

the ultimate resume writing guide.



what to include on your resume

your full name and contact info

You may be surprised how many people forget to include these basic elements. Make sure your name and contact information is at the top of your resume where it's easy for recruiters to find. A phone number and personal (but professionally named) email should suffice. Don't use your current work email.

a professional summary

A brief summary at the top of your resume gives recruiters a quick run-down of your strengths. Make sure it's short and to the point. No rambling allowed. This isn't a memoir. Include information relevant to your work history and job skills.

work experience

This is the meat of your resume. List your experience in reverse chronological order, with a few bullet points outlining your accomplishments in each position. As a general rule, only include roles that are relevant to the job you're applying for.

awards you've won

Awards reflect positively on you. If you've won something, don't be afraid to show it off! Certifications obtained or awards won in your field set you apart from other candidates.

your education

Your post-secondary education is the highlight. Only include high school information if you graduated recently or it's your highest level of education.

community involvement

Do you have volunteering or community involvement under your belt? Employers love seeing potential employees engaged in their local communities. However, only include recent volunteering efforts. Leave out anything older than a few years.

hard skills

Focus on hard skills related to your industry. Generic skills like **organized**, **hardworking**, **people-person** and **team player** are overused to the point of exhaustion. Soft skills have their place, but it's not on your resume.



what to cut from your resume

objective statement

Objective statements are so last century. Don't bother with this archaic custom. Hiring managers know your objective is to get a job, no matter how you phrase it.

your photo

A few years ago it was trendy to include a headshot on your resume. Photos can come across as vain or distract from your actual qualifications. You may think you look great, but you never know what a hiring manager sees.

your address

Once upon a time it was standard to include your address on your resume. Today, a phone number and email address are all the contact info you need.

dated accomplishments

If it happened before you were a legal adult, wipe it from your resume. Winning a 'most punctual' award when you were 12 is not relevant and seems silly on your resume. It makes it seem like you don't have any recent accomplishments.

personal info

Personal information includes your birthday, marital status, political leanings, religious affiliation, information about your kids, or anything else hiring managers aren't entitled to know. Employers aren't allowed to consider any of these things during the hiring process, so there's no reason to include them.

buzzwords

There are few things more off-putting than someone who uses fancy words to sound intelligent (or in this case qualified for a job). You might think you sound trendy using words like synergy or disruptor, but we promise hiring managers won't think so. Ditch the buzzwords and use simple, clean language that describes what you do and the impact you had. There's no need to fluff up your resume with buzzwords.



action words to use on your resume

Peppering action words (a.k.a. verbs) into your writing gives your resume an instant boost. Action words make your resume more dynamic and add a storytelling element. Instead of listing what you're responsible for, describe what you did using action words. Even better: start sentences and bullet points with them. Below are some resume-friendly action words to kick start your creativity, though there's hundreds more to choose from!

accelerated	evaluated	outperformed
achieved	exceeded	oversaw
acquired	executed	persuaded
administered	expanded	planned
advised	explored	produced
advocated	facilitated	redesigned
aligned	formed	reduced
amplified	formulated	refined
assembled	generated	resolved
assessed	guided	restructured
capitalized	identified	reviewed
coordinated	implemented	secured
composed	improved	showcased
conserved	initiated	shaped
created	launched	spearheaded
customized	mapped	stimulated
demonstrated	maximized	strengthened
documented	measured	supervised
decreased	mentored	tracked
developed	modified	trained
devised	motivated	transformed
edited	operated	upgraded
engineered	orchestrated	
enhanced	organized	

phrases to avoid on your resume

helped with

If you include something on your resume, take responsibility for it. Strong verbs like managed, led, or directed are more powerful than helped or assisted. State how you contributed instead.

worked on

If it's on your resume, it's a given that you worked on it. Instead of saying 'I worked on X project,' find a relevant action verb to describe your participation. Did you analyze data? Draft content? Oversee strategy? Be specific.

generic positive words

This includes descriptors like excellent or great. Declaring yourself an 'excellent typist' is vague. Instead, say how many words you can type per minute. Quantifiable details are more powerful.

enthusiastic

Everyone is enthusiastic when looking for a job. Same goes for driven, motivated and passionate. These words are overused on resumes. Instead of stating you're enthusiastic, describe how or why you're enthusiastic.

duties included

A straight-forward list of the things you were responsible is a boring read. Instead of listing your daily responsibilities, focus on the results. What did you achieve through your work?

successful

If something made it onto your resume, it's a given it was a success. Instead of stating an initiative was successful, explain why. Did you grow revenue? Close a deal? Increase productivity?

proficient with

The worst offenders of the 'proficient' epidemic are Microsoft Office apps like Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Everyone is proficient with these applications. Unless they're central to your job, take them off your resume. Also, being 'proficient' sounds like you know the bare minimum. That's not something you want taking up space on your resume.

