

Resume Writing Tips

Most recruiters and managers have just one or two minutes to review your resume. Spend the time now to craft one that makes it easy for them to quickly identify your qualifications that are most relevant for the job.

Contact information

- Include complete contact information. Include one email address and at least one phone number that you monitor regularly. It's okay to include two phone numbers.
- Use an email address that is based on your real name, not "myhighschoolnickname@yahoo.com."
- Record a brief and professional greeting for your voice mailbox. Do not use music or other effects, and don't have someone else record your greeting.

Objective

The objective line is a perfect place to customize your resume for a specific job opening.

- Craft a brief statement that showcases how you will contribute to the organization's success if hired. Focus on what you can do for the employer, not on what you want the employer to do for you.

Bad example:

To obtain a position that provides growth and opportunities for advancement.

Good example:

Seeking an executive assistant position where I can contribute my administrative experience, planning ability, and attention to detail to the success of the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center executive team.

Career summary

- You can include a Career Summary at the top, but it's not required.
- If you include it, craft a brief paragraph or bullet list that highlights your key accomplishments.
- Customize your summary to emphasize aspects of your experience that are most relevant for the job in question.

Skills

- List the skills that you have which are required and/or relevant for the job (not *all* your skills). Set up your list using two or three columns in the skills section.
- Include computer or software skills and "soft skills." For example, Microsoft Word, Adobe InDesign, Customer Service, Project Management

Employment history

- List your professional experience in reverse chronological order. It's what most managers and recruiters prefer.
- Make your employment history simple and easy to read.
- Use bullet lists instead of paragraphs.
- Start each bullet point with an action verb.
- Use a separate bullet for each responsibility or accomplishment you describe.
- Don't try to cram a lot of information on one page. Focus on your responsibilities and professional accomplishments that are most relevant for the position to which you are applying.
- Don't exaggerate your experience. It will backfire when the manager or recruiter figures out that you don't have the skills or expertise that you claimed on your resume.

Education and Certifications

- Place your education/certifications section near the bottom of your resume. (Job seekers with no employment history can place this section near the top.)
- List your education and professional certifications under separate headings.
- Only include certifications that are relevant for the position.

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References, hobbies, and personal information

- Do not include references. Instead, include a statement that references are available on request.
- Managers and recruiters have varying opinions about whether or not to include hobbies. If you do include them, keep this section short. Leave out anything that could be controversial.
- Do not include a photo of yourself or personal information such as your age, citizenship, or marital status.
- It is okay to state your eligibility to work in the United States.

Formatting

- Use plain white or off-white paper.
- Use a common, easy-to-read font such as Times, Arial, or Calibri. Never use fancy fonts.
- Use a font size of 10 points or larger.
- Most job seekers should limit their resumes to two pages in length. Never go over five pages, no matter how much experience you have.
- Most candidates should avoid using images. In design and creative fields, images can be acceptable sometimes if you use them carefully.
- Keep your formatting, tabs, and spacing consistent throughout the resume.
- Test to make sure your resume looks the way you intended when you send it electronically. Complex formatting or unusual fonts might not be preserved when the recipient views the file.

Other tips

- Ask *at least* one person to proofread your resume before you distribute it.
- Create two versions of your resume, one in Word (.doc) format and one in Text (.txt) format. The text version will be best when you need to paste your resume into an online application window. Simplify your formatting if needed.

Tips for senior-level candidates

- Omit graduation years from your education section.
- Make the first item in the body of your resume a summary of your key accomplishments.
- Keep the dates in your employment history. It's tempting to remove them, but this raises a big red flag for recruiters and managers who rely on this information to assess your qualifications.
- Senior-level candidates can sometimes justify a resume longer than two pages, but never exceed five pages. If you have more to present, create a short version to submit with job applications and add a line to state that a complete resume or CV is available on request.