

TIPS FOR PREPARING APPLICATIONS AND RESUMES

For many government agencies the application is the primary document used to evaluate qualifications. Its presentation is key to obtaining an interview.

Most government employers will require completion of the organization's official application form at some time during the process. Even if the resume contains the same information, an application form is often required for legal, data processing, and employer convenience reasons.

The application is an official document. The information must be complete and accurate. If the space is inadequate for a certain situation, explain the situation on an attached page.

Be certain that your document is neat, error- and smudge-free, typed, centered, and complete. Typing application forms is not always possible; however, it is preferred. The form is often copied and widely circulated internally, and a typed form is a more effective presentation.

If there is a "salary desired" or similar blank, you may write, "negotiable" if you have no significant work experience related to the sought-after assignment. For candidates with work experience or a minimum acceptable salary, the minimum should be specified. If the employer cannot meet the minimum, an offer is unlikely, so both parties can save time.

Designing Your Resume

Purpose

A resume is a self-marketing tool. It is designed with one purpose in mind - to "sell" your skills, knowledge, and experience to an employer so that he/she will invite you for an interview. An effective resume speaks to the employer's needs and requirements and demonstrates a match between what you have to offer and those requirements. It stimulates interest in you by summarizing information: unique qualities, well developed skills, relevant work or academic experiences, or accomplishments that clearly differentiates you from the competition.

Employers want to know about you, not your position. Spend more time describing your duties, responsibilities and accomplishments than describing the size and nature of your organization, although it is important for the employer to know that you have had experience in a similar organization. Your resume should be factual, impressive, readable, and tailored to the position you are seeking. It should describe your experience and achievements to stimulate a positive response. Your resume is an important item in getting you the position desire.

Preparation

In preparing to write your resume, remember that you can only count on an employer to spend twenty seconds scanning your resume before deciding whether to review it further or put it aside. The key is to design the format in such a way that it leads the employer's eye to words that speak to his/her needs. Obviously then, effective resumes are developed by individuals who have thoroughly researched the organizations they want to work for, have identified the specific job they want, and have figured out what they have to offer. In addition, well designed resumes have these

characteristics in common:

- * Visual appeal, easy to read layout, and high quality reproduction;
- * Highlights strengths and links them to employer's needs; minimizes or excludes irrelevant experience;
- * Presents the most important information first;
- * Entirely free from any errors: spelling, typographical, punctuation, or grammatical;
- * Succinct and organized; does not exceed two pages.

Types of Resumes

The chronological and functional resumes, or some combination of these two formats, are the standard types of resumes used by job seekers in today's employment market. To select the type which best supports your needs, review the following information. Many professional recruiters discount functional resumes and consider them as a "red flag", since many applicants use them to disguise a lack of experience or unstable work history.

Chronological Resume (Preferred)

In this type of resume, job history is organized chronologically with the most recent information first. Job titles and organizations are emphasized and duties and accomplishments are described in detail. A chronological resume is easy to read, since it highlights names of employers and job titles, and emphasizes career growth. It is best suited to those whose career goals are clear and whose job objectives are aligned with their work history.

A chronological resume is advantageous when:

- your recent employers and/or job titles are impressive;
- you are staying in the same career field;
- your job history shows progress;
- you are working in a field where traditional job search methods are utilized (e.g., education, government).

A chronological resume is not advantageous when:

- you are changing careers;
- you have changed employers frequently;
- you want to de-emphasize age;
- you have been absent from the job market.

Functional Resume

Stay away from a function resume if at all possible. In a functional resume, skills and accomplishments developed through work, academic, and community experiences are highlighted.

Your skills and potential can be stressed and lack of experience or possible gaps in work history de-emphasized. However, it is important to realize employers often view functional resumes more critically for these very same reasons.

The functional resume is advantageous when:

- * you want to emphasize capabilities not used in recent work experience;
- * you want to emphasize personal qualities relevant to the job such as industriousness, cooperative attitude, related interests, and aptitudes;
- * you want to focus on capabilities rather than lengthy employment history;
- * you are changing careers/re-entering the job market;
- * your career growth in the past has not been continuous and progressive;
- * you have a variety of unrelated work experiences;
- * your work has been free-lance, consulting, or temporary in nature.

The functional resume is not advantageous when:

- * you have little work experience;
- * you want to emphasize promotions and career growth;
- * you are working in highly traditional fields, such as teaching, accounting, and politics, where employers should be highlighted.

