

Top 15 Resume Writing Tips

10 SECONDS AND COUNTING

Recruiters spend an average of 10 seconds reviewing each resume, so you'll want yours to be...

- 1) Concise (You only have 10 seconds)
- 2) Structured (You only have 10 seconds)
- 3) Specific (You guessed it...10 seconds)

Brian Shoicket, Dean of University & Community Partnerships at Wakefield Media

ADD A LINK

Sometimes the hiring manager or HR representative may not be familiar with your former company. I suggest adding a hyperlink to the company in the Experience section of your resume. Consistency is key though and a hyperlink should be added for each company listed on your resume. Doing this quickly allows the decision maker to review a company's products or services. Also since an increasing number of hiring managers are turning to social media to search for employees, it makes sense to include a hyperlink to your LinkedIn profile in the Contact information section of the resume.

Nancy Range Anderson, Author of Job Search for Moms and President of Blackbird Learning Associates

BEFORE YOUR WRITE YOUR RESUME

To out distance your job-seeking competitors, follow this best practice... before writing your resume. Make a list of 10-15 (or more) mutual good-fit employers to target.

Do research on them to determine what makes you uniquely qualified to help them meet their current challenges, for market intelligence, and to uncover relevant keywords and phrases. Use this information to create content for your personal brand messaging and career marketing materials (resume, biography, LinkedIn profile, etc.) that will resonate with those target employers.

Meg Guiseppi, Executive Job Search and Personal Branding Strategist for the C-suite, and CEO of Executive Career Brand

BE SPECIFIC ABOUT YOUR QUALIFICATIONS

When applying for a position, prepare a cover letter that picks up 3 - 4 key qualifications listed in the job description and be very specific with regards to what you can offer pertaining directly to those qualifications.

Lori Dermer, Dermer Consulting

CAREER SUMMARIES OR OBJECTIVES

A career summary is recommended for most candidates, however there are exceptions. For instance, if you have less than five years of work experience or if you're changing careers, you'll want to have a one to two sentence objective statement.

Your objective statement should describe the industry you are targeting. If you're one of the many candidates that should include a career summary be sure that it is a snapshot of your work experience and offer insight into the skills and attributes you offer. A career summary will typically be in a block paragraph format and run about 3 to 5 sentences long.

John Scott, Career Advocate, Beyond.com - The Career Network

CUSTOMIZE YOUR RESUME

Each time, before you send your resume for a specific position, research the position and company (including speaking with current or former employees, if you can) so you have a better understanding of the goals and culture of the company, how the position fits within the organization, and the skills and qualities that are an ideal match for the position. Then, customize your resume to reflect the priorities emphasized by the company for this position, using language similar to theirs. This also means resisting the urge to tell them everything you've done and can do. Rather, look at your resume from the employer's perspective. What do they need to know to be moved to contact you for an interview? Select the skills, qualities, accomplishments, and experiences that speak directly to their stated and implied needs.

Shahzad Arasteh, Author of Nourish Your Career, Holistic Career Counselor, and Speaker

DEMONSTRATE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Ensure your resume is a forward looking document that demonstrates how your achievements are in alignment with results desired by the hiring organization. Do not write a historically-focused document that simply shows where you have been - show where you are going and how you will add value.

Lisa Rangel, Chameleon Resumes

FOCUS ON YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The most important resume tip I offer is that you need to make the focus of the job descriptions listed on the resume a summary of what you accomplished and contributed in each of your positions. Employers are more interested in these than in what you actually did on the jobs. My second most important tip is to tell the truth. Yes, obviously you don't want to lie about where you worked or what you did, but it's the little lies that will trip up your application. Things like disguising gaps in employment by only using years or implying that you earned a degree - when you didn't, give a potential employer a red flag about your integrity.

Susan Heathfield, Human Resources Expert, About.com

INCORPORATE KEYWORDS

Print job postings you're interested in and highlight keywords. Are these words used on your resume? Transform your resume from a job description to a series of accomplishment statements that are of interest to the company by incorporating those keywords.

Distribute your resume to close friends, family and references and ask them, "Does this resume communicate my strengths and experiences in a way that will be interesting to the person interviewing me?" Friends and family can be excellent resources for pointing out strengths you have not recognized about yourself.

Robin Richards, Chairman and CEO of CareerArc Group

KEYWORDS AS HEADLINES

Resumes used to feature a list of keywords to entice the computerized Applicant Tracking System (ATS). Unfortunately, a list of terms isn't very enticing to human eyes and doesn't differentiate a candidate from others with the same list of skills.

Instead, use these same keywords as "headlines" for bullet items and give an example from your experience. Like this: Project Management: Initiated and implemented national merchandising program for big box retailer.

Jeri Hird Dutcher, National Award-winning Certified Resume Writer, WorkwriteResumes.com

MATCH YOUR RESUME TO YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

Make sure your resume is online! Once you have your perfect document in place, update your LinkedIn profile so it matches, include your job information on Facebook and Twitter, start an About.me page, or create a professional blog for yourself where your resume information can be posted. When employers search for you online (and they will!), it will be a tremendous help to make it easy for them to find the same information confirming what they're reading on your resume.

Sara Sutton Fell, Founder & CEO of FlexJobs.com

NOT A LAUNDRY LIST

A resume should not be a laundry list of "stuff" you've done. It is a marketing document, and should directly address the target employer's needs by including your specific skills and accomplishments. Before writing a resume, be sure to study job descriptions and collect as much information about organizations that interest you as possible. Then, you can make a clear case for why you are the perfect person to address and solve that company's challenges.

Miriam Salpeter, Author of Social Networking for Career Success, New Economy Job Search Coach & Social Media Consultant, Keppie Careers

RESUME LENGTH

A simple rule with flexibility is that if you have more than seven years of experience, your resume should be two pages. With less experience, write a one page resume. Your resume should never be more than two pages. For people who are older or in areas such as Management Consulting, like myself, create a biography to retain everything you have done.

Jay Martin, Chairman, JobSerf, Inc.

RESUMES FOR CAREER CHANGERS

Career changers ask career coaches how to format their resume for a new position or industry but first it would be helpful to do something to signify to hiring managers that you are serious about the new career. Join the professional association, do relevant volunteer work, take a skills-building class. Any accomplishments in your desired career field are better than a beautifully formatted resume that lacks proof that you really know anything about the new career path.

Janet Scarborough Civitelli, Ph.D., Career Coach, VocationVillage.com

THROW YOUR RESUME OUT

The best thing you can do with your resume is throw it out. That's right: Don't use a resume to impress an employer, because it won't. Write a mini business plan for the job instead - and submit it to the hiring manager, not to HR, and not to some "applicant tracking system." You don't know the manager? Then you have no business applying for the job. The information you submit should be about the manager and your plan for fixing her problems - not about you. This approach is actually fun, because you must focus on one job at a time, which in turn means you must choose wisely, and meet the manager first. After all, isn't that how you behave when you're on the job?

Nick Corcodilos, host of asktheheadhunter.com and author of Fearless Job Hunting