How to write a winning Resume

Introduction

Summarising your experience, qualifications and skills onto a few sheets of paper is no easy task. However, in today's competitive job market, getting your Resume up to a high standard is critical for landing your dream role.

Your Resume is the first impression you will give to a prospective employer and, just like any good greeting, you need it to be strong, to-the-point and representative of all your best traits.

This guide will take you through each step of drafting a Resume, one that best highlights your skills and experiences in a professional and concise way to make you stand out from the competition.

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Should you write a Resume from scratch or edit an existing one?

Ideally, you should be frequently updating your Resume with your new roles, achievements and qualifications. If this is the case, you already have a good skeleton to start from and can tidy up from there. However, if your resume is looking a little dusty, it might be a good time to turn over a new leaf and create a whole new document.

Regardless of which method you choose, you need to ensure that the formatting and layout is optimised to be read quickly and easily. This means choosing a simple, readable font that looks professional. Arial, Times New Roman or possibly Tahoma are all good font choices for an effective Resume.

Remember to insert appropriate subheadings and bullet points as this will help guide the employer through your resume smoothly and quickly. These headings are also a good place to add a subtle pop of colour if you want to give your resume a little personality.

There is no one structure that is best for a Resume so be sure to experiment with different layouts and templates to find one that you like.

Keeping it concise and simple

Research from job search site The Ladders found that a recruiter will spend just over **six seconds** looking over a CV before making a decision. Long, winding paragraphs will quickly lose their interest before you can convey all your valuable experience and skills.

Through eye-tracking, the organisation also found that employers focus most of their attention on the name of your previous and current company, start and end dates and educational sections, so it's important these are clear and easy to understand.

The length of your CV will depend on your experience and job history, but keeping everything to within three pages is preferred, while two pages is generally considered the ideal length.
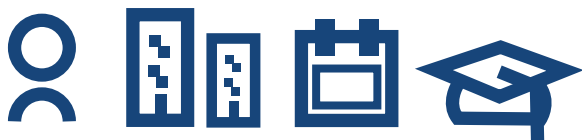
...employers focus most of their attention on the name of your previous and current company, start and end dates and educational sections....

What should you avoid putting in your Resume?

As explained earlier, there is no room in a resume for irrelevant details, which means you may have to take a critical eye to see what needs to be cut.

While a mission statement can be useful in certain situations, the Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing (CSTW) of Ohio State University explained that this must be used sparingly. For example, a career objective is often too vague or poorly worded and wastes your valuable page space.

However, Jane Heifetz of the Harvard Business Review argues that a short, punchy statement tailored to each application can help make an impact from the moment a prospective employer picks up your Resume. This should highlight your particular expertise relevant to the role and the time spent in the industry.

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Another important consideration is avoiding fluffy, cliche or confusing phrases. According to a survey conducted by CareerBuilder, some phrases that hiring managers name among their pet peeves include go-to person, think outside of the box, go-getter and results-driven as they don't convey much information and often sound insincere.

Strong words with a clear meaning like achieved, managed, created, ideas and resolved are more likely to impress an employer.

For the rest of your Resume, think carefully about the company you are applying for and if they would be interested in all the elements of the Resume. For example, a finance company hiring for a back-office position may not be particularly interested in your customer service role, while an office looking for a temporary receptionist will find that especially relevant.
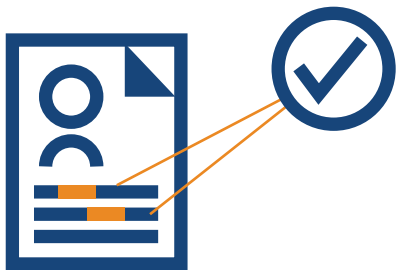
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Selling yourself

The competitive nature of job hunting can be daunting for some, but for those who know how to express their talents and specific achievements, winning over an employer is a much easier undertaking.

With this in mind, the main aim of your Resume should be about communicating the value you have contributed in each previous role and how this will transfer to your new prospective job. As the old saying goes, actions speak louder than words, so it is important to demonstrate you have the abilities to succeed in a prospective role.

For each role, list four to five key achievements that you have accomplished. These could range from significantly increasing sales through implementing a cost reduction strategy or completely turning around an unhappy and demanding client. Use quantifiable data or evidence to back up your achievements and be specific about the actions you took to secure the outcome.

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The finishing touches

Once you have finished your draft, there is still some work to be done before you can send it off to prospective clients. One of the most important parts of the editing process is to check and re-check your Resume for correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.

According to a recent audit from spell checking program Grammarly, the average Resume has around five spelling or grammar errors. While the occasional mistake is understandable, stating you are an "affective team leader" or that you were a "credit to you're team" are jarring mistakes that diminish the credibility of your application.

Getting a second, third or even fourth opinion is a great way to ensure there are no hidden mistakes within your Resume and that everything is clear, accurate and effective. Choose someone who has a strong way with words and who can give you tips on style, phrasing choices and layout to help craft your final copy.

With these tips under your belt, you will be able to best express your unique talents and skills to beat out the competition in the market. Having a high-quality Resume is a solid first impression that will get the recruitment process off to the best start possible.

Questions to answer in your Resume

WORK EXPERIENCE

1. What were the key tasks and responsibilities in your role?
2. What did you achieve during your time at a previous company that added value?
3. Did you earn promotions or take on new responsibilities in your role?

SKILLS

1. What are your five strongest qualities that set you apart as a candidate?
2. Which personal traits have been the most helpful to your career?
3. How have you developed technical knowledge and specialised skills?

QUALIFICATIONS

1. Do you have any training that is relevant to the role?
2. What did you achieve as part of a course?
3. Have you received any relevant awards or accreditations?

For Example: "Led a new digital marketing campaign which increased brand awareness by 55 per cent and raised revenue by 27 per cent over three months"