RÉSUMÉ GUIDE

THE SECRET TO WRITING A WINNING RÉSUMÉ

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INTRODUCTION

"Begin somewhere. You cannot build a
reputation on what you intend to do."

~ Liz Smith

Writing resumes is a stressful experience for anyone, with so much seeming to hang on the line of one simple piece of paper. Writing a good, professional resume, however, is a fairly easy task, once one puts one's mind to it.

First, you must select the kind of resume to use. There are a number of options. For the purpose of this article, we will focus on three: the chronological, the functional, and the combination resumes. The chronological resume's main body is composed of a list of jobs and experience going reverse chronological, with your most recent job first. This kind of resume is often the preferred for those hiring, and is best suited for workers with long, steady, and related job histories. For those with a more off-and-on work past or those changing careers, the functional resume is often the better choice, focusing in on a list of relevant skills and experience rather than actual job history. For the most versatility and coverage of all options, the combination resume uses both job history and skill and experience to make its point.

There are a few central sections to build in your professional resume. First, as a header, you need your contact information: full name, house address, home and cell phone numbers, and e-mail. Following the header should be a basic tagline or headline, a short phrase describing you as a career worker with some specific highlighted skill. After the tagline comes the resume objective. This objective should be as detailed and plainly stated as possible, focusing in on your goals for the job to which you are applying, how this will help you with your professional skills, and, potentially, what position you want to rank at eventually in the future.

Following your objective, it is time for you to fill out your main body, whether it be a listing of skills and experience, a chronological job history, or both together. Be clear, concise, and focused on the skills and keywords that will put you in the best light for the particular position to which you are applying. Use bullet points, action words, and clear numbers with logical and professional abbreviations and symbols. Most of all, highlight your strengths and be positive!

What To Include In a Résumé

A typical chronological resume should have the following sections

1. Contact Details

2. Professional Summary

3. Work Experience

4. Education

5. Publications

6. Skills/Qualifications

7. Certifications/Honors

8. References

Your contact details should be the first and most prominent item on your resume. Your name should be in a large font and it should stand out from all the other text. Along with your name, you should include your current mailing address, your phone number and email address. If you have a personal website or an online portfolio website, you can also include a link to that website.

A professional statement or a career summary provides an insight into what is unique and competitive about you. A professional statement should be concise - either in the form of a short paragraph or a bulleted list. It should discuss how your skills, educational qualifications and experience make you a good fit for the job you are interested in.

List the information about the last one to five jobs that you have held, starting with your current or most recent job to your first job. The listing should include the date range of your employment, name of the companies or person(s) you have worked for, and the city and state where the place of employment is located (full address of employment is not necessary). List your title and your main responsibilities, with emphasis on duties that are applicable to the type of work you are seeking.

List your college, graduate and post-graduate degrees, as well as certifications and courses that you have taken. Your educational qualifications should also be listed in chronological order starting with the most recent qualification.

Include details of any achievements, volunteer positions or publications that may be relevant to your professional work experience.

Note that you should refrain from including personal information in your professional statement. Information such as ethnicity, marital status and religious beliefs should not be included in your professional statement. Also, it is essential that you avoid using generic phrases in your professional statement. Make your statement sound unique and personalized. Refrain from using fluffy statements like "I am well organized and detail oriented".

RÉSUMÉ TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES

Your resume is most important portion of your job application. It is the first document that potential employers see, and if they are not impressed, chances are they won't look at the rest of your job application. A good quality resume could be the deciding factor in your job search success. In such cases, you cannot afford to show potential employers a poorly-formatted and visually unappealing advertisement of your experience and skills.

1. Organize your resume properly

Your resume must be clearly organized. Separate out your resume into sections and list out items in each section in a chronological order.

A typical chronological resume should have the following sections -

• Contact Details

• Professional Summary

• Work experience

• Education

• Publications

• Skills/Qualifications

• Certifications/Honors

• References

2. Use adequate whitespace

Make sure that your resume is legible and appropriately spaced. A resume with a lot of words jammed together is almost impossible to read. Likewise, a resume with lots of empty space and too few words looks flimsy and unimportant. Your goal should be to have an adequate mix of white space and words.