Combination Resume

This format combines the best elements of the chronological and functional types. It presents patterns of accomplishments and skills in a section headed "Areas of Effectiveness" or "Qualifications Summary." But it also includes a brief work history and education summary. This format is advantageous for those who wish to change to a job in a related career field.

Preparing your Resume

Ronald and Caryl Rae Krannich in their book, *Dynamite Resumes*, point out that the categories of information you include on your resume should provide answers to these questions:

1. Contact section: Who are you and how can you be reached?
2. Objective statement: What do you want to do?
3. Education section: What have you learned?
4. Experience/Employment section: What can you do? What have you done?
5. Professional activities and accomplishments: How have you been recognized?
6. Miscellaneous: What else do they want to know about you?

Sequence the categories according to what is most important to the employer and your career objective. A recent college graduate with limited experience should usually put the education section first since it is the most significant qualification. Education should also be listed first when, as in the case of teaching, law, medicine, or engineering, education is a qualifying requirement. In a situation where an applicant wants to emphasize significant work or extracurricular experience or when an employer seeks to fill jobs in fields such as sales, public relations, or merchandising, the experience or work history category may be listed first.

1. Contact Information

Begin your resume with your name by capitalizing or using bold type. Include street address, city, state, and zip code. Include phone number(s) where you can be reached weekdays, 9am-5pm. Designate your home phone with an "H," and work number with "W," or a "Messages" number.

2. Career/Job Objective

This is recommended only for recent graduates or entry level personnel. Experience and professional job seekers rarely include it. This component of the resume can be very challenging to write. The purpose of the objective statement is to inform the reader of your career goals and qualifications. The statement should be written specifically enough to let the reader know that you have a focus to your job search. If you are considering a variety of objectives, you may want to relay the relevant objective in an accompanying cover letter.

3. Educational Highlights

This section is most effective when you have experiences from your education that are impressive and/or directly relate to your objective. Adding this section is useful when you have developed skills and specific knowledge through your education rather than work experience. This section can be used to highlight coursework, research, or special knowledge that complements your objective. This information is useful in a resume of entry level candidates and recent graduates.

An alternative to highlighting courses is to list the skills and knowledge acquired through important courses and research.

Examples: Developed model investment portfolio for Fortune 500 company. Analyzed revenue and expense history using state-of-the-art computer simulation programs. Designed promotional campaign for new service a targeted market.

Summary information about your undergraduate and graduate education should be included in your resume. List the name and location of the school, time period or date of degree, the degree received, and academic honors, e.g. Phi Beta Kappa, significant scholarships or fellowships. You may also list any continuing education and significant professional training but do not list every course or seminar you have attended. In general, the more recently you have attended college, the more education related information you may want to provide as you will most likely have relatively less work experience.

Start with your most recent degree or the program in which you are currently enrolled. List other degrees or relevant education in reverse chronological order.

Highlight your degree by using bold type, capital letters or underlining.

If the degree is relevant to your job objective, begin with degree and emphasis, followed by university, location of university, and date of graduation or anticipated date of graduation. Example: M.P.A., Masters of Public Administration, George Washington University, Washington, DC, May 1995.

If degree/program is not directly related to current job objective, begin with the university, followed by the location, degree and emphasis, and graduation date.

If you are within two semesters of graduation, do not use "expected" or "anticipated" with month/year of graduation.

If you are an entry level candidate or recent graduate and have a high GPA, include it on your resume. You may want to highlight your GPA on a new line, or in an educational highlights section. Note: Some employers believe no GPA on a resume indicates an poor GPA. Employers hiring experienced professionals generally care only that you have the degree.

If your education relates to your objective and is within the past three years, it should be the first section. If not, education should follow the work experience section of your resume.

4. Employment and or Experience Summary

A brief summary of qualifications can condense an extensive background by emphasizing experiences and accomplishments in brief phrases. The qualifications summary is accomplishment-oriented and provides an overview of your work experience. A summary is most appropriated for someone with substantial experience, for someone who is changing careers and wants to demonstrate transferable skills, or for someone with an eclectic background.

