Resume Writing Tips

1. List your technical knowledge first, in an organized way. Your technical strengths must stand out clearly at the beginning of your resume. Ultimately, your resume is going to be read by a thoughtful human being, but before it gets to that point it often has to be categorized by an administrative clerk, and make its way past various sorts of key word searches. Therefore, you should list as many directly relevant buzz words as you can which reflect your knowledge and experience. List all operating systems and UNIX flavors you know. List all programming languages and platforms with which you're experienced. List all software you are skilled with. Make it obvious at a glance where your strengths lie - whether the glance is from a hiring manager, a clerk, or a machine.

2. List your qualifications in order of relevance, from most to least. Only list your degree and educational qualifications first if they are truly relevant to the job for which you are applying. If you've already done what you want to do in a new job, by all means, list it first, even if it wasn't your most recent job. Abandon any strict adherence to a chronological ordering of your experience.

3. Quantify your experience wherever possible. Cite numerical figures, such as monetary budgets/funds saved, time periods/efficiency improved, lines of code written/debugged, numbers of machines administered/fixed, etc. which demonstrate progress or accomplishments due directly to your work.

4. Begin sentences with action verbs. Portray yourself as someone who is active, uses their brain, and gets things done. Stick with the past tense, even for descriptions of currently held positions, to avoid confusion.

5. Don't sell yourself short. This is by far the biggest mistake of all resumes, technical and otherwise. Your experiences are worthy for review by hiring managers. Treat your resume as an advertisement for you. Be sure to thoroughly "sell" yourself by highlighting all of your strengths. If you've got a valuable asset which doesn't seem to fit into any existing components of your resume, list it anyway as its own resume segment.

6. Be concise. As a rule of thumb, resumes reflecting five years or less experience should fit on one page. More extensive experience can justify usage of a second page. Consider three pages (about 15 years or more experience) an absolute limit. Avoid lengthy descriptions of whole projects of which you were only a part. Consolidate action verbs where one task or responsibility encompasses other tasks and duties. Minimize usage of articles (the, an, a) and never use "I" or other pronouns to identify yourself.

7. Omit needless items. Leave all these things off your resume: social security number, marital status, health, citizenship, age, scholarships, irrelevant awards,

irrelevant associations and memberships, irrelevant publications, irrelevant recreational activities, a second mailing address ("permanent address" is confusing and never used), references, reference of references ("available upon request"), travel history, previous pay rates, previous supervisor names, and components of your name which you really never use (i.e. middle names).

8. Have a trusted friend review your resume. Be sure to pick someone who is attentive to details, can effectively critique your writing, and will give an honest and objective opinion. Seriously consider their advice. Get a third and fourth opinion if you can.

9. Proofread, proofread, proofread. Be sure to catch all spelling errors, grammatical weaknesses, unusual punctuation, and inconsistent capitalizations. Proofread it numerous times over at least two days to allow a fresh eye to catch any hidden mistakes.

10. Laser print it on plain, white paper. Handwriting, typing, dot matrix printing, and even ink jet printing look pretty cheesy. Stick with laser prints. Don't waste your money on special bond paper, matching envelopes, or any color deviances away from plain white. Your resume will be photocopied, faxed, and scanned numerous times, defeating any special paper efforts, assuming your original resume doesn't first end up in the circular file.

"Resume Writing Tips." 5 Mar. 2009
<http://www.myresumeonline.org/writing/tips.asp>.

Template for Chronological Resume

Name
Street • City, State Zip • Phone • Email

JOB OBJECTIVE

Very concisely state what job you would like next.

SUMMARY

- Write three or four bullet statements that summarize why you would be good at your job objective. Each statement should be no longer than two lines.
- Your statements should highlight your relevant strengths such as experience, skills, community service, and personality traits.
- Prioritize the statements in this section so the most relevant one comes first.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

COMPANY NAME, City, State, 20xx-present
Job Title
- Write two or more bullet statements about the work you performed on this job and what you learned or accomplished that's relevant to your job objective.
- Quantify results of your accomplishments when possible and appropriate; refer to how you positively affected the organization, the bottom line, your boss, co-workers, or customers.
- Mention on-the-job awards or commendations you received that relate to your job objective.

COMPANY NAME, City, State, 20xx-xx
Job Title
- Write two or more bullet statements about the work you performed on this job and what you learned or accomplished that's relevant to your job objective. Follow the tips mentioned above.
- Prioritize the statements under each Job Title section so the most relevant one comes first.

COMPANY NAME, City, State, 19xx-xx
Job Title
- Write two or more bullet statements about the work you performed on this job and what you learned or accomplished that's relevant to your job objective. Follow the tips mentioned above.
- Prioritize the statements under each Job Title section so the most relevant one comes first.

EDUCATION

Degree, Major [if relevant], 20xx
School, City, State

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Organization, Position held, 20xx-present
Organization, Position held, 20xx-xx

Template for Functional Resume

NAME

Street • City, State Zip • Phone • Email

JOB OBJECTIVE

Very concisely state what job you would like next.

HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Write three or four bullet statements that summarize why you would be good at your job objective. Each statement should be no longer than two lines.
- Your statements should highlight your relevant strengths such as experience, skills, community service, and personality traits.
- Prioritize the statements in this section so the most relevant one comes first.

PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

KEY SKILL

- Write two or more bullet statements about employment or volunteer activities in which you used this skill.
- Quantify results of your accomplishments when possible and appropriate; refer to how you positively affected the organization, the bottom line, your boss, co-workers, or customers.
- Mention awards or commendations you received that required this skill.
- If you used this skill to solve problems, briefly describe the problems and results.

