

Best Practices for Resume Writing

An objective, summary or professional profile?

Use an **objective** if you are a current student, recent graduate or new professional. An objective should focus on three ideas: The position you are seeking, which industry or environment you prefer and which skills you are bringing to the company or organization. Use a **summary** or **professional profile** if you have several years of full-time professional experience. Both serve as the equivalent of your “elevator pitch,” succinctly presenting details of your background, strengths, most marketable skills and important personality traits.

Be targeted in your approach

Offer the specific qualifications you possess to perform the job advertised. Use a customized resume for each position. If you choose to use a general resume, then customize your cover letter to the position.

Emphasize relevant results and accomplishments

This is the difference between an excellent resume and a below-average resume. You must be able to articulate the results of the work you did, or what you accomplished in each position. For example: how you improved a process; helped increase the quality or reduce the cost of a product or service; how you may have thoroughly satisfied a customer. Quantify in numbers or percentages whenever possible.

Use “meaty” action verbs and key words

- Start each sentence with a descriptive, “meaty” action verb (“directed,” “organized,” “created,” “planned,” etc.). Using past tense verbs implies that you have already accomplished it. This reassures employers you can do it for them.
- Do not use personal pronouns (I, you, he, she, etc.).
- Read the job posting and use words in your resume that are in the posting.
- **HINT:** Use “185 Verbs to Make Your Resume Awesome” as a resource.

Be complete and make your point succinctly

Do not abbreviate or use acronyms because the reader may not know what the letters stand for. Spell out street addresses, names of schools, business terms, committees and titles. Complete sentences are not necessary in resume writing; it is better to use bulleted, pithy descriptive statements to make a point. Eliminate redundancies and use only *the most relevant* details.

Is one page best?

Employers on average spend around 10 seconds reading a resume! Assure the reader uses that time wisely! Articulate exactly what you want the employer to know, using the least number of words to make the point. Be a skillful editor. Always ask for assistance or for someone else to give you an additional review.



Visually appeal to employers

The formatting of your resume must be consistent, clean and simple. If you want to express yourself, use a readable but nontraditional font for your name only. Less is more. Make it reader-friendly. A crammed, cramped resume often goes unread. Use white space effectively.

Do not lie!

Research shows that nearly 50% of candidates exaggerate their skills, which is always uncovered during interviews and reference checks.

Catch any grammar or formatting errors and typos

Your resume must be FLAWLESS. No spelling errors, mistakes or typos. **Do not trust spell check!** Make sure sentences are concise with adequate space between points. Make deletions wherever necessary. Send your resume as a PDF but also print it out to see how it appears on paper.

What NOT to include

A resume is the wrong place to advertise that you were laid off, fired or had an extended illness. Additionally, do not include:

- Your references
- Personal information such as birth date, height, weight, gender, etc.
- Anything political or religious can be used to judge you unfairly, keep this in mind
- Pictures of yourself or clip art of any kind

Final test

Are you getting interviews? Are employers calling? This is evidence that your resume is working (or not).

