

Writing the Perfect Resume to Get the Perfect Job

Writing the perfect resume will increase your chances for getting hired for the perfect job you've always wanted. In order to do this successfully, you must take the time to plan. In doing so, your employer will know exactly if you are the person they are looking for. Your resume should reflect the skills and interests you have. If you want a particular job, find out what skills it requires and how you can acquire them. Including your past job experience will help the employer get a sense of what experience you've had. Be sure to include the dates of these jobs and to avoid gaps. Training and education are also important to include. Make sure everything is in a chronological or functional format. Meaning, the skills you listed are relevant and present you as a better candidate. Now, that you've created your resume, you'll need a cover letter. Your cover letter will be the first thing they see and it's crucial that it's professional. Look in the library for examples. Keep it short and simple. Careful attention to your resume will increase the chances that you will get you the job you want.



Writing a resume can seem like a daunting task, but it doesn't have to be. With a little forethought and planning, you can write the perfect resume.

To begin the planning you must decide what type of job you will apply for. Obviously, you would need a different resume for an administrative assistant job than you would for a payroll clerk job. Your resume must highlight your strengths as they apply to the job at hand.

Do you think you don't have time for all this? Well, planning really does pay off! Prospective employers receive hundreds of resumes for every job they advertise. Do you think they have the time to read and study each one? How will they decide which resumes are worth reading all the way through? If you list *all* of your skills and experiences, the prospective employer will think you don't have a clue what their job is all about and will toss your resume.

Therefore, it is important to find out all you can about the company and the open position. Once you've done so, you can show how your experience will fit their requirements and how you will add value to their company. Employers want to receive the best return on their investment that is possible. You must show them why you are the best candidate.

Put yourself in the place of a prospective employer. If you were looking for a legal assistant, would you be interested in hearing about a candidate's administrative assistant experience? Probably not. However, your experiences and duties as an administrative assistant could increase your chances of obtaining a legal assistant position if you were to successfully demonstrate their relevance to the legal assistant position. Nevertheless, you would definitely want to emphasize your legal experiences and duties first.

All of this is fine and dandy if you are an experienced worker and know what kind of position you are looking for. But what if you aren't certain about the type of job you will be applying for? Can you write a "generic" resume? Sure you can.

Here's where you really need to toot your own horn. For some of us that's pretty difficult to do. But you really have to take stock of all of your strengths in order to sell yourself. Try following these steps:

1. Make a list of your strongest skills and interests.
2. Ask yourself what type of job you would like if you already had the training and skills necessary. What skills would that job require?
3. Find out what jobs in your area require the skills and relate to the interests you already have.

By taking this personal inventory, you stand a much better chance of finding a job that you not only will like but also are qualified to perform. Having this knowledge will make you more confident in writing your resume and will also make you more confident when it comes time for that all-important interview.

Describe each of your professional accomplishments in a simple action statement that emphasizes results that benefited your employer. Be sure to place the action words at or near the beginning of the line. Most prospective employers receive far too many resumes to read all the way through. If they're skimming, you want them to easily pick up on the most important points of your resume.



After you have made a list of your skills and accomplishments, make a list of the jobs you have held. Put them into chronological order, with the most recent listed first. It's important to list the years you held each job (e.g., 2001-2005), the job title, and the company's name and location.

Remember: you are trying to prove to the employer that your experience applies to their current vacancy. Be sure you include all your jobs, regardless of how long you held them. Prospective employers look for lapses between jobs and will question you about them if you secure an interview. Include these short-tenure jobs as a means of showing stability — that you lived in the same area for a long time, etc. However, sometimes these lapses will cause your resume to be thrown away.

Also include periods of volunteer work, especially if they fill in gaps between periods of paid employment and if your duties as a volunteer gave you experience that applies to the job you are now seeking.

You may want to consider leaving out short-tenure jobs from very long ago if you think they may indicate your approximate age and lead to age discrimination in the hiring process. Although age discrimination is illegal, it still happens. Non-selection of a candidate because of age happens frequently and is disguised as "less-qualified individual" in the official interview documents.