In general, you should list, in successive order for each position you have held, your employer, position title, dates (year to year), a brief description of your position, and accomplishments. You need to devote little space to explain commonly known responsibilities for positions such as city manager, police chief or public works director. You will probably devote more space for positions such as assistant city manager, city engineer, and similar jobs. You should also indicate the size of the budget and number of employees for whom you were responsible. Give brief, illustrative examples of your responsibilities and accomplishments. This is where you have the opportunity to tailor (while being accurate and truthful) your resume to what the employer is seeking. At least for your current position, indicate your base salary, not the top of your range.

Begin with your current/most recent position and work backward, chronologically. Devote more space to recent employment.

If your job titles relate to your current job objective, start each position description with job titles. If not, begin with the organization.

Follow job title and organizational information with the organization's city and state.

Use the first and last month and year to describe dates of employment.

Describe the last three to five positions in detail. Summarize earlier positions unless relevant to your objective.

Do not show every position change with each employer. Only list the most recent and describe promotions.

Do not repeat skills that are common to several positions.

Within each listed position, stress the major accomplishments and responsibilities that demonstrate your competency. It is not necessary to include all responsibilities, as they will be assumed by employers.

Tailor your position descriptions to future job/career objectives.

One-page resumes are preferred for entry-level positions.

Two-Three page resumes are preferred for experienced persons.

5. Professional Activities and Accomplishments

This part of your resume offers you the opportunity to provide insight into your career development. You should be selective and complete, listing such items as memberships in professional associations and offices held, professional registrations, honors received, and major articles or publications you have written. Do not list every article or every speech you may have given or every conference you have attended. Emphasize quality - this section of the resume should help you to demonstrate you are current and active in your profession.

Resume Checklist

The following checklist has been designed to assist you in writing your resume.

1. Overall appearance...

- makes an immediately favorable impression
- is inviting to read
- is easy to read
- looks professional

2. Contact information...

- is clearly presented at the top.
- includes address information; permanent and temporary
- includes telephone number(s) where you can be reached day and night

3. Objective (optional; use if yours is specific)...

- includes type and level of position sought
- includes type and size of organization sought
- emphasizes strongest qualifications and skills pertinent to desired job

4. Organization...

highlights strongest qualifications or credentials
uses headings to help establish common ground with employer
is brief - usually one page unless you have 5-10 years experience

5. Content...

demonstrates ability to do the job and speaks to employer's needs
supports and substantiates objective
stresses transferable professional skills, accomplishments, and results
contains only that personal data relevant to the job
omits racial, religious, or political affiliations

6. Education section includes...

most recent degree
list of other degrees or relevant training
name and location of university, college, or training institution
major, minor, and/or area(s) of concentration or interest
relevant coursework, skills, or knowledge
GPA, honors, and awards
percentage of educational expenses earned

7. Extracurricular activities section (optional) includes...

list of most impressive offices held, including title and organization
leadership roles and transferable skills
pertinent professional memberships

8. Experience section...

Each relevant paid, volunteer, extracurricular, intern, or co-op experience
dates position held
description of transferable skills, accomplishments, and effectiveness
specific examples of successes and results supporting your objective
examples that quantify results or successes

9. Language...

is expressed in succinct manner
uses action verbs to begin phrases
has short action-oriented phrases instead of complete sentences
is free from grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors
is in active rather than passive voice
uses vocabulary of the field for which you are applying

10. Layout and space utilization...

is crisp and clean
separates sections and incorporates enough blank space for easy reading
centers text with adequate margins

11. Highlighting and emphasis...

uses bold type, underlining, different type styles and sizes
is well balanced

12. Printing and reproduction...

paper is high quality; heavy weight bond

paper is off-white, ivory, light tan, light gray, or other conventional color

reproduction is clear, clean and professional

print is letter quality, never photocopied

Scannable and E-Mail Resumes

The job search is moving into the electronic age, so make sure your resume is on the cutting edge. Employers who receive several hundred resumes for each advertised opening and a couple of hundred unsolicited resumes now have a better way to manage all the paperwork. How? By investing in electronic databases which store resumes and are quickly accessible by a few simple computer commands.

Resumes may be entered into a system using an optical scanner and the images stored, thereby building a database of applicants and relevant skills. Employers then access candidates by searching the database for qualifications.

Your resume is a place to express individuality and style. However, some fonts and style choices could present too much of a challenge for the scanner. If you follow the tips below, the system will be better able to extract your information accurately.

