Resume Writing Tips

When looking for a job, it's important to make a great first impression. Your resume and cover letter are usually a potential employer's first look at you, and these documents can make or break your job search. Keep in mind this isn't your autobiography! This is meant to give a hiring manager just enough information about you that they feel compelled to call you in and meet you face to face! The last thing you want to do is give them something that's messy, confusing, or unorganized.

Resume Tips

In most cases, document margins should be 1". To check the margins in Word 2019, go to **Page Layout** tab → **Margins**. The **Normal** option should be selected.

The resume should contain no more than two font styles. Choose standard fonts like **Arial**, **Cambria**, **Tahoma**, **Times New Roman**, etc. – no "creative" (funky or script) fonts! Too many font changes make documents appear cluttered and unprofessional. Don't use more than 2-3 font sizes. Use one size for your name (largest; about 20 pt), one for the section headings (about 14 pt), and one for everything else (11 or 12 pt).

Keep It Simple

Unless you're applying for a design role, a clean, simple layout is best. Use clear section headings and make them stand out with bold type, capital letters, and/or a different color. Make sure there's plenty of white space—an overstuffed resume is hard to read.

Skip the fancy graphics, pie charts, and illustrations, which don't play well with resume-scanning software.

Use a Summary Statement Instead of an Objective

A resume objective ("Seeking a senior-level product management role in the fintech space") tells the recruiter what you want. A summary statement, on the other hand, explains what value you can bring to them.

In short, it can help you get noticed faster. Many hiring managers have to go through dozens of resumes every day. In fact, they usually only give each resume about six seconds of their time. A good professional summary is something that will catch their attention from the get-go. And if it's written well, it will compel them read the rest of the resume.

When writing a summary statement, think about your "elevator pitch." For example, if you stepped into an elevator and saw the hiring manager who holds the keys to your dream job, how would you sell yourself during that 30-second elevator ride?

Consider the strengths, experiences, and accomplishments that are unique to you and write each of them down as you brainstorm. Using the job posting, determine what value can you bring to the company.

Spotlight Key Skills

Whether you put your skills section at the top of your resume (like the example here) or at the bottom, after your work experience, make sure the skills you list match the requirements for the job you're applying to. Not sure what those are? Read the job description carefully to see which skills, programs, and keywords are mentioned. If there's a requirement or responsibility listed in the job description that you've performed in a current or previous role, it should be on your resume.

Put Your Latest Experience First

Recruiters still prefer the traditional reverse chronological format, where you list your current or most recent job first.

Company name seems straightforward and typically are. There is some leeway in whether or not you use the company's formal name — Acme, or Acme Incorporated, or Acme Company — and whether or not to use the abbreviation. Because there's no standard rule, use the formal company name in industries with a tendency towards formality, and the more casual version in casual industries.

Titles and employment dates

Now's the time to be precise. No tall tales, fibbing, or fish-that-got-away stories allowed. Because you're dealing with history, you need to be rigorous with your presentation of the facts.

For each job, list your actual title, as it appeared in your offer letter or subsequent company promotion. It is quite important to be precise, as you are representing that you held this title at this company at this time. Small inflations can come back to bite you — promoting yourself to manager or director of a team when you were, in fact, a step or half-step lower. Among the few things that companies review during background checks are titles, so it is both ethically and procedurally necessary to ensure that your resume matches the company's records precisely.

The common practice remains to include both month and year in the date. Write both the month and year for start and end dates. So January 2017 – December 2020, for example, or Feb 2016 – Apr 2020, both work. If you just don't remember the month you started and stopped work for a company then go with just the years. 2016-2020.

Break It Down

For each job, list out your responsibilities and accomplishments in easy-to-skim bullets, not in paragraphs, which look denser and harder to read. Make sure you start each of these bullets with a strong action verb.

Success Action Verbs

Accelerated	Improved
Achieved	Increased
Added	Introduced
Awarded	Maximized
Contributed	Minimized
Decreased	Optimized
Delivered	Orchestrated
Eliminated	Produced
Exceeded	Reduced
Expanded	Saved
Gained	Sold
Generated	Streamlined
Grew	

Consider Adding Volunteer or Other Experience

Listing volunteer work or other interests can add personality to your resume and help you seem more three-dimensional. These experiences can also help you highlight transferable skills you've gained outside of the workplace.

Quantify Your Bullets

Wherever possible, add numbers and results to your bullet points to show the impact you had in a role. You can do this even if you're not in a numbers- or dollars-oriented role: How frequently did you do a task? How big was your team? How many people used your product?

Key Words

How important can a bunch of words really be?

70% of job applications get disqualified by applicant tracking systems without being read. This statistic emphasizes how important it is to tailor your resume to the job you're applying for.

Your resume will often be screened by an Applicant Tracking System (ATS). This system has inbuilt software that filters the different applications that come in.

The recruiter writes a list of keywords in the ATS system. These are the job requirements. The ATS then scans your applications for those specific keywords that the recruiter plugged in. If you don't have the right amount of them, your resume gets thrown in the software void and never reaches the recruiter.

Example: Let's say you are an architect applying for a senior position in a large firm.

This is your resume summary:

"A detail-oriented and qualified senior architect who excels in developing construction drawings, creating 3D models, and conducting architectural research and analysis."

The system reads these keywords in your resume summary:

Detail-oriented, Qualified, Senior Architect, Construction Drawings, 3D Models, Research, Analysis

The system registers which of these keywords match the ones set as a requirement by the recruiter.

For example:

- ✓ CHECK: senior architect
- ✓ CHECK: construction drawings
- ✓ CHECK: 3D models
- ✓ NOT CHECK: computer-aided design (CAD)
- ✓ NOT CHECK: 10 years of experience

Now, you might have experience with CAD and also have more than ten years of experience. But because the ATS didn't read it, it did not count it, and you might be rejected at this very first stage. This example perfectly demonstrates the importance of keywords with ATS.

