



# TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE RESUME WRITING

## What should be in a resume?

- Candidate contact information (name, address, phone number, and email address)
- Work experience; make sure to include dates (month and year), title, company, weekly hours, salary, grade (if applicable)
- Education
- References, affiliations (optional)

## Address Specialized Experience

The specialized experience statement for a job is located in the “Qualifications” section of the USAJOBS vacancy announcement. You must have at least one year of full time specialized experience clearly addressed in your resume to be rated qualified for most positions. Your resume should be tailored to meet all of the specialized experience of the vacancy to which you are applying.

Example: *You need to have at least year of full time experience defined as implementing programs under the Clean Water Act (CWA) to implement organizational objectives; and performing contract management activities.*

## Does all my experience need to be in my resume?

No, be judicious. If your college days are far behind you, does it really matter that you pledged a fraternity or delivered pizza? Just ensure that you provide all the relevant details of your experience related to the position to which you are applying.

## Timeframes count

Timeframes count, so you will need to make sure that you address these questions:

- What were the dates or length of time you worked on a project or job?
- Did you work full-time or part-time?
- If part-time, what percentage of your time did you do that work?

## Prioritize and be concise

Look at your resume and ask:

- Can a hiring manager see your main credentials within 10 to 15 seconds?
- Does critical information jump off the page?
- Is it well organized?

## Use numbers to highlight your accomplishments

If you were a recruiter looking at a resume, which of the following entries would impress you more?

- *Wrote news releases.*
- *Wrote 25 news releases in a three-week period under daily deadlines.*

## Use words wisely

The key to a good application is getting the right information to the agency representative in a fast, readable style. How do you do this? Use minimum words to provide substantive information.

Just look at this example: *In this position, it was my responsibility to assist the program director on evaluating health care programs. Due to the fact that most of these centers were in rural areas, it was important that I traveled at least 3 days a week.*

Phrases such as “due to the fact”, “it was important”, and “it was my responsibility to” block your point. Cut them out for a stronger, easy-to-access message: *In this position, I assisted the program director on*



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*evaluating health care programs. Because most of these centers were in rural areas, I traveled at least 3 days a week.*

## **Keywords are your friend**

You could be the most qualified person for the position, but you could be lost in a sea of applicants without the right keywords. For example: If the position you are applying requires specialized experience in the Clean Water Act (CWA), make sure that you specifically reference in your work history your experience with the CWA. You wouldn't want to just mention that you have worked in some capacity in the area of water, in hopes that a link between that and the CWA might be made by the individual reviewing your resume.

## **Keep paragraphs brief and sentences short and clear**

Paragraphs should be between 5 and 10 lines depending on content. Put important points first. Short, direct sentences get to your point. Take this example: *My 12 years as a customer service representative have given me the opportunity to become comfortable speaking to virtually anyone and to answering questions calmly and professionally even when the person I am speaking to is upset.*

It practically leaves the reader out-of-breath. Break up sentences so that your point flows and is clear: *My customer service representative experience provided opportunities to sharpen my skills. For example, I am comfortable speaking to virtually anyone. I can answer questions calmly and professionally, even when the person I am speaking to is upset.*

## **Focus on outcomes**

You may be surprised by how many people forget to mention this critical aspect of their experience altogether. Be sure to discuss the what, how, and the breadth and scope of your experiences.

## **Showcase your role**

Did you work on your own or as part of a team? Did you work in a supervisory capacity or as a team leader? Example: *As part of a team of five employees, I helped put together conferences. My responsibilities included sending invitations, calling potential guests, and preparing the conference materials.*

## **Show and tell**

Telling about your experience is great but be sure to use examples, too. See how this candidate's job sounds pretty generic: *As a maintenance mechanic, I often worked in settings that required I maintain control of every move in the operation.*

Look at the difference a few specifics can make: *As a maintenance mechanic, I often worked in settings that required maintaining control of every move in the operation. For example, for 16 months I worked on renovation projects in the Smithsonian Institutions where I had to move priceless museum exhibits using forklifts, cranes, skids, and rollers.*

## **Proofread**

We are all human and make the occasional typo or grammatical error. Proofread your document and always run a Spelling & Grammar check on your resume prior to submission to make sure those mistakes are caught. Remember, you want to leave a positive and professional impression on the hiring official!

## **Get ready for the interview**

When reviewing your resume, be sure to think about transferrable skills that might prepare you for your desired position. Try to think of a few stories about how you used or gained these skills, in preparation for the interview process.