Next, you need to list your training and education. The fact that you don't have a college degree won't necessarily preclude you from being eligible for certain jobs that "require" a college degree. Many companies today acknowledge middle-aged workers and Baby Boomers as highly valuable employees. Many candidates from these groups do not have college degrees because obtaining a college degree was not as essential when they were younger as it is today.

Many companies' job descriptions indicate, "Four-year college degree required." However, it may be possible to substitute applicable work experience year for year for the required education. Check carefully for this type of

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clause in the job description. Also, remember that even if the job description does not state that experience can substitute for the required education, you can still apply for the job and explain why you think you're qualified in your cover letter.

After you have listed all of your qualifications, experience, and training and education, it is time to select your resume's format. This can be almost as important as the content itself. Here are the two most common formats:

- **Chronological:** Everything on the resume is arranged in the order that it happened, with the most recent job first. Chronological resumes work best when you're applying for a job in the same field and you have no lapses in employment.
- **Functional:** Everything is arranged by "relevant skills." This style works better when you want to emphasize the skills you've developed over the years but not the companies you've worked for. This style might also be better for you if you have developed skills through a hobby or volunteer work and you want to use those skills in a new job. These skills might not be obvious to a reader of your resume if you use the chronological style. If you use the functional style, your skills can be made more obvious because you're not limited to describing your activities under specific job titles.

When you sit down to begin writing, don't forget to use dynamic verbs such as "attained," "improved," "increased," "strengthened," "convinced," "expedited," "engineered," "overhauled," "upgraded," "introduced," "originated," "revitalized," "expanded," "resolved," and "transformed." Your resume should be targeted to the job and to the most critical skill area of the job. It should tell the reader, "This is what I've done and where I've done it, and these are the achievements to back up what I'm applying for."

There has been much discussion regarding whether a resume should fit on only one page. There are two schools of thought on that question. First, consider the content. If you have a very long employment history with varied skill sets, a second page would be warranted if you needed to include all your skill sets in your application. However, if you have always worked in similar positions, a functional resume could group all your skill sets together, and a one-page resume would work.

So, you have most of your resume finished. It's looking good, you have proofread it twice, it has no typos or incorrect words, and the grammar is proper. Now there is one more thing you need to do: write a one-paragraph summary, which should be placed at the very beginning. Many times a potential employer will read only this summary and decide if he or she wants to read further. You have to entice the employer with this summary.

Once you've finished your resume, what's your next step? A resume is meaningless unless it gets reviewed by potential employers. How do you get your resume into the hands of the people who count? You need a submission plan and a cover letter.

A submission plan outlines where and how you will look for work. Will you use the newspaper? Will you use an employment agency? Will you use the Internet? Will you canvass on foot the businesses where you would like to work? All of these are valid methods, and none should be left out.

Of course, you cannot just mail your resume to a business to apply for a job. You need to send a cover letter with it — a cover letter that points out quickly why you're qualified for the position and why the reader should not discard your resume but consider you for an interview.

This cover letter may be the one and only time the prospective employer reviews you and your qualifications for the job. It is a personal communication from you to the reader. Writing a cover letter should not be an intimidating task. It is just a simple, friendly communication outlining the main points of your resume.

When writing your cover letter, always use a properly formatted business letter style. There are books at the library with examples, or you can find sample letter styles on the Internet. Always use an inside address and address the letter to a person, not to "To Whom It May Concern." This shows a lack of respect and knowledge of the company to which you are applying. A little research will tell you whom to address the letter to.

Indicate in the opening that you know a little about their company by mentioning their expansion plan, the opening of a new location, etc. This shows that you have initiative and know how to get what you want. Express your enthusiasm for the available position, and summarize why you are the best candidate for the job. Also include a statement about how you can improve the company if hired. Be specific in this area.

At the end of your cover letter, take the initiative regarding the next step if possible. For example, you might write, "I will call your office next week to find out if we can meet soon."

Finally, your cover letter should be short and simple. Always keep it to one page.

If you follow these steps, you should end up with a resume that gets you noticed and hopefully gets you that interview. Good luck with your job search!