifications. If you have no clear goal, take the skills (or knowledge) you most enjoy or would like to use or develop in your next career step and build the resume around these.

Strengths are highlighted / weaknesses de-emphasized. Focus on whatever is strongest and most impressive. Make careful and strategic choices as to how to organize, order, and convey your skills and background. Consider: whether to include the information at all, placement in overall structure of the resume, location on the page itself or within a section, ordering of information, more impressive ways of phrasing the information, use of design elements (such as boldface to highlight, italics to minimize, ample surrounding space to draw the eye to certain things).

An initial focus. A resume needs an initial focus created to help the reader. The reader will not want to read through every word in order to figure out what your profession is, and what you can do. Think of the resume as an essay with a title and a summative opening sentence. An initial focus may be as simple as the name of your profession ("Internet Website Designer") centered under the name and address; it may be in the form of an objective or a summary statement or, better, a summary statement beginning with a phrase identifying your profession.

Liberal use of power words. For every skill, accomplishment, or job described, use the most active impressive and accurate verbs you can. Begin sentences with verbs, except to vary the sentence structure to avoid repetition.

Results-oriented. Wherever possible, prove that you have the desired qualifications through clear strong statement of accomplishments, rather than a statement of potentials, talents, or responsibilities. Indicate results of work done, and quantify these accomplishments, whenever appropriate. For example: "Initiated and directed complete automation of the Personnel Department, resulting in time-cost savings of over 25%." Additionally, preface skill and experience statements with the adjectives "proven" and "demonstrated" to create this results-orientation.

Writing that is concise and to the point. Keep sentences as short and direct as possible. Eliminate any extraneous information and repetition. Don't use three examples when one will suffice. Say things directly, rather than trying to impress with bigger words or more complex sentences. For example: "coordinated eight city-wide fund raising events, raising 250% more than expected goal" rather than "was involved in the coordination of six fund raising dinners and two fund raising walkathons which attracted participants throughout St. Louis and were so extremely successful that they raised \$5,000 (well beyond the \$2,000 goal)".

Vary long sentences (if these are really necessary) with short punchy sentences. Use phrases rather than full sentences when phrases are possible, and start sentences with verbs, eliminating pronouns ("I", "he" or "she"). Vary words - don't repeat a verb or adjective twice in the same writing "block" or paragraph. Use commas liberally, to clarify meaning and make reading easier. Be consistent in writing such as use of abbreviations and capitalization.

Production. Use a laser printer or one that produces high quality results. It should look typeset. Do not compromise. Do not use a dot matrix printer, unless you are applying for a burger-flipping job. Use a standard conservative typeface (font) in 10 or 11 point. Produced to the sharpest printing quality - no faded or broken letters; Off-white / cream or bright white 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper, in the highest quality affordable. If you are applying for a senior-level position, use Crane's paper. An absolutely clean paper - no smudges. No staples. Generous border. Don't have your resume look like you squeezed too much on the page.

Length. Your resume can be 500 pages long if you can keep the readers undivided attention and interest that long, and at the same time create an excitement that gets the prospective employer to call you. Don't blindly follow rules! Do what works. Sometimes it is appropriate to have three pages. But, unless your life has been filled with a wide assortment of extraordinary achievements, make it shorter. One page is best, if you can cram it all into one page. Most Fortune 500 C.E.O.s have a one or two page resume. It could be said that, the larger your accomplishments, the easier to communicate them in few words. Look to others in your profession to see if there is an established agreement about resume length in your field. The only useful rule is to not write one more word than you need to get them to pick up the phone and call you. Don't bore them with the details. Leave them wanting more.

Length of consulting resumes. Make it sizzle like any other resume, but include a more detail, such as a list of well-known clients, powerful quotes from former clients about how fantastic you are, etc. If seeking a job with a consulting firm that will package you along with others as part of a proposal, include everything except the name of your goldfish. A full list of publications, skills, assignments, other experience, and every bit of educational stuff as you can manage to make sound like it has something to do with your work. The philosophy here is: more is better.

Verb person and tense. Use either the first or the third person verb tense. Be consistent. Verb tenses are varied and based on accurate reporting; If the accomplishment is completed it should

be past tense. If the task is still underway, it should be present tense. If the skill is something that has been used and will continue to be used, use present tense ("conduct presentations on member recruitment to professional and trade associations"). A way of "smoothing out" transitions is to use the past continuous ("have conducted over 20 presentations...").

