

Tips for Writing Your Résumé

Your résumé should show an employer that you're qualified for a position by listing your relevant experiences, training, skills, and accomplishments. Since employers spend as little as 6 seconds on a résumé,¹ it's important that you make yours informative and memorable. In this handout, you will find tips, inspired by experts at the New York Times and Forbes, for creating a résumé that will help you stand out as a uniquely qualified candidate.

1. Tailor your résumé to your target position.

- a. *Include only relevant work experience.* The résumé you send out to employers should be different from your master résumé, the one that includes all of your work experience. Pull out your most relevant work experience and list 3-6 major accomplishments for each job.
- b. *Use buzzwords.* Employers often use applicant tracking systems to pick out applicants based on keywords in their résumés.² You can gather the keywords employers will be looking for from the job description or the company's website. Making connections to the company's mission and values is also a good way to show that you are not only a good match for them, but that you've also done your research.

2. Include analytical training and experience, but don't underestimate the value of creativity.

- a. Even in technical fields, a list of both analytical and creative experience marks a more well-rounded and versatile candidate. According to Laszlo Bock, Google's Senior Vice President of People Operations, "humans are by nature creative beings, but not by nature logical, structured-thinking beings...One of the things that makes people more effective is if you can do both."³
- b. You can combine your analytical and creative training by showing your problem solving skills and ability to learn new things. Employers like to see that you can thrive in new and unfamiliar places.

3. Don't just describe your past jobs; identify and quantify your accomplishments.

- a. *Make your accomplishments unique.* Avoid giving generic descriptions that employers could attribute to anyone. Instead, ask yourself: "What was the benefit of having done what I did?"⁴
- b. *Use numbers and action verbs as evidence of your accomplishments.* Many applicants make general claims that don't fully demonstrate their skills and strengths. By using numbers, you can add validity to your claims. By using action verbs you can vividly show how you affected your previous workplaces. Plus, numbers and action verbs help draw your reader's eyes to specific areas of your résumé.⁵
- c. *Discuss your strengths relatively.* Most applicants write résumés by stating their responsibilities – for example, "wrote blog posts on a variety of topics." It's better to state what you did in relation to others in your department or field and give insight into how that benefited your company. For the example above, you could say: "wrote 10 blog posts compared to the company average of 6, generating more readership and subscriptions."⁶

¹ (Evans, 2012)

² (ASME Career Center, 2011)

³ (The New York Times, 2014)

⁴ (ASME Career Center, 2011)

⁵ (Forbes, 2014; Yahoo Finance, 2012; DePaul University's Transferable Skills and Action Verbs Handout, 2014)

⁶ (The New York Times, 2014; Forbes, 2014; ASME 2011)

4. Decide if an objective is the best way to represent your career goals.

- a. On one hand, an objective can be “the fastest way to pigeon-hole yourself.”⁷ On the other hand, it can be compared to a “30-second elevator pitch” where you explain who you are and what you’re looking for.
- b. An alternative to an objective is a career summary. A career summary lists your professional qualifications and gives your reader an accurate and powerful idea of how you can solve their problems.

5. Reconsider listing your hobbies and your references.

- a. You should include extracurricular activities, professional connections, volunteer experience, and publications as long as they’re relevant to the position. You don’t want to clutter your résumé with distracting information.
- b. Don’t pack valuable résumé space with references. According to experts at Yahoo Finance and CareerBuilder, if employers want to speak to your references, they’ll ask you.⁸ These experts recommend that you leave out reference information and even a line stating, “references available upon request.”
- c. You should still notify your references in case a potential employer wants to speak with them.

6. Follow the conventions of résumé writing.

- a. Keep your résumé to one page unless you have an advanced degree or many years of experience.
- b. Don’t abbreviate the names of people or organizations; spell them out.
- c. Begin each experience with an action verb.⁹

7. Send employers a résumé that shows your professionalism.

- a. Make sure your résumé is error-free.
- b. If you’re printing your résumé out, invest in thicker paper with a watermark. You’ll make a better impression on potential employers.

⁷(Yahoo Finance, 2012)

⁸(Yahoo Finance, 2012; CareerBuilder, 2013)

⁹(DePaul University’s Transferable Skills and Action Verbs Handout, 2014)