

## HOW TO WRITE A BETTER RESUME

*You have less than twenty seconds to sell your resume to a prospective employer!*

Millions of resumes, submitted daily, have the same purpose: obtain an interview from a prospective employer and land a job. Your resume is a marketing tool – your personal advertisement. It's a sales brochure, not an autobiography. *Your* resume will be distinguished by its content and format.

### Paper

- The feel of your resume in the prospective employer's hand conveys one of the first messages about you. Choose high-quality paper, resume stock, linen, or bond. White or off-white paper is easier to read and makes better photocopies than colored paper. Use the same paper for your cover letter and reference page for a unified, consistent look.

### Formatting and Punctuation

- Maintain consistency in formatting and punctuation. Eliminating all spelling or grammatical errors demonstrates attention to detail – an important trait for any job.
- Keep it short and simple.
- Changing fonts within your document or using too many different styles or sizes is distracting. Pick one or two fonts or sizes.
- Use bullet points to highlight individual items on your resume. This makes it easier to read and more visually inviting.
- Leave plenty of white space – blank areas separating blocks of information. Leave two to three blank lines between sections. Set margins at one inch on all four sides.
- Use **bold**, *italics*, CAPITALIZATION and underlining to highlight facts (such as section headers or company names), but use them sparingly. Underlined text can blur after a document has been faxed or photocopied so **bold** is usually a safer choice. Keep it professional and conservative.
- Use the TAB key to indent the lines on your resume. This helps when sending your resume via email. The content of your resume will not line up properly if you use the space bar.

### Resume Language

- Make your sentences positive, brief and accurate. Avoid being redundant.
- Cut out unnecessary phrases and words. You do not need to write in complete sentences.
- Never use personal pronouns 'I,' 'me,' or 'my.'
- Omit 'a,' 'an,' and 'the.' Avoid phrases like 'responsible for,' or 'responsibilities included.'

### Resume Sections

Arrange the sections of your resume to support the objective or position you're applying for. Think about your strongest qualifications and make certain they appear in the top half of your resume. Include only those qualities that relate to the job you are seeking. Demonstrate you are qualified for that position. *RESUMES ARE MADE TO BE CHANGED!*

- **Contact Information or Heading.** This is one of the most important elements of a resume. Include name (which should stand out above all else), address, phone number and email address.
- **Objective.** If you have a clear idea of the kind of position you want, an objective is probably a good idea. Compose a short sentence or phrase describing the type of position you are pursuing. (Seeking a part-time position in ...) Make sure the rest of your resume supports your objective. If you want to keep your options open, leave the objective off and address your interests in your cover letter.

*Other titles for this section:* Career Goal, Career Objective, Job Target.

- **Summary of Qualifications or Skills.** The goal of this brief listing is to highlight your strongest selling points relating to the job you want. Think of it as a marketing brochure or an advertisement. The idea is to sell yourself. You can use several sentences in paragraph format, or provide a list using bullet points. Use statements that are targeted to your objective.  
*What to include:* a phrase that gives an overview of your experience; a summary of your credentials; an award or distinction you have received; a description of your skills.

*Other titles for this section:* Profile, Qualifications, Highlights of Qualifications, Expertise, Strengths, Summary of Qualifications, Professional Background, Executive Summary, Professional Overview, Skills, Summary of Skills, Skills & Qualifications.

## **Resume Sections, continued**

- **Education.** The education section of your resume should include degrees, continuing education, professional development, seminars, workshops and self-study.

High school education and activities on a resume are appropriate if you are under 20 and have no education or training beyond high school. Drop all high school information once you enter college.

If you are a recent college graduate, place your education at the top of your resume. As you gain more experience, education moves to the bottom.

How you list your school and degree can make a difference in how the reader perceives the importance of each item. If the name of the university is prestigious, list it first. If the degree is more important, list it first. Prioritize your degrees in order of importance. If you graduated with a degree, list only the year you graduated (2004). If you did not complete a degree but have some college study, list the degree with an explanation that you have a certain number of credits left to finish, or classify the section as "Undergraduate Studies." List years attended, (1996-1999). List your GPA if you have 3.5 or above.

Participation in continuing education or professional development show you care about lifelong learning and self-development. Relevant is the keyword here. Always look at your resume from the perspective of a potential employer. Don't waste space by listing training not directly related to your target job.

*Other titles for this section:* Credentials, Professional Development, Continuing Education, or Training.

- **Work Experience.** Your resume is a marketing brochure, a sales tool to get you a phone call or an interview. Focus on presenting yourself as the ideal candidate. Describe your accomplishments at each job – what you achieved, not what you were responsible for.

List the names of the companies you've worked for, your job title, your dates of employment (list years, not months), and the location of the company (city & state). If your job title is more impressive than where you worked, then list it first. List information in the same order for each job.

You can use bullet points or sentences in a paragraph format, but focus on three to five main accomplishments relating to your career goal. Highlighting several accomplishments well is more effective than risking information overload. Make your sentences positive, brief, and accurate.

Use action verbs at the beginning of each sentence (compiled, demonstrated, developed, filed, researched, organized, greeted, supported, troubleshooter, typed, set up, planned, etc.) to make them more powerful. Combine related items to avoid short, choppy phrases.

Use keywords, nouns, or short phrases to describe experience and education that might be used to find you're resume in a keyword search of an electronic resume database. They reflect the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities required to do your job.

You do not need to list every job you have held; only those that apply to the position you are seeking. By using the words *related work experience* or *relevant experience*, you are telling the reader there is more information but you have intentionally chosen to leave something out because you thought it would be a waste of their time. You can add another section called *work history* where you can list past positions in chronological order, including company names, job titles, and dates employed.

*Other titles for this section:* Experience, Relevant Experience, Professional Experience, Work History, Employment History, Employment Summary, Related Employment, Business Experience, Career History.

- **Optional Sections.** Use only those sections directly related to the position you're applying for. Most resumes use three to five sections. Keep your resume to one page for every ten years of work experience.

*Titles for these sections:* Affiliations & Organizations, Honors & Awards, Publications & Presentations, Accomplishments, Related Accomplishments, Highlights of Accomplishments, Achievements, Volunteer Service, Ecclesiastical Service, Community Service.

- **References.** References are not usually presented on a resume. Avoid using, "References available upon request." If they want your references, they'll ask for them. Create a "Reference Page" to take with you to an interview.