

How to Write an Effective Resume

To ensure your resume stands out from the hundreds of responses an employer receives to a job posting, follow these resume writing tips.

Pay attention to format and “feel.”

Impress the employer by leaving lots of open space and using a clear, easy-to-read font (such as 12 point Arial). Information should be easy-to-find and skim through to entice the employer to read more. Print your resume on high quality paper and mail it in a quality envelope.

Proof, proof, proof!

An error-free resume is a sure-fire employer-pleaser. Every mistake you make is a reason for the reviewer to pause and think, to question your carefulness and attention to detail.

Make it easy to contact you.

In today's high-tech age, with many communication options available, it should be easy for a potential employer to contact you. In addition to your home phone number, be sure to include your email address and a cell phone number (even if you have to buy a mobile for your job search). This strategy ensures you won't miss out on an interview due to playing phone tag.

Create a customized objective for each job/employer.

Your objective should connect your skills, experience, and traits with the job requirements the employer is seeking. Read the job posting carefully and pick out exactly what the employer believes is needed, then create an objective that connects with those needs.

Include customized career highlights/qualifications.

This section of the resume should include bulleted points that emphasize your most important career experience, skills, personality traits, and key work-related accomplishments as they relate the job you're applying for.

Provide overview of past work experiences.

When listing previous work experience, you should include, not only company name, your position, and the dates of your employment; you should also include a brief overview statement of what the company does and what you did for them. This information helps potential employers assess your experience. Your contributions should highlight key, measurable achievements and successes that demonstrate your effectiveness.

Education matters.

Employers want to see dates of attendance, majors/ minors, and degrees earned.

List awards and other recognition.

These will catch the employer's eye on a resume.

Include personal highlights and accomplishments.

Include anything else that will raise your value as a potential employee in the eyes of the employer. Be sure to mention activities and accomplishments such as volunteerism, publications, team and individual sports participation, and leadership in professional/community organizations.

Never exaggerate your qualifications, skills or experience.

Chances are, exaggerations will be exposed during a background check or an interview, which will hurt your chances of getting a job. If discovered later, they may result in loss of your job and may taint your reputation in the industry.

Prioritize your accomplishments and skills.

Impressiveness, uniqueness and relevance to the prospective position should determine the order when listing accomplishments and skills. Resumes are scanned quickly, so don't bury the skill or job experience that would be most likely to impress a recruiter.

Write with active verbs.

Try to begin each sentence with action words, such as "developed," "initiated," or "managed" to strengthen your resume.

Stay focused.

Summarize qualifications and experience related to your field. Do not list odd jobs, or irrelevant job training or courses.

Avoid sending your resume as an email attachment.

If sending your resume electronically, avoid sending it as an email attachment (unless you are invited by the employer to do so). Paste your resume within the body of your email instead. This avoids potential virus and compatibility issues, making it easier for a recruiter to scan your resume.

Effective Sentence Openers (Action Verbs)

Absorbed	Defined	Handled	Observed	Scheduled
Accelerated	Delegated	Headed	Obtained	Searched
Accomplished	Delivered	Helped	Opened	Secured
Achieved	Demonstrated	Hired	Operated	Selected
Acted	Designed	Hypothesized	Organized	Served
Added	Determined		Originated	Set up
Administered	Developed	Identified	Outlined	Shipped Showed
Advised	Devised	Illustrated	Overhauled	Sold
Analyzed	Diagnosed	Implemented	Oversaw	Solved
Applied	Differentiated	Improved		Sorted
Appraised	Directed	Incorporated	Packaged	Staffed
Approved	Discovered	Increased	Patrolled	Standardized
Arranged	Disseminated	Informed	Performed	Structured
Assembled	Distributed	Influenced	Persuaded	Studied
Assisted	Diverted	Initiated	Photocopied	Summarized
Attained	Doubled	Innovated	Picked out	Supervised
Attended	Drove	Inspected	Pioneered	Surpassed
Automated	Duplicated	Installed	Planned	Synthesized
		Instituted	Positioned	
Balanced	Earned	Instructed	Posted	Tabulated
Bought	Edited	Integrated	Prepared	Taught
Budgeted	Eliminated	Interpreted	Presented	Traced
Built	Employed	Interviewed	Presided	Tracked
	Enabled	Introduced	Processed	Traded
Carried	Enacted	Invented	Produced	Trained
Catalogued	Encouraged	Invested	Programmed	Transferred
Centralized	Enlarged	Investigated	Promoted	Translated
Changed	Enlisted		Provided	Trimmed
Checked	Ensured	Judged	Published	Tripled
Clarified	Equipped		Purchased	Turned around
Classified	Established	Launched		
Cleaned	Evaluated	Learned	Qualified	Uncovered
Closed	Examined	Lectured	Questioned	Undertook
Coached	Executed	Led		Unified
Collaborated	Exceeded	Leveraged	Recommended	Updated
Collated	Expanded	Listed	Recorded	Upgraded
Compared	Expedited	Located	Recruited	Used
Compelled	Experimented	Logged	Rectified	Utilized
Composed	Extracted	Lowered	Redesigned	
Computed			Reduced	Verbalized
Conceived	Facilitated	Maintained	Refined	Verified
Condensed	Fed	Managed	Related	
Conducted	Finalized	Marketed	Repositioned	Withdrew
Controlled	Financed	Masterminded	Reorganized	Withstood
Converted	Folded	Measured	Reported	Won
Conveyed	Forecasted	Mediated	Researched	Wrote
Coordinated	Formulated	Merged	Reshaped	
Corrected	Fostered	Minimized	Resolved	
Corresponded	Found	Moderated	Responded	
Counseled	Furnished	Modernized	Restored	
Created		Modified	Restructured	
Cut back on	Generated	Motivated	Reviewed	
	Grouped		Revised	

