



Writing an Effective Résumé

Workshop Materials · Handouts · Participant Activities

The Federal Government is making it quicker and easier to connect the best candidates with Federal jobs. You will be able to apply to almost any Federal job with a résumé and an optional cover letter. This workshop will cover best practices for writing an effective résumé that highlights your strengths and accomplishments.

Course Objectives

During this workshop, you will:

- √ Learn tips to market yourself
- √ Understand what information to include on your résumé
- √ Understand best practices for describing your experience
- √ Learn how to communicate veteran-specific information on your résumé

Résumé Content

It is best practice to break résumés down into major sections, outlining job information, personal information, education, experience, and other qualifications. Job Opportunity Announcements may specify information that must be included on your résumé. Using the *Résumé Builder* tool in USAJOBS® helps ensure that you include this essential information.

Job Information

- Announcement Number, series, grade

Personal Information

- Full Name
- Mailing Address
- Email and Phone
- Citizenship
- Military Status*

Education

- Degrees, Major/Minor
- Graduation/Anticipated Graduation Date
- GPA

Work Experience

- Job Title, Duties, Accomplishments
- Employer's name and address
- Supervisor's name and phone number
- Starting and ending dates
- Hours per week
- Salary/Grade Level/Rank*

Skills and Volunteer Work

- Related knowledge, skills, attributes, certifications, volunteer work, publications*

*Optional/Recommended



Imagine that you are a hiring manager.
What information on this résumé might be useful?
Why? What would help you decide whether to hire this candidate?

Applicant M. Powers

14 Sunshine Blvd • Springfield, MO • 12345 • (H)111-111-1111 • A.M.Powers@xxx.com

Announcement #PH47213, Program Manager, GS-301-9

Citizenship: United States of America

Veterans Preference: TP

Federal Status: Program Analyst, GS-343-7, Full Performance Potential GS-12

Summary

- Over 1 year of Program Analyst experience
- Specific experience analyzing survey and financial data

Experience

U.S. Office of Personnel Management

H.R. Solutions

1900 E Street NW, Washington, DC 20415

Please do not contact current supervisor: John Miller

Program Analyst, GS-343-7

January 2009 -Present

40 Hours/Week

\$50,000/Year

Project Analysis and Coordination

- Analyzed program accomplishments of the National Cyber Scholarship Program. Assisted with drafting the evaluation briefing and co-presented recommendations to approximately 40 high-level agency officials.
- Coordinated the receipt and oversaw processing for over 15,000 grant applications. Exceeded processing deadlines by 18%.

Data Management

- Developed an office tracking system for managing an increased number of audit report requirements. The new system improved workflow, file management, and communication methods. Resulted in meeting reporting deadlines for the first time in 5 years.
- Collected and maintained program financial, evaluation, and outcome data for over 30 projects operating within the organization. Analyzed data quarterly and briefed organization leadership.

U.S. Army

Department of Defense
 12 Private Drive, Fort Hood, TX 73153
 May Contact Supervisor: Mary Maddin, Phone 523-157-4326

Unit Supply Specialist

December 2002 – September 2008
 40 Hours/Week
 \$22,850/Year

Account Management

- Managed all financial and