

# Writing an Effective Resume

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# Resume Overview

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A resume is the most important tool used to obtain an interview and potentially lead you to winning a great job—it should include skills, experience and educational training applicable to the job for which you are applying.

## Your resume should:

- Be clear, concise and grab the reader's attention.
- Always be truthful.
- Use the first person but drop the words "I" "me" or "my."
- Not go too far back in your job history. Only include 10-12 years if applicable.
- Use concrete words rather than vague descriptions.
- Reflect on your accomplishments and the skills you enjoy using.
- Not include personal traits that cannot be justified.
- Not be more than two pages long.
- Use a chronological or functional format, depending on which shows your skills and accomplishments best.
- Make it easy-on-the-eye by having lots of white space, especially around the edges so information won't get cut off when faxing or scanning.
- Choose 10 – 12 point font and a standard type style.
- Use light colored, standard 8 X 11 paper, single sided for printed copies or if mailing.
- Be current. Update your resume at least once a year and it is always a "work in progress."
- **Tailored to the specific job or specific type of work you are applying for.**

There are **six sections** that need to be included on a resume:

- **Contact Information:** Name, address (optional), phone numbers and e-mail.
- **Focus Statement:** An opening header to provide clarification of the focus for your resume – the job or specific type of work your resume is relevant to.
- **Key Skills, Strengths and Attributes:** A synopsis of best skills, strengths and attributes relevant to your focus that will get the reader to "read on."
- **Professional Experience:** Work and/or professional experience including employers and dates worked (can use just years if you prefer.) Write impactful statements.
- **Education:** Formal college education and certifications.
- Awards, Certificates, Honors: *Relevant* certificates, awards received, and any additional applicable coursework completed.

# Cover Letters

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Cover letters are extremely important. Whenever you send a resume to a potential employer, a cover letter should accompany it.

## Your Cover Letter should:

- Be addressed to a specific individual and spell his/her name and title correctly. If necessary, call the company to obtain that information.
- Explain how you became attracted to this company.
- Demonstrate you have done your “homework” on the company and can see their point of view (their current problems, their interests, their priorities.)
- Convey your enthusiasm and commitment for this line of work.
- Balance professionalism with friendliness. Avoid using generic phrases such as “To Whom it May Concern.” Make this is a personal letter.
- Identify at least one thing about you that is unique – something that goes beyond the basic requirements of the position. (Then, if several others are equally qualified, there is a reason to choose you.)
- Be appropriate to the field you are exploring – stand out, but in a non-gimmicky way.
- Outline specifically what you are asking for and offering.
- Point directly to the next step, telling what you will do to follow through.
- Remain as brief and focused as possible.

# References

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You should have at least three names, with addresses and phone numbers, of people who are willing to support you with a strong recommendation for the position you are seeking. *Ask them prior to using them as a reference and do not include them if they hesitate at all.*

- **Do not list your references on your resume** or provide them when you give a potential employer your resume.
- Be prepared to furnish your references during an interview or any time they are requested.
- References can be past employers, customers, co-workers or any influential person who knows you perform well.
- List references in order of importance and relevance to the position for which you are applying.
- While some employers do not check references, *do not make the mistake of making that assumption.*

## Example Cover Letter

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Date

Your Name  
Address (optional)  
Email

Interviewer's Name  
Title and Company Name  
Address

Dear Ms. XXXX:

I am responding to an opening for Payroll Manager in your department. Jack Bxxxx from your Accounts Payable Department suggested I contact you.

As you will see from my resume, I have four years of experience handling a payroll of 350 people which is a solid foundation for your department of 300 employees. My work record reflects the high degree of accuracy required to ensure that correct payments are issued to all employees. With my knowledge and experience, I know I would be an asset to your ABC Company.

I hope to have the opportunity to meet with you to discuss your requirements further. I will contact you early next week or you may contact me at 555-555-5555.

Thank you for considering me for the position of Payroll Manager.

Sincerely,

Your Signature (if mailed)

Your Name

# Example Resume—Chronological Format

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**Your Name**

**Your Street Address (optional)  
City, State, and Zip Code**

**(Area Code) Telephone Number  
Email address**

## **TARGET JOB HEADER**

Relevant Skill Set • Relevant Skill Set • Relevant Skill Set Employers need to know the position for which candidates are applying as well as a candidate's relevant skills.

## **SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS or PROFILE or CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:**

Highlight your qualifications to let employers know your areas of strength. Keep your statements strong and use this section to support your objective. Summarize your skills, abilities, experience and knowledge in 3-5 bullets or short descriptive phrases.

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:**

**Company Name, City, State**

**200x-Present (Year-Year)**

**Job Title**

A brief synopsis of your essential role in the company; include a description of the products and/or services you *provide*

- An accomplishment from THIS job, illustrating a skill needed in the NEW job
- An activity from THIS job which demonstrates a necessary skill in the NEW job
- Another activity from THIS job, illustrating a required skill in the NEW job

**Company Name, City, State**

**200x-200x (Year-Year)**

**Job Title**

A brief synopsis of your essential role in the company; include a description of the products and/or services you *provided*

- An accomplishment from THIS job, illustrating a skill needed in the NEW job
- An activity from THIS job which demonstrates a necessary skill in the NEW job
- Another activity from THIS job, illustrating a required skill in the NEW job

## **EDUCATION**

School, Location, Degree (Year and GPA are optional)

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS and AWARDS**

One line statements giving the name of the organization or award and year of association or receipt

# Example References

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<b>Your Name</b>	
Your Address (optional) City, State, Zip	Your Phone Your Email
<b>References</b>	
Name Title Company City, State	Phone Email
Name Title Company City, State	Phone Email
Name Title Company City, State	Phone Email
Name Title Company City, State	Phone Email