No lengthy blocks of writing. Rule-of-thumb is to no more than 6 lines of writing in any writing "block" or paragraph (summary, skill section, accomplishment statement, job description, etc.).

Ordering of experience and education sections. Experience sections come first, before education, in most every case. This is because you have more qualifications developed from your experience than from your education. Exceptions: 1) if you just received or are completing a degree in a new professional field, if this new degree study proves stronger qualifications than your work experience, 2) lawyers, who have the professional tradition of listing their law degrees first, 3) a traditional undergraduate student, or 4) someone who has just completed a particularly impressive degree from a particularly impressive school, even if they are staying in the same field.

Telephone numbers. Be sure the telephone will be answered. Include the area code of the telephone number. If you don't have an answering machine, get one. Include e-mail and fax numbers, if you have them.

GENERAL TIPS

Put most important information on the first line of a writing "block" or paragraph - the first line is read most.

Use bold caps for the name on page one. Put your name at the top of page two, on a two-page resume. Put section headings, skill headings, titles or companies (if impressive), degrees, and school name (if impressive), in boldface.

Spell out numbers under and including 10; use numerical form for numbers over and including 11 (as a general rule). Spell out abbreviations unless they are unquestionably obvious. If in doubt, spell it out.

RESUME DONTs – DO NOT INCLUDE

- Controversial subjects, such as politics
- The word "Resume" at the top of the resume
- Fluffy rambling "objective" statements
- Salary information
- Full addresses and zip codes of former employers or Reasons for leaving jobs
- A "Personal" section, or personal statistics (except in special cases)
- Names of supervisors or References

BASIC RESUME FORMATS

There are three basic types of resumes: Chronological, Functional, and "combined" Chronological - Functional. To see what these styles look like, get a resume book. They are usually terrible guides for how to write an excellent resume, but they are good to see different formats. We would love to show you what complete resumes look like but your web browser would probably do unspeakable things to the formatting.

CHRONOLOGICAL

The chronological resume is the more traditional structure for a resume. The Experience section is the focus of the resume; each job (or the last several jobs) is described in some detail and there is no major section of skills or accomplishments at the beginning of the resume. This structure is primarily used when you are staying in the same profession, in the same type of work, particularly in very conservative fields. It is also used in certain fields such as law and academia. It is recommended that the chronological resume always have an objective or summary, to focus the reader.

The advantages: May appeal to older more traditional readers and be best in very conservative fields. Makes it easier to understand what you did in what job. May help the name of the employer stand out more, if this is impressive. The disadvantage is that it is much more difficult to highlight what you do best. This format is rarely appropriate for someone making a career change.

FUNCTIONAL

The functional resume highlights your major skills and accomplishments from the very beginning. It helps the reader see clearly what you can do for them, rather than having to read through the job descriptions to find out. It helps target the resume into a new direction or field, by lifting up from all past jobs the key skills and qualifications to help prove you will be successful in this new direction or field. Actual company names and positions are in a subordinate position, with no description under each. There are many different types of formats for functional resumes. The functional resume is a must for career changers, but is very appropriate for generalists, for those with spotty or divergent careers, for those with a wide range of skills in their given profession, for students, for military officers, for returning homemakers, and for those who want to make slight shifts in their career direction.

Advantages: It will help you most in reaching for a new goal or direction. It is a very effective type of resume, and is highly recommended. The disadvantages are that it is hard to know what the client did in which job, which may be a negative to some conservative interviewers.

COMBINED

A combined resume includes elements of both the chronological and functional formats. It may be a shorter chronology of job descriptions preceded by a short "Skills and Accomplishments" section (or with a longer Summary including a skills list or a list of "qualifications"); or, it may be a standard functional resume with the accomplishments under headings of different jobs held.

There are obvious advantages to this combined approach. It maximizes the advantages of both kinds of resumes, avoiding potential "turn-off" of either type. One disadvantage is that they tend to be longer resumes. Another is that they can tend to be repetitious - accomplishments and skills may have to be repeated in both the "functional" section and the "chronological" job descriptions.

GUIDELINE PRIMARY SOURCE: Samples & some excerpts from "The Pathfinder: How To Choose or Change Your Career for a Lifetime of Satisfaction and Success" published by Simon & Schuster.