

Ten Tips for Successful Résumé Writing

Many people agonize over writing a résumé, and often for good reason. It is challenging and difficult to write an effective, creative résumé that gets results. Most prospective employers decide after reading the first few lines whether or not they want to interview you. Add to that the vast sea of competitive candidates with whom you're going head to head, and suddenly the entire process of crafting a winning résumé can seem daunting, if not impossible.

Luckily, there are some tried-and-true rules to follow that can help you transform your résumé from *blah* to *wow*! Use the 10 tips below to help parlay your résumé into a winner:

1. **Don't skip the small stuff.** Make sure your résumé includes your name, mailing address, phone numbers, and email address — all possible ways you can be contacted. Should your résumé happen to get separated from your cover letter, a potential employer will have no way of getting in touch with you.
2. **Use language that sizzles.** Use active language and strong, energetic words. Avoid the use of personal pronouns such as “I” and “me.” Steer clear of buzzwords, acronyms, and industry-specific jargon. Avoid the use of phrases such as “responsibilities included” or “duties included” — employers want to hear about your accomplishments, not how well you carried out your assigned duties.
3. **Get to the point.** It's a smart idea to quickly capture an employer's attention with easily digestible information. Consider beginning your résumé with a specific, highly condensed summary of your professional background, skills, and attributes. A summary also helps to give your résumé focus.
4. **Edit and proofread carefully.** The importance of painstakingly proofing your résumé for typos, misspellings, and grammatical errors cannot be stressed enough. Enlist several other pairs of eyes to go over it as well, preferably belonging to friends who are professional writers or editors. Having to review so many résumés can make many employers look for reasons to eliminate applicants; that first typo usually does the trick. Even small mistakes can lead a potential employer to believe that a candidate might not make a very careful or conscientious employee.
5. **Customize.** If you have a broad range of experience, you may want to consider having more than one résumé, each targeted to a specific industry or job.
6. **Be truthful and accurate.** Make sure you have not included any misleading or false information on your résumé. Chances are your “inaccuracies” will eventually be discovered, and you'll lose all credibility with your prospective employer.
7. **Name your motivation.** It's important to paint a clear picture of your goals and objectives, as well as the industry or position that you are targeting. Don't make an employer guess; he or she should be able to take a quick glance at your résumé and have a good sense of what you want to do.

8. **Emphasize achievements.** Employers are less interested in titles and duties and more interested in previous accomplishments. The fact that you implemented cost-cutting measures that reduced your department's expenses by 15 percent is far more meaningful than simply stating you oversaw a budget. Quantify your achievements in terms of percentages, dollar amounts, or time frames to make your accomplishments more concrete.
9. **Put education in the right place.** If you are a recent graduate who does not yet have much work experience, make sure to put the emphasis on your education. In addition to listing the university you attended, include information on degrees earned, majors and minors, grade point average, date of program completion, and any scholarships or honors received. Once you've got several years of work experience under your belt, this education information can move to the end of the résumé.
10. **Include references and portfolio.** While many résumés promise references “upon request,” sometimes it's a good idea to include a list of references up front. Make sure it's a list of professional acquaintances that you trust to speak well of your skills and past accomplishments to prospective employers. You may also want to attach a portfolio of your professional-quality work to illustrate your abilities.

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