So how do you pick the keywords the ATS and the recruiter are looking for?

First, scan the job ad for keywords. If your resume keywords match the ones given in the job ad, you have a higher chance of getting an interview. There are two main categories of keywords the recruiters or managers are looking for: (1) job-related skills and (2) action verbs. Job-related keywords describe your primary skills (both hard and soft) and your core qualifications for this particular job.   e.g: Computer Science, Social Media, Photoshop, Critical-thinking, etc.

Action verbs, on the other hand, demonstrate action: they show what you have accomplished and how you have succeeded in your previous experience. e.g: managed, developed, planned, maximized, etc. So, in your resume scan, you should be looking for both job-related keywords and action verbs.

Once you've pinpointed all relevant keywords from the job description, it's time to put them down in your own resume. But which section do they go under, exactly?

Generally:

Job-related keywords go under your "Skills"

Action verbs will help you with your job descriptions in the "Work Experience" section.

Education requirements will be reflected in your "Education" section,

Job title descriptions will go on your resume summary.

ATS Resume checker

https://www.jobscan.co/

What Not to Include in Your Resume

The Word "Resume"
Do not label your resume, "resume." One look at your resume, and the employer should know exactly what type of document it is. Also, don't simply name your resume "resume" when you save the file. Use your name, so the hiring manager will know whose resume it is at a glance. Example Fred Liking's Resume.docx

The Date You Wrote the Resume
Some people make the mistake of dating their resumes. The employer does not need to know when you wrote your resume; the dates you include regarding past education and employment are the only dates you need to include.

Any Personal Data Beyond Your Contact Information
Do not include any personal information beyond your address, email, and phone number.

Leave out your age, date of birth, race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, political affiliation, and the names and ages of your spouse and children. While some of this information may be required in an international CV, it should be left out of a resume.

You should also leave out important numbers that could allow someone to steal your identity, such as your social security number, driver's license number, and any credit card information. In some cases, you may wish to leave your address off your resume or only include part of it.

Photographs
While many companies outside of the United States require a photograph with each resume, those within the US do not. In fact, most companies prefer you not to include a photograph so they can safely adhere to the Equal Employment Opportunity legislation (which prohibits companies from making hiring decisions for discriminatory reasons). An exception would be if you were applying for a modeling or acting job, where appearances inform hiring decisions.

Physical Characteristics (height, weight, etc.)
Like a photograph, including your physical characteristics on a resume opens the door to possible accusations of discrimination against the company. Companies, therefore, prefer that you do not include any physical descriptors.

Grammar School and High School
Grammar school is never included on a resume. If you are still in high school, are in your first couple of years of college, or if a high school diploma is your highest degree, you can certainly include your high school information. However, once you complete any other form of education, eliminate this information from your resume.

Low GPAs
College students and recent graduates often include their GPA in their resume. However, if you are worried about a low GPA, simply leave it off your resume. You can still include your school, graduation date, and any awards received.

Unrelated Work Experience
You don't need to list every job you have held on your resume. Generally, you only want to include positions you have held in the past 10 to 15 years, unless an earlier job strongly demonstrates your qualifications. Leave out any positions that are unrelated to the job for which you are applying unless this will leave gaps on your resume.

However, if you have limited job experience, you can include slightly unrelated positions as long as you demonstrate how they prepared you for a job in your new field. For example, if you are applying for a job in sales, you can include your earlier job as a cashier if you explain that the job helped you develop your customer service skills.

Remember employers want to know what you have done lately and what can you do NOW!

Unrelated Hobbies
Most companies do not want to see your hobbies on your resume. However, if you have a hobby that relates to the company, you may include it. For example, if you are applying to work at a sporting goods store, you could list your interest in particular outdoor activities.

Obsolete Skills
Make sure all the skills and attributes you list on your resume are current. If you list skills that are obsolete or not relevant to the position, it won't help you get an interview. Review this list of skills to exclude from your resume.

Names and Contact Information for Former Supervisors
Because you will have a separate list of references, you do not need to include any contact information for your former supervisors on your resume. The only exception to this is if you are creating a resume for a federal job, where this information is required.

Salary History
Your salary history is an issue you can discuss with the employer during an interview or once you have been offered the job; you do not want to establish a salary range before you have even been offered an interview. So, don't list your current salary or the salary you expect to earn at a new job.

Criminal Record
If you get hired, the company will likely conduct a search of your criminal record. However, there is no need to include this information on your resume.

"References Available Upon Request"
Generally, it is assumed that a job applicant will have references. Instead of including the references on your resume or saying, "references available upon request," you can send the hiring manager a separate sheet of references or wait until you are asked to provide them.

Negative Words / Ideas
Avoid saying what you did not do or have not yet accomplished; focus instead on what you have done or are in the process of achieving. For example, if you are still in college, do not say "not yet graduated," but instead list the year in which you will graduate. If you didn't graduate, simply list the dates you attended.

Instead of saying that you have "limited experience" in administrative work, simply provide examples of your previous experience.

An Objective That Says What You Want
Rather than writing a resume objective that says what you are seeking in a job, write a career summary,

More Things Not to Include on a Resume

- Personal pronouns
- Statements about your health
- Long descriptions
- Acronyms
- Street addresses for schools and employers
- Spelling and grammatical errors
- Exaggerations or mistruths

Anything negative about yourself or an employer

If asked to submit your resume and cover letter electronically, be sure to use a compatible file format. Ideally, they should be saved as **PDF** files, which can be opened on any computer. Unless specifically directed, do not copy and paste your resume into an email or online form, as all of the formatting will be lost. Instead, **attach** the document to the email or form.