Font - Standard serif and sans serif fonts work best. Avoid ornate fonts and fonts where the characters touch. Font size is also important. Sizes between 10 points and 14 points work best.

Italics and underlining may cause problems for the scanner, especially if combined. Use boldface for emphasis.

Vertical or horizontal lines should be used sparingly. When used, leave at least a quarter of an inch of space around the line. Avoid graphics and shading or shadowing.

Do not compress or expand the space between letters or lines. Also, do not double space within sections.

The resume you submit should be an original. It should be printed with a laser printer on white or light-colored 8.5 x 11 inch paper. Print on one side only.

Resumes which have been folded, stapled or otherwise mutilated will not scan well.

It is imperative that you describe your skills and accomplishments using the language of your (desired) profession.

These new systems search for applicants by using key words or phrases. So in order for your resume to have appeal in your chosen career field, use the jargon of the field.

While sections which highlight experience, education, languages, technical skills and other categories are important, emphasize specific skills and achievements. Nouns are also more distinguishable than action verbs.

Remember the rules differ for unusual or different looking resumes. The fancy graphics used to catch an employer's eye will only confuse a computer, so keep it simple.

Key Resume Phrases and Words & Additional Categories

The following phrases and words may help with organizing your resume statements. They convey involvement and accomplishments and make your resume more readable.

Interaction with...

Acted as liaison for/between...

Edited...

Established...

Formulated...

Handled...

Initiated...

Implemented...

Maintained...

Managed...

Assigned territory consisting of...

Promoted to/from...

Instrumental in...

Recipient of...

Honored as...

Remained as...

Innovation resulted in...

...amounting to a total savings of...

Recommendations accepted by...

Administered...

Assisted with...

Adept at...

Analyzed/Assessed...

Arranged...

Coordinated...

Conducted...

Counseled...

Delegated...

Directed...

Demonstrated...

Developed...

Advised...

Budgeted...

Consulted...

Delivered...

Drafted...

Evaluated...

Gathered...

Improved...

Installed...

Instructed...

Investigated...
 Negotiated...
 Organized...
 Performed...
 Planned...
 Presented...
 Recommended...
 Proven track record in...
 Experience involved/included...
 Successful in/at...
 More than ____ years experience...
 Expertise and demonstrated skills...
 Experienced in all facets/phases...
 Knowledge of/experienced as...
 Extensive training/involvement...
 Proficient/competent at...
 Initially employed...
 Specialize in...
 Temporarily assigned to...
 Direct/Indirect control...
 Served/Operated as...
 In charge of...
 Familiar with...
 Assigned to...
 Contracted/Subcontracted...
 Acted/Functioned as...
 Provided technical assistance...
 ...on an ongoing/regular basis...
 ...to ensure maximum/optimum...
 Worked closely with...

Additional Resume Categories

To add relevant information to your resume that focuses on special knowledge or skills, consider the following resume headings:

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS
 TECHNICAL SKILLS
 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
 INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE
 ASSETS
 COOPERATIVE EDUCATION
 HONORS
 SCHOLARSHIPS
 TRAVEL
 LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES
 LANGUAGES
 INTERESTS
 PUBLICATIONS

QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY
PRESENTATIONS
REFERENCES
TRAINING
VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

The Transmittal Letter

The transmittal letter gives you an additional opportunity to tailor your experience and background to the position for which you are applying. It is important to include a transmittal or cover letter, even if you are sending both a resume and a standard application form. Your letter should be tailored specifically for the position applied for, should address several areas: 1. It should clearly express why you are interested in the position; 2. It should summarize the relationship between your experience and the position (why you are well suited for the position); and 3. It should leave a positive impression. The transmittal letter should be an original letter, no more than two pages in length.

6. Miscellaneous Information

References

While not required, it is a good practice to include in your resume four or five current, work-related references. If you prefer, you can include a separate reference list as an enclosure, with a reference to it in your cover letter.

References should include the name and title of the reference, relationship, and their current telephone number. Work-related means they should have some ability to comment on your skills and capabilities. Most often they will include individuals who have served as your supervisor, co-worker, or subordinate. References from friends, relatives, neighbors and ministers are not considered as useful or valid as work related references.

Unless you are on a first name basis with the person listed on your reference sheet, and the person will immediately accept reference calls, do not include the governor, chief justice, or other high ranking person unless you have actual direct work experience with that person. Name dropping can work against you unless it is bona fide. It may be nice for the reference checker to talk to these people and others with similarly impressive titles, but they need to be work-related references. If you do not want your references contacted without first notifying you, clearly make that indication in your resume, on your reference list, and in your cover letter.)