KEY SKILL

- Write two or more bullet statements, following the tips mentioned under the first Key Skill section.
- Prioritize the statements under each Key Skill section so the most relevant one comes first.

WORK HISTORY

20xx-present	ORGANIZATION, City, State Job Title
19xx-xx	ORGANIZATION, City, State Job Title
19xx-xx	ORGANIZATION, City, State Job Title

EDUCATION

Degree, Major [if relevant], 20xx
School, City, State

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Position held, Organization, 20xx-present
Position held, Organization, 20xx-xx

Resume Cover Letters

You will need a cover letter whenever you send a resume or application form to a potential employer.

The letter should capture the employer's attention, show why you are writing, indicate why your employment will benefit the company, and ask for an interview. The kind of specific information that must be included in a letter means that each must be written individually. Each letter must also be typed perfectly, which may present a problem. Word processing equipment helps. Frequently only the address, first paragraph, and specifics concerning an interview will vary. These items are easily changed on word processing equipment and memory typewriters. If you do not have access to such equipment, you might be able to rent it. Or you might be able to have your letters typed by a resume or employment services company listed in the yellow pages. Be sure you know the full cost of such a service before agreeing to use one.

Let's go through a cover letter point by point.

Salutation

Each letter should be addressed by name to the person you want to talk with. That person is the one who can hire you. This is almost certainly not someone in the personnel department, and it is probably not a department head either. It is most likely to be the person who will actually supervise you once you start work. Call the company to make sure you have the right name. And spell it correctly.

Opening

The opening should appeal to the reader. Cover letters are sales letters. Sales are made after you capture a person's attention. You capture the reader's attention most easily by talking about the company rather than yourself. Mention projects under development, recent awards, or favorable comments recently published about the company. You can find such information in the business press, including the business section of local newspapers and the many magazines that are devoted to particular industries. If you are answering an ad, you may mention it. If someone suggested that you write, use their name (with permission, of course).

Body

The body of the letter gives a brief description of your qualifications and refers to the resume, where your sales campaign can continue.

Closing

You cannot have what you do not ask for. At the end of the letter, request an interview. Suggest a time and state that you will confirm the appointment. Use a standard complimentary close, such as "Sincerely yours," leave three or four lines for your signature, and type your name. I would type my phone number under my name; this recommendation is not usually made, although phone numbers are found on most letterheads. The alternative is to place the phone number in the body of the letter, but it will be more difficult to find there should the reader wish to call you.

"Resume Cover Letters." 5 Mar. 2009 <http://www.myresumeonline.org/cover-letters/>.

Template for Resume Cover Letter

Your name
Mailing address
City, state, and zip
Telephone number(s)
Email address

Today's date

Your addressee's name
Professional title
Organization name
Mailing address
City, state and zip

Dear Mr. (or Ms.) last name,

Start your letter with a grabber—a statement that establishes a connection with your reader, a probing question, or a quotable quote. Briefly say what job you are applying for.

The mid-section of your letter should be one or two short paragraphs that make relevant points about your qualifications. You should not summarize your resume! You may incorporate a column or bullet point format here.

Your last paragraph should initiate action by explaining what you will do next (e.g., call the employer) or instigate the reader to contact you to set up an interview. Close by saying "thank you."

Sincerely yours,

Your handwritten signature

Your name (typed)

Enclosure: resume

Career Article 110: Action Words

By Tamara Dowling, CPRW

Nearly every book or article on the topic of résumé writing will advise you to use high-impact action words, and avoid the passive tense.

When you sit down and actually write, it is tough to come up with some original words.

Here is a list of powerful action words.

-A-

Accelerated
Accomplished
Achieved
Adapted
Administered
Advised
Analyzed
Arranged
Assembled
Assumed responsibility

-B-

Balanced
Blazed
Billed
Built

-C-

Carried out
Channeled
Collected
Communicated
Compiled
Completed
Conceived
Conducted
Controlled
Contracted
Coordinated
Counseled
Created
Cut

-D-

Delegated
Demonstrated
Designed
Determined
Developed
Directed
Dispatched
Distributed
Documented

-E-

Earned
Edited
Effected
Eliminated
Enabled
Energized
Established
Evaluated
Expanded
Expedited

-F-

Facilitated
Found
Functioned as

-G-

Gained
Gathered
Generated

Graded
Graduated

-H-

Handled
Hired

-I-

Increased
Influenced
Implemented
Improved
Initiated
Innovated
Inspected
Installed
Instituted
Instructed
Interpreted
Interviewed
Introduced
Invented
Issued

-L-

Launched
Lectured
Led

-M-

Maintained
Managed
Mastered
Met with
Modernized
Motivated

-N-

Negotiated

-O-

Operated
Optimized
Originated
Orchestrated

Ordered
Organized
Oversaw

-P-

Participated
Performed
Pinpointed
Planned
Prepared
Presented
Produced
Programmed
Proved
Provided
Published
Purchased

-R-

Recommended
Recorded
Recruited
Reduced
Referred
Reinforced
Represented
Researched
Revamped
Reviewed
Revised
Revitalized

-S-

Saved
Scheduled
Screened
Served
Set up
Simplified
Sold
Solved
Spearheaded
Standardized
Steered
Structured
Suggested
Supervised
Supported
Surpassed

-T-

Taught
Tested
Trained
Translated
Tripled
Typed

-U-

Underwrote
Updated
Used

-W-

Won
Wrote