10 Tips for Creating a Cover Letter That Gets Results

1. Write a letter to a specific person.....the person you think is the one who would hire you.
 - * Write to a specific person. If you don't know the name, call and find out. Call and ask for the company's mailing address – then ask the name of the specific person you're looking for (Director of Marketing, etc.). Asking for an address makes it more likely that you'll get the information you want rather than asking only for the name of the person with a specific title.
2. Do your research.
 - * You want to demonstrate that you know something about the company you are applying at, something that you had to do some research to find out. Such information can be found on web sites, local newspapers, etc.
 - * Customizing your letter to a particular company is impressive and makes you stand out from other job seekers.
3. Tell the reader what you can do for the company, not what you what the company to do for you.
 - *Begin by stating some specific way in which you can help the company or department accomplish a particular goal, preferably giving an outstanding example of a related accomplishment.
4. Be specific about the job you are seeking.
 - *Employers want you to have already done your homework and figured out exactly what job you want.
5. Mention only accomplishments that directly relate to the job you're wanting to get.
6. Keep it brief, to the point and simple.
 - *Your cover letter should be short and to the point. Rarely should it be longer than one page. Remember, you are trying to capture the reader's interest in knowing more about you. Telling your life story is boring.
7. Make it easy on the eyes.
 - *When you've finished writing you letter, print it up and take a "big picture" look at it. Is it visually appealing? Is there plenty of white space (using bullets increases the white space)? Does it look un-crowded? Does it look like a letter you would want to read?

8. Close with an invitation for the reader to act.

*Why are you writing a cover letter? Answer: To get an interview. So tell the reader you would like to talk or meet and include these words: "Please give me a call at such-and-such phone number." Don't say "I'll give you a call in a few days to follow up and see if you're interested in meeting." That statement encourages that reader who might be ready to pick up the phone to put the letter aside and wait for your call. You've lost the interest and momentum you worked so hard to achieve.

9. Follow up with a phone call or a second letter with a week.

*People get busy. They intend to call but get sidetracked by other priorities. Don't assume that someone isn't interested just because they don't call you after your first letter. So give the person a call if possible; if you can't reach him or her, write a second letter but adding some new quantified accomplishments. Again, ask the person to call you and give your phone number.

10. Proofread your draft.

*You cannot afford one mistake or slip. Use your spelling checker and check all names carefully. Read the draft several times and make sure you have included all the necessary information. Check your punctuation, grammar and consistency of capital letters and names. Ask a friend to check it over.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

1234 South Plaza
Chicago, Illinois 60228
August 20, 2006

Sally Smith
Director of Personnel
Bank of Illinois
456 Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60222

Dear Ms. Smith:

The accompanying resume is in response to your listing in the Chicago Tribune for a security officer.

I am especially interested in this position because my experience as a senior security professional in the Army has prepared me for a disciplined, secure work environment and the challenges associated with unexpected events. I'm looking forward to using this experience for enhancing the security of a growing and community-conscious bank.

I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss how my experience will best meet your needs. My ideas on how to improve your bank's security posture may be of particular interest to you. I will follow up with you in a few days to answer any preliminary questions you may have. In the meantime, you may reach me at (123) 321-5555.

Sincerely yours,

Joyce Peterson