Military Service

Your resume should include your military service, if any, including rank and the dates you served. If you have had a first career in the military, you should clearly state what your rank and positions were. Trying to make a military career look like a civilian one is very difficult.

Other

You should use your own judgment about including other information. Some applicants include a listing of their hobbies, membership in service or charitable organizations, community service,

marital status and similar information. This information can be helpful in giving the reader a more personal view of you, but it could also make you look weird. Be discreet!

Attachments are not necessary for the first screening if you have prepared your resume properly. If you decide to attach items to your resume you need to be very selective. Letters of reference, transcripts, certificates, newspaper articles, and similar items generally should not be attached to your resume unless they are particularly appropriate to the position for which you are applying. Lists of projects, grants obtained, publications may be helpful in demonstrating your qualifications for a particular position, but it should be as an attachment, not as a part of the resume.

For EEO purposes, do not include a picture on your resume or as an attachment. Also, you should not give your age, religious affiliation, race, marital status, number of children or similar information that could be used in a discriminatory manner or not considered job related.

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Top Ten Resume Writing Tips

Resume Writing Advice and Suggestions

By Alison Doyle, About.com Guide

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Need help creating or updating your resume? It certainly can be complicated because your resume is going to be reviewed by software as well as by hiring managers. Review these top resume tips for choosing a resume format, selecting a resume font, customizing your resume, using resume keywords, explaining employment gaps, and more tips for writing interview winning resumes.

Choose a Basic Font

Professional Experience

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When writing a resume it's important to use a basic font that is easy to read, both for hiring managers and for applicant management systems.

Include All Your Contact Information

Jane Doe
123 Main St.
Anytown, NY 12345
Tel: (555) 123-4567
Home: (555) 234-5678
Email: jane.doe@company.com

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It's important to include all your contact information on your resume so employers can easily get in touch with you. Include your full name, street address, city, state, and zip, home phone number, cell phone number, and email address.

Include Resume Keywords

...tech-nol-ogy
...knowl-edge
...man-agement
...com-mu-ni-cation
...team-work
...pro-blem-solving
...time-management
...customer-service
...leadership
...strategic-thinking
...analytical-skills
...attention-to-detail
...strong-will

Copyright Mark Poprock

Your resume should include the same keywords that appear in job descriptions. That way, you will increase your chances of your resume matching available positions - and of you being selected for an interview. Also include [keywords in your cover letter](#).

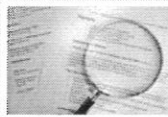
Choose the Right Resume Format



Copyright James Tutor

There are several basic types of resumes used to apply for job openings. Depending on your personal circumstances, choose a [chronological](#), a functional, [combination](#), or a [targeted](#) resume. Take the time to customize your resume - it's well worth the effort.

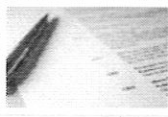
Prioritize Your Resume Content



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It's important to prioritize the content of your resume so that your most important and relevant experience is listed first, with key accomplishments listed at the top of each position.

Write a Custom Resume



Copyright Heidi Kristensen

It definitely takes more time to write a custom resume, but, it's worth the effort, especially when applying for jobs that are a perfect match for your qualifications and experience.

Tailor Your Resume Objective

Obtain a position at ABCD Company where I can maximize my management skills, and my quality assurance program development and training experience.

If you include an objective on your resume, it's important to tailor your resume objective to match the job you are applying for. The more specific you are, the better chance you have of being considered for the job you are interested in.



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Tweak for Technology



Copyright Pali Rao

In this competitive job-seeking environment, job seekers need to make sure that their resume stands out from the pack, is selected by talent management systems, and shows, in a professional, no-nonsense way, that the applicant has taken the time and interest to pursue a specific job opening.

Use a Resume Template



Copyright PenelopeB

Use a resume template as a starting point for creating your own resume. Add your information to the resume template, then tweak and edit it to personalize your resume, so it highlights your skills and abilities.

Email Your Resume



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When you're sending an email resume, it's important to follow the employer's instructions on how to submit your cover letter and resume. The employer may want your resume attached to the email message and sent in specific format, typically as a Word document or a PDF.

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