references available

It's expected that you have references. If a hiring manager wants to see them, they'll ask. Don't waste precious resume space on this outdated phrase.

general resume writing tips

keep it short and to the point

Good resume writing gets your point across succinctly. Aim for 2 pages or less. Don't think shrinking the text size is a clever way to squish your resume onto 2 pages, either. Hiring managers won't pull out a magnifying glass to read your resume. Eliminate unnecessary roles and information. Does a hiring manager really need to know you worked at a fast food joint in high school? Are you wasting precious space on statements like 'references upon request' or an objective statement? These things don't add value to your resume.

write with ATS in mind

In many organizations, the first review of your resume is performed by an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) which searches for relevant keywords and phrases. Read the job description carefully and use the language and terminology found in the posting on your resume to increase the odds of being shortlisted and having your resume land in the hands of an actual person.

focus on examples

Use examples to show your skills in action. For example, 'secured a deal with a new client,' 'boosted sales 30%,' and 'implemented a new filing system' are real life examples of your skills in action. You could have easily replaced these examples with generic skills like **client-oriented, strong sales initiative, and highly organized**. Without the examples to back them up, the skills carry less weight – you're asking hiring managers to take your word for it.

use subheads and bulleted lists

Large paragraphs are harder for the human eye to process quickly. Separate sections on your resume with short, clear subheads (i.e. job experience, achievements, certifications, education) that clearly communicate the information that will follow. Also make use of bulleted lists to communicate your responsibilities, skills and other information.

use the proper verb tense

Most elements on your resume are written in past tense. This signals that the events you're describing happened in the past. Most past tense verbs end in 'ed,' such as in 'managed.' If you're currently working on something, for instance an ongoing commitment, use present tense. On your resume this means verbs typically end with 's' such as in 'volunteers at the hospital every Tuesday.'



resume design tips

choose your font carefully

Select an easy-to-read font. First and foremost your resume must communicate information. When in doubt, err on the side of simplicity. Handwriting fonts tend to be harder to read, so stick with classics like Arial or Tahoma. Also avoid extras like drop shadows, glow fonts, bevels or other font stylization.

optimize the top half of the first page

The top half of the first page is where your name, contact info and strongest qualifications should go. Front-load information that grabs attention. There's no point in hiding your best skills on the last page; chances are the hiring manager won't make it that far if you don't hook them earlier.

save your resume as a PDF or word file

Make sure that your resume is saved as a Word document or a text-readable PDF, so it can be read by applicant tracking systems, which pre-screen resumes for keywords identified by the recruiter. If your resume is a flat image (for instance a .jpg or a print-only PDF) text can't be scanned.

use white space to your advantage

White space is the blank area around text. Adequate white space ensures your resume is easy to read. Avoid lengthy blocks of text and use bullet points wherever it makes sense. Keep those bullet points to 1 line or less and use no more than 6 bullets in a row. Using these techniques increases white space and makes the information on your resume more accessible and memorable.

use an accent colour

Your resume should be clean and presentable, but a splash of colour or personality makes your resume stand out in a sea of resumes void of personality. Imagine you're flipping through 200 papers, but only a few have colour or differ from the others – those are the ones that catch your eye first.

know your audience

If you're applying to an extremely traditional organization – think a law firm – it's usually safer to stick with a simple, clean design. If you're applying to a job in a creative field, more design flair is probably expected.



resume editing tips

A typo can kill a great resume. Don't make the mistake of pouring your heart and soul into an awesome resume only to have it tossed because you didn't check for errors. We can't emphasize enough how important it is to proofread your resume carefully.

don't rely on spellcheck

Spellcheck often misses contextual errors or proper names. Technology has a way of assuming what we meant to say, even if it's incorrect, inappropriate, or out of context. There's so much at stake. Did you catch the error in the last sentence? Spellcheck didn't. Instead of **steak** it should have been **stake**. These are the kinds of errors you need to proofread to catch. Spellcheck is also unreliable when checking words like its/it's, their/there/they're, and your/you're – always make sure the correct versions are used.

be consistent

Your font and spellings should be consistent. If you've copied and pasted parts of your resume from other versions, you may inadvertently include a different font type or size. Check for consistency in formatting, spacing, bullet points – anything that might pull a reader away from the information at hand. You don't want readers distracted by bullet arrows that become dots when they should be focused on your accomplishments. Also check for consistency in punctuation, capital letters, hyphens and use of bold and italics.

read it backward

This is an old proofreading technique. Sentence by sentence, read your resume from the bottom up. This forces your brain to read the document with fresh eyes and helps catch errors you might miss after labouring over your resume for hours. Reading backwards stops you from automatically filling in words or making other corrections that aren't reflected in the text.

read it out loud

When you hear words aloud, it's easier to catch errors and understand how it 'sounds' to a recruiter. Will you feel silly doing it? Most likely. But this process finds specific errors that have less to do with content and more to do with asking your brain to consider the content in a different way.

