

7 Tips to Write a Great Resume

What does it take to write a great resume? A great resume demonstrates your skills and tells the story behind your accomplishments. It catches the hiring manager's eye and gets your foot in the door at the company. That might sound easy but, for many people, writing a good resume can be overwhelming. They may wonder, "how do I capture everything I have done in 1 to 2 pages?"

The 7 tips below will answer this question and provide tangible steps for writing a great resume. Follow these tips and instead of feeling overwhelmed you may actually feel excited about crafting a resume that tells your story and makes you stand out from the crowd!

Tip 1: Tell Your Story

If someone, who did not know you, read your resume what information would she take away? Would she be able to articulate any of the following?

- What skills you have.
- What you have accomplished in your career.
- What your experiences demonstrate.
- What kind of job you would be ideal for.

A good resume tells your story. It demonstrates where you have been, what achievements you have accomplished, and what skills you have developed. Would a person reading your resume understand your story? Better yet, would that person be able to articulate your story back to you... or to someone else, like a hiring manager?

Tip 2: Customize Your Resume for Each Position

Tailor your resume to match each position. First, read the job requirements carefully. Next, review your resume and address the questions below:



- What are the desired skills and requirements for the job?
- Do you have bullet points that address the skills and requirements?
- Where are those bullet points located in your list?

Relate your skills to the listed qualifications for the position. Don't make the employer work to figure out how you meet those requirements. Put your best foot forward and make the connection between the list of what they are looking for and your experience.

Ideally, your bullet points should demonstrate your skills and accomplishments related to the *most important* qualifications. Place the applicable bullet points near the top of your list so the employer will see them first. Do this for each job you apply for!

Tip 3: Write a Results-Oriented Resume

Your resume should focus on results you accomplished and not on the tasks you were responsible for. I tell my clients that an easy method for doing this is to ask the "So what?" question. After each bullet point, ask yourself, "So what?"

For example, your bullet point reads, "Created an email marketing campaign." Now ask yourself, "So what?", meaning, what was the result of this campaign? Why would I, as a hiring manager, care about reading this information? Your answer may be, "Well this campaign landed a click through rate of 67% which was the highest of all the email campaigns we ran in 2009." Great! Put that information in your resume! Now the employers will know that 1) you can create an email marketing campaign and, more importantly, that 2) you can create a *successful* email marketing campaign.

The action I want you to take is to ask the "So what?" question after each bullet point on your resume. Will you have results after each bullet? Probably not. However, you should have results for most of them. For the bullet points without results, ask yourself, "is this a value-added bullet point?" If you say "no" then remove the bullet.



Tip 4: Remove ‘Responsible for . . .’

Quickly scan your resume. Do you see the phrase, “responsible for” anywhere? If so, it is very possible that your resume is focused on your job responsibilities and not results.

While employers want to know what you were in charge of at your last job, they would rather see the results of that work. It's great that you led the team on their process improvement initiative, but what were the results of that initiative? Cost savings? Quality improvements? Decreased delivery time? Great! Make sure to put that on your resume! Employers want to know that if they put you in charge of a task you are likely to produce good results.

Tip 5: Quantify Your Achievements

To make your results stronger, quantify your results. For example, stating that you saved the company money by implementing a process improvement initiative is an *okay* result. Stating that you saved the company \$50,000 by implementing a process improvement initiative is much stronger.

Many people can't remember the results from their previous jobs and, therefore, cannot quantify their results. It goes without saying that you should not lie or embellish on your resume so only put figures you are positive of. Going forward, while working at your current or next job, keep track of all the great results you produce. That way you can have solid, quantifiable data to include in your bullet points.

Sometimes your results cannot be tied to numbers. Being awarded additional client contracts because of the efficient team environment you created is a very solid result that does not have a number tied to it. Being awarded Employee of the Month for your work on a marketing campaign is also a strong result that is not tied to a number. Don't get caught up in a numbers game when trying to write your results - think broader.



Tip 6: Utilize Your Space

Many of us get caught up in trying to capture every task we did for every job. If we did that, our resumes would be several pages long. While it is important to capture all of our important achievements from each position, we also need to make sure the resume appeals to readers.

To make your resume visually appealing, utilize white space appropriately. You should have close to 1 inch margins on every side of your resume and blank lines separating the different sections of your resume. This will make the resume appeal to the reader and encourage her to read it.

Tip 7: Solicit an Objective Opinion

Many of us feel our resumes are extremely clear and accurately demonstrate our skills. Often times, we are too close to the information to objectively look at our resume and see the story (or lack of a story) it portrays. Having an objective viewpoint is essential in knowing how someone will interpret your resume. Follow these steps for soliciting that viewpoint:

- Give your resume to a friend or relative who hasn't seen it before.
- Ask your friend to read it over thoroughly.
- Once she is done, ask her to tell you what skills, achievements, and experiences she noticed.

Additionally, you could ask your friend/relative to look at the job description you are applying for and if you seem like a good fit for the job. **Warning:** the answers might surprise you! If so, ask for some feedback and make some changes to your resume (if you agree with the feedback). Then, repeat the process with someone else. If you receive conflicting feedback or you are unsure whether to implement the changes, you can always reach out to a career coach or resume writer for a professional opinion.



Follow these 7 tips while you rewrite or review your resume and you'll be less overwhelmed. Plus, you may soon find your foot in the door at the company with the job of your dreams.

