

Most Effective Resumes

For Federal Applications



The most effective résumés when applying for federal jobs are those that clearly articulate how an applicant's skills and experiences align to the selection criteria defined by the job announcement. Applicants should always tailor their résumé to the job opportunity to which they are applying. Consider these additional tips in ensuring you've created and are using the most effective résumé.

Pay Attention to Keywords

Whether you're writing your first résumé or updating an existing one, stop and think about which keywords you need to add based on the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities required for the position. You could be the most qualified person for the position, but you could be lost in a sea of applicants without the right keywords.

A Single Keyword Communicates Multiple Skills and Qualifications

When a recruiter reads the keyword "analyst," he or she might assume you have experience in collecting data, evaluating effectiveness, and researching and developing new processes. Just one keyword can have tremendous power and deliver a huge message.

Study Vacancy Announcements

This is the best way to determine important keywords. Review several vacancy announcements, similar to your ideal position – even those in other geographic areas. You're looking to find skills, experience, education and other credentials important in that occupation. Focus on the requirements, skills or qualifications sections of job announcements, and look for buzzwords and desirable credentials for your ideal job.

Be Concise

Managers (or hiring officials) often receive dozens or even hundreds of applications for certain positions. The first step involves quickly skimming through submissions and eliminating candidates who clearly are not qualified. Look at your résumé and ask:

- Can a hiring manager see my main credentials within 10 to 15 seconds?
- Does critical information jump off the page?
- Do I effectively sell myself on the top quarter of the first page?



The Sales Pitch

It is crucial that your résumé effectively sells your credentials. Key selling points need to be prominently displayed at the top of the first page of the résumé and directly address each question asked in the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities section. For example, if an advanced degree is an important qualification, it shouldn't be buried at the end of a résumé.

Use an Editor's Eye

A résumé doesn't have to contain every detail of your work experience. So be judicious. If

For More Information

For information about NRCS, visit the website at nrcs.usda.gov. You will also find employment information there under Careers.

All job announcements will be posted on www.usajobs.gov.

your high school days are far behind you, does it really matter that you organized a car wash fundraiser or delivered pizza? The editing step will be difficult if you are holding on to your past for emotional reasons.

Use Numbers to Highlight Your Accomplishments

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

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

Clearly the second statement carries more weight, because it uses numbers to quantify the writer's accomplishment. It provides context that helps the reader understand the degree of difficulty involved in the task. Numbers are powerful résumé tools that will help your accomplishments draw the attention they deserve from prospective employers. With just a little thought, you can find effective ways to quantify your successes on your résumé.

Think Money & Numbers

All agencies/organizations are concerned about money and numbers. So, think about and articulate ways you've saved money, earned money, or managed money in your internships, part-time jobs and extracurricular activities. A few possibilities may include:

- Identified, researched and recommended a new Internet Service Provider, cutting the company's online costs by 15 percent.
- Wrote prospect letter that has brought in more than \$25,000 in donations to date.
- Managed a student organization budget of more than \$7,000.
- In Natural Resource related work, also use numbers (e.g. 500 acres treated, 3 miles surveyed, 17 plans reviewed or developed, etc.)

Think Time

Time is money. Organizations are constantly looking for ways to save time, perform work more efficiently, and meet internal and external deadlines. So, whatever you can do on your résumé to show that you can save time, make time or manage time will grab the manager's immediate attention. Here are some time-oriented examples:

- Assisted with twice-monthly payroll activities, ensuring employees were paid as expected and on time.
- Attended high school basketball games, interviewed players and coaches afterward, and composed 750-word articles by an 11 p.m. deadline.
- Suggested procedures that decreased average order-processing time from 10 minutes to five minutes.

