

Effective Resumes

Your resume should be brief and concise – a long, wordy resume will put off someone who is already short on time. The purpose of your resume is to summarise your experience, knowledge and accomplishments and it should be no longer than three pages. Try to tell the employer exactly what you mean using the least possible amount of words.

Content of resume

Contact Details

Your name, address, telephone, and email address should all go at the top of your resume.

- Choose an email address that sounds professional.
- Do not mention personal characteristics such as age, height, and marital status.

Objective or Summary

An objective simply tells employers the type of work you want and should be kept short.

- Be specific about the job you want. For example: to obtain an entry-level position within a financial institution requiring strong analytical and organisational skills.
- Tailor your objective to each employer you target and every job you apply for.

Education

New graduates without a lot of work experience should list their educational information first. Alumni can list it after the work experience section.

- Your most recent educational information should be listed first.
- Include your degree, major, institution attended and minor/concentration.
- Mention academic honours.

Work Experience

Briefly give the employer an overview of work experience that has taught you skills. Include your work experience in reverse chronological order. Make the most of your experience – potential employers need to know what you have accomplished to have an idea of what you can do for them. You should include:

- Title of position.
- Name of organisation.
- Location of work.
- Dates of employment.
- A description of your work responsibilities with emphasis on specific skills and achievements.

Don't be vague in your explanations – describe tasks/responsibilities that can be measured objectively. Employers will feel more comfortable hiring you if they can verify your accomplishments. It is also important to be honest. A falsified resume is easily spotted by an employer, if not immediately then during the interview process.

Other Information

You may want to add extra information at this point, such as key skills or competencies, leadership experience, volunteer work or participation in sporting activities or hobbies.

Referees

Always ask people if they are willing to act as a referee for you before you give their name to a potential employer. Do not include your reference information on your resume, but note on the bottom of your resume “referees available on request.”

Tips for creating an excellent resume

Preparation

Before you begin writing your resume, take time to do a self-assessment on paper. Outline your skills and abilities as well as your work experience history. This will make it easier for you to prepare a comprehensive and detailed resume.

Use of Language

Your use of language is extremely important as you need to sell yourself to an employer quickly and efficiently. Address your employer's needs with a clearly written, compelling resume.

- Use words or phrases that highlight your intelligence, however don't get carried away with flowery words that you would not normally use.
- Don't use boring, dead statements, but try to use strong active verbs such as achieved, administered, analysed, assisted, constructed, demonstrated, designed, developed, established, implemented, improved, managed, marketed, minimised, supervised etc.
- Avoid large paragraphs (over six or seven lines) as employers often scan resumes and small, digestible pieces of information stand a better chance of actually being read.
- Don't use declarative sentences such as "I developed the.." or "I assisted the.."; leave out the "I".
- Avoid passive sentence constructions, such as "was responsible for managing." It is not only more efficient to say "managed," it is stronger and more active.

Recognise your target

Emphasise what you can do for an employer and be specific. If you are applying for more than one job opening, customise your resume accordingly and tailor your resume to specific positions. Through your covering letter, try to convey that you have researched the company and can connect that research with your experience, skills or knowledge.

General Qualities/Skills Employers are looking for

According to various surveys, employers are impressed by candidates who have excellent communication skills, good grooming habits and relevant work experience. They want trustworthy new employees who can move right in, get along with their co-workers and get the job done without having to be babied at each step.

Appearance and design of your resume

Your resume is the first impression you will make on a potential employer, and the overall appearance is very important. You want your resume to stand out, but it should still be conservative and professional. Try to make your resume as aesthetically pleasing as possible using the following techniques:

- Use a font size of 10-12 points for body text and 12-14 points for headlines.
- Use non-decorative typefaces.
- Choose one typeface and stick to it.
- Avoid italics, script and underlined words.
- Your resume should not be too fancy so avoid wild colours, graphics, lines or shading.
- Pay attention to letter spacing, how each section is arranged and overall appearance.
- Make sure all columns are aligned correctly.
- Do not overcrowd your resume and make good use of white space.
- Use normal margins (1" on top and bottom, 1.25" on the sides) and don't cram text onto the page.
- Make sure there are no spelling or grammatical errors.
- Use white or off-white A4 size non-textured, fine-grained paper. Textured or dark coloured paper does not photocopy well.
- Print on one side of the paper.
- Do not fold or staple your resume, and if mailing put it in a large envelope.
- If you need to copy your resume, make sure your copies are clean and clear. Poor quality copying can ruin the best looking resume.

Check your resume carefully before submitting

After carefully writing and designing your resume it is time to have it reviewed and critiqued by a friend or relative. Your chances of getting a job can be ruined by submitting a resume filled with easily preventable mistakes. Take the following steps to ensure quality:

- Run a spell check on your computer before anyone sees your resume.
 - Get a friend to do a spelling and grammar review.
 - Ask another friend to proofread again. The more people who see your resume, the more likely that misspelled words and awkward phrases will be seen and corrected.
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