3. Use consistent line spacing

Be consistent in your use of line spacing. It is recommended that you use a double line spacing between headings and the body of text and a single space within sub-headings.

4. Use consistent vertical alignment

When indenting text, make sure that your vertical alignment is consistent. Use either tabs or spaces. Having a mix of tab stops or spaces in different sections can ruin the appearance of a well-written resume.

5. Choose the right keywords

Many companies use a automated resume filtering software that looks for specific keywords in a resume. It is crucial that your resume has the keywords that the HR department is looking for. Read the job description carefully and include the details that the recruiter wants to hear from you.

6.   Use full pages

Make each page a full page. A partial page suggests deficiency and gives an impression that information has spilled over onto the second page. In such a case, try to compress your resume in one page. If the second page has considerable amount of information, try to use the full page.

7.   Use a serif font

Serif fonts (fonts with small line extending from the top and bottom) are much easier to read on a computer screen. Use serif fonts if possible. Here is a list of some common serif fonts -
• Century Schoolbook
• Courier
• Times New Roman
• Times

If possible, refrain from using monospaced fonts like Courier as these fonts are difficult to read.

8. Never use all uppercase letters

Never use all-caps (all uppercase letters) in your resume. It makes your resume almost impossible to read.

9. Use italics and boldfacing to add emphasis

Use italics and boldfacing moderately to make certain sections more evident. Refrain from underlining text as it makes your resume lose some visual clarity.

10. Make your resume clear, concise and to the point.

HR managers spend less than 20 seconds scanning a resume and they might discard your resume if they find it too vague. Make sure that your resume is concise and pertinent. Avoid including irrelevant information. Arrange your information in such a way that the most important points are easily visible.

11. Use effective job titles

Since you get less than 20 seconds to showcase your qualifications and accomplishments to your potential employer, make sure that your titles stand out. Try to make them as descriptive and attention-grabbing as possible.

12. Write a Focussed Profile Section

Include an effective and focussed Profile section. This section should be such that it grabs the readers attention. Use this section to indicate what you hope to do for the company. Using a bulleted list is preferred.

13. Proofread it at least twice

It is hard to overstate the importance of proofreading your resume. Read your resume twice and look out for common spelling mistakes or grammatical errors. Also get help from a friend if possible.

14. Showcase accomplishments instead of responsibilities

In the Experience section, highlight your achievements and accomplishments instead of listing out your duties and responsibilities. Also, whenever possible, present your work experience as challenges or problems solved. A recruiter would already know the responsibilities of the job but would be more interested in what you have done for your previous company.

15. Consider quantifying your achievements

Wherever possible, use numbers to quantify your achievements. Statements like - "Increased the revenue by 20%" add more credibility to your resume.

16. Use Bulleted Lists

No recruiter has the time (and the patience) to read large paragraphs of text describing your work profile. Instead, make use of bulleted list that describe your scholastic accomplishments, your work experiences and objectives in short sentences.

17. Include a professional profile

Including professional goals can help you by giving employers an idea of where you are going, and how you want to arrive there. You don't need to have a special section devoted to your professional objectives, but overall the resume must communicate it. The question of whether or not to highlight your career objectives on the resume is a polemic one among HR managers, so go with your feeling. If you decide to list them, make sure they are not generic.

18. Prioritize your resume content

When ordering your resume sections and the items inside each section, make sure that the important section is presented first. Also prioritize your statements by the order of their importance, relevance and impressiveness.

19. Use appropriate font sizes

Make sure that that your fonts are big enough and are clearly readable. Preferably use 12pt - 14pt font for the body and 24pt - 30pt font for headings.

20. Avoid extraneous information

Information such as ethnicity, marital status and religious beliefs should not be included in your resume. Avoid fluffy statements like - "I am well organized and detail oriented". Also refrain from using statements like "References available upon request.

21. Only include relevant skills

Only include those skills that are relevant to the job you are applying for. Merely stating all your skills will not catch the attention of a recruiter, also make sure to explain how your skills make you a good match for the job.

22. Do not include picture/photo

A potential employer is more interested in your scholastic accomplishments and your work experience than looking at your picture. Avoid attaching a photo/picture with your resume unless the recruiter has specifically asked for it.

23. Customize your resume for each job

The most common mistake made by job seekers is to create one generic resume and send it out to all job openings. Customize your resume for each job application. Make sure that your resume has the keywords that the recruiter is looking for.

24. Only include relevant work experiences

Refrain from listing out unrelated work experiences in your resume. If you are applying for a software developer position then including your part-time job as a car-mechanic does not add any value to your resume.

25. Never lie on your resume

Never, never, NEVER lie on your resume. If you don't have any relevant work experience then include your summer internships or volunteering work; if you don't have a college degree then mention any non-credit courses that you took. Whatever you do, just don't lie on your resume.

26. Get someone else to review your resume

Even if you think you resume is looking kinky, it would be a good idea to get a second and third opinion about it. We usually become blind to our own mistakes or way of reasoning, so another people will be in a good position to evaluate the overall quality of your resume and make appropriate suggestions.

27. Resume length - One or two pages

It is recommended that you try to limit your resume to one page. A shorter resume is generally preferred but don't remove relevant information in order to make your resume shorter. Use as many pages as needed to highlight your accomplishments and qualifications but set the upper limit at three pages.

28. Don't mention your hobbies

Your potential employer is not interested in knowing that you like reading books or that you enjoy watching Dexter. Refrain from including hobbies in your resume.

29. Use action verbs

Action verbs can add emphasis to your resume and can help you catch the attention of a potential employer. Here is a list of some common action verbs:

administered	analyzed	appointed	contacted
conveyed	convinced	standardized	studied
upgraded	utilized	Transcended	Transformed

30. Keep your resume up to date

Ensure that your resume is kept up to date. Keep adding any courses, certifications or volunteering work on a regular basis. This can save you from having to send an obsolete resume to an employer.

31. Don't blindly copy sample resume templates

There are a lot of sample resumes available online. If you are using a sample resume, ensure that you customize and personalize it.

32. No jargon or slang

Your resume should sound professional. Refrain from using slang. As far as technical jargon is concerned, the HR manager or employer who does an initial review of a resume might not be aware of what you are talking about. A recruiter would also not want to spend time researching about the words you that used. For this reason, avoid using tech jargon in your resume.

33. Don't use pronouns

Your resume, by default, talks about you, your qualifications and your achievements. Therefore, pronouns like "I" or "Me" are redundant and should not be used in your resume.

34. Highlight your contact information

Your name should be at the very top of your resume. It should be in a large font and preferably boldfaced. Ensure that your contact details, especially your email address and phone number are correct and clearly listed.

35. Use A Design That Grabs Attention But don't go overboard

It is vital that your resume is well formatted and visually appealing. Large blocks of misaligned text with varied font sizes can ruin your resume. Ensure that your resume is organized into relevant sections and that each section title stand out.

Use some colors (set the limit at two) to add more emphasis but don't go overboard with the design. Refrain from using unreadable fonts and fancy background images.

36. Spend time on your resume, do some research

Crafting a solid resume can be a tedious and time-taking process. Take your time in coming up with a resume. Prepare rough drafts and ask your friends/ colleagues for suggestions.

While checking your drafts, focus on the content as well as the formatting. There are lots of books, websites and tools that provide sample resumes. Use those sample resumes as a starting point for crafting your own resume

37. Know your potential employer.

Before sending in your resume, do a bit of research about the position you are applying for. This will help you assess whether you are qualified for the position or not. Also gather as much information as you can about the company that you want to work for. Read about the employer's (company's) mission, vision statements, goals and approach. Also try to assess the working environment of the company.

38. Use a good printer and good quality paper

If you are sending out a hard copy of your resume, make sure that you use a good quality printer and good quality paper.

39. Mention people you have worked for

If you have had the experience of working with top executives in your industry, mentioning their names in your resume might help you gain some credibility. Apart from mentioning them in your resume, you can also ask them for a reference.

40. Supplement your Education with courses and certifications

Your educational qualifications is a vital part of your resume. However, simply stating the kind of degree that you have achieved is not sufficient. It is recommended that you supplement it with the important courses that you took and how those courses would help you with the job you are applying to.

RÉSUMÉ ACTION VERBS

"Words mean more than what is set down
on paper. It takes the human voice to
infuse them with deeper meaning.

~ Maya Angelou

The words that you use to describe your work history, your skills and qualifications can be the differentiating factor between an impressive and a non-impressive résumé.

Action verbs are words that are inherently eye-catching and can attract more of your potential recruiter's attention. Action verbs can make even the most mundane work experience and accomplishments sound valuable and important.

We have compiled a list of action verbs that can help you make your resume more powerful. Substitute some of the verbs from this list for 'passive' and less powerful words.

Able	Advertised	Arranged	Billed
Accelerated	Advised	Arrested	Blazed
Accentuated	Advocated	Articulated	Blended
Accompanied	Affected	Ascertained	Blocked
Accomplished	Aided	Aspired	Boosted
Accounted for	Alerted	Assembled	Bought
Accumulated	Allocated	Assessed	Bridged
Achieved	Allotted	Assigned	Briefed
Achievement	Amended	Assist	Broadened
Acquired	Amplified	Assisted	Budgeted
Acted	Analysis	Assumed responsibility	Built
Action	Analyzed	Assured	Calculated
Activated	Answered	Attained	Campaigned
Active in	Anticipated	Attended	Canvassed
Adapted	Applied	Attracted	Capitalized
Addressed	Appointed	Audited	Captured
Adjusted	Appraised	Authored	Carried out
Administered	Approved	Automated	Cataloged
Adopted	Arbitrated	Awarded	Catalogued
Advanced	Arraigned	Balanced	Caused

Cautioned	Communicated	Convicted	Deliver
Centralized	Compared	Convinced	Delivered
Certified	Compiled	Cooperated	Demonstrated
Chaired	Completed	Coordinated	Demystified
Challenged	Composed	Corrected	Described
Championed	Computed	Correlated	Design
Changed	Conceived	Corresponded	Designated
Channeled	Conceptualized	Corroborated	Designed
Charted	Condensed	Costed	Detected
Checked	Conduct	Counseled	Determined
Cited	Conducted	Counted	Develop
Clarified	Conferred	Created	Developed
Classified	Conserved	Critiqued	Devised
Closed	Considered	Crowned	Devoted
Co-authored	Consolidated	Cultivated	Diagnosed
Co-directed	Constructed	Cured	Diagramed
Co-managed	Consult	Customized	Directed
Coached	Consulted	Cut	Discovered
Collaborated	Contacted	Dealt with	Discussed
Collected	Contained	Debated	Dispatched
Combined	Contracted	Decided	Dispensed
Commanded	Contributed	Decreased	Displayed
Commended	Controlled	Deducted	Dissected
Commented	Converted	Defined	Distinguished
Committed	Conveyed	Delegated	Distributed

Diversified	Engineered	Facilitate	Functioned as
Documented	Enhance	Facilitated	Furnished
Doubled	Enhanced	Familiarized	Furthered
Drafted	Enlarged	Fashioned	Gained
Drew	Enlisted	Fielded	Gathered
Drove	Ensured	Filed	Gave
Earned	Entertained	Filled	Generated
Economized	Established	Finalized	Graded
Edited	Estimated	Financed	Graduated
Educated	Evaluate	Fine-tuned	Granted
Effected	Evaluated	Finished	Grew
Elected	Examined	Fixed	Guided
Eliminated	Exceeded	Focused	Halved
Emphasized	Executed	Forecast	Handled
Employed	Exhibited	Forecasted	Harmonized
Empowered	Expanded	Forged	Harnessed
Enabled	Expedited	Formalized	Headed
Enacted	Experienced	Formed	Helped
Encourage	Experimented	Formulate	Hired
Encouraged	Explained	Formulated	Hosted
Ended	Explored	Fostered	Hypothesized
Endorsed	Expressed	Found	Identified
Energized	Extended	Founded	Illustrated
Enforced	Extracted	Framed	Imagined
Engaged	Fabricated	Fulfilled	Implemented

Impressed	Invested	Managed	Netted
Improved	Investigated	Mapped	Observed
Improvised	Involved	Marketed	Obtained
Incorporated	Issued	Mastered	Opened
Increased	Joined	Matched	Operated
Indexed	Judged	Maximized	Optimized
Indoctrinated	Justified	Measured	Orchestrated
Influenced	Kept	Mediated	Ordered
Informed	Launched	Mentored	Organized
Initiated	Lead	Merged	Originated
Innovated	Learned	Met	Outlined
Inspected	Leased	Met with	Overhauled
Inspired	Lectured	Minimized	Oversaw
Installed	Led	Mobilized	Participated
Instigated	Liaised	Modeled	Partnered
Instituted	Licensed	Moderated	Perceived
Instructed	Linked	Modernized	Performed
Insured	Listed	Modified	Persuaded
Integrated	Lobbied	Monitored	Photographed
Interacted	Located	Motivated	Piloted
Interpreted	Logged	Moved	Pinpointed
Interviewed	Machined	Named	Pioneered
Introduced	Made	Navigated	Placed
Invented	Magnified	Negated	Planned
Inventoried	Maintained	Negotiated	Played

Plotted	Quantified	Reinforced	Saved
Predicted	Queried	Related	Scheduled
Prepared	Questioned	Remodeled	Screened
Presented	Raised	Rendered	Scrutinized
Presided	Ran	Reorganized	Searched
Prevented	Ranked	Repaired	Secured
Printed	Rated	Replaced	Selected
Prioritized	Reached	Replied	Separated
Processed	Realigned	Reported	Served
Procured	Realized	Represented	Serviced
Produced	Reasoned	Reputed	Set or set up
Programmed	Received	Researched	Settled
Prohibited	Recognized	Resolved	Shaped
Projected	Recommended	Responded	Shared
Promoted	Reconciled	Restored	Showed
Proofread	Recorded	Restructured	Simplified
Proposed	Recruited	Retrieved	Simulated
Protected	Redesigned	Revamped	Sketched
Proved	Reduced	Reversed	Slashed
Provided	Reengineered	Reviewed	Sold
Publicized	Referred	Revised	Solicited
Published	Refined	Revitalized	Solidified
Purchased	Registered	Revived	Solved
Pursued	Regulated	Routed	Sorted
Qualified	Rehabilitated	Safeguarded	Sought

Sparked	Supplemented	Transferred	Unraveled
Spearheaded	Supplied	Transformed	Updated
Specialized	Supported	Translated	Upgraded
Specified	Surpassed	Transmitted	Urged
Spoke	Surveyed	Transported	Used
Sponsored	Synchronized	Traveled	Utilized
Staffed	Synergized	Treated	Validated
Standardized	Systematized	Triggered	Valued
Started	Tabulated	Trimmed	Verbalized
Steered	Tackled	Tripled	Verified
Stimulated	Tailored	Triumphed	Visited
Stored	Targeted	Troubleshot	Vitalized
Streamlined	Taught	Turned	Volunteered
Strengthened	Terminated	Tutored	Waged
Stressed	Tested	Typed	Weighed
Stretched	Tightened	Umpired	Widened
Structured	Took or took over	Uncovered	Won
Studied	Totaled	Understood	Worked
Submitted	Toured	Understudied	Wrote
Substituted	Traced	Undertook	
Succeeded	Tracked	Underwent	
Suggested	Traded	Underwrote	
Summarized	Trained	Unearthed	
Superseded	Transcended	Unified	
Supervised	Transcribed	United	