

Are Your Personal Interests in Your Résumé's Best Interest?

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When writing your resume, you may find yourself wondering if you should add a Personal Interest section. You'll find that many people like and dislike the personal interest section. Some advantages to having this section in your resume are: displaying strong knowledge of a subject or a skill, and establishing a connection with your interviewer. However, your employer may find it a waste, or it can be a distraction if he/she dislikes your personal interests. This section is mainly used for the candidate to tell the employer a little more about themselves. It can be beneficial if their personal interests coincide with the company's workplace. You should keep in mind that adding a personal interest section does not necessarily mean that you will get hired. Keep in mind that you don't want your interviewer to judge you based on your resume, but rather at the interview itself.



Professional resume writers are in disagreement regarding whether or not a resume should include a Personal Interests — or “Interests” section. Half find it interesting; half find it irrelevant—those who even have an opinion on this questionable resume accessory. A lot of employers are not concerned either way and will not hold it against you if you have an Interests section on your resume. For some candidates, however, it is a decision worth bearing in mind. If you are one of these candidates, consider the following regarding your

resume and the possibility of a personal interest section:

Advantages

- It can display a strong knowledge of a subject or a skill applicable to the job you seek.
- It can indicate positive traits such as being in good health or having a versatile personality.
- Most importantly, it can establish a connection with the interviewer and provide for a comfortable atmosphere of conversation.

Disadvantages

- It can be viewed as a meaningless waste of space at the bottom of your resume, even so far as to seem like you are not serious about your candidacy.
- It can act as a distraction if the employer happens to detest your personal interests.

The reason most candidates decide to use the Interests section is because they want to tell the employer something more personal about themselves to show that they are unique individuals who can bring more than just professionalism and experience to the table. These candidates believe that subjects like sports, travel, and hobbies will add a touch of personality to their resumes and demonstrate that they, as faceless applicants, are not as two-dimensional as the paper their qualifications are printed upon. You can add an Interests section if you truly believe your personal activities will enhance your work experience. Cinema is a nice addition if you are going into Entertainment Law. Travel will work if you know the company will send you out of town frequently. Sometimes your activities and hobbies will indicate an important skill you will offer the employer. Practicing martial arts shows that you have patience and fortitude. International cooking might suggest that you will implement excellent attention to detail and time management abilities.

If you are a candidate for a company that does substantial business abroad, the Interests section is a way of telling the employer that your hobbies and activities are relevant. Submitting a résumé to a U.S. company doing business in certain foreign countries could be another example. On such a résumé, an “Interests” section would show a prospective employer that your hobbies and activities are harmonious with that part of the world. For example, if you are an avid World Cup fan, you will have something in common with your continental counterparts who frequent football matches.



Keep in mind that anything you write in the Interest section will more than likely not lead the employer to deem you the best candidate of the lot.

Simply put, the best reason to add an Interests section is if you have some extra space at the bottom of your resume.

Students and recent graduates might find an Interest section helpful if they don't have a lot of experience for an ideally presentable resume. Otherwise, students and new graduates can also add an Activities section to showcase any leadership or teamwork experiences they might have gained while volunteering or participating in organized activities. Unlike the old “References Available Upon Request” eyesore, the Interests section is debatable. Posting that you will give references if asked is unnecessary, and employers assume that you will give them when requested. If you do not, more than likely, you will not be considered any longer. Bringing a list of references to the interview is standard practice, however.

If you have white space in your resume, your interests could help you. But they could also leave a lasting negative impression if the employer doesn't take them seriously or doesn't like what you like.

A better point to consider is that you should not include anything in your resume that will make the employer think twice about calling you for an interview. This is why attaching photos and listing religious and political affiliations can be harmful to your objective. Since the point of your resume is to get an interview, you want the employer to judge you at the interview, not beforehand. Photos are fine if you are going into acting. Your membership to the Republican Charity Association of Wisconsin might help if you know the company votes that way. Your acting as Chair for a Christian organization might not benefit you if you apply to a firm of non-believers who might not want to risk the presence of a “Holy Roller.” All the same, the main question to ask before including an Interest section to your resume is: “How will my interests be judged on paper before I am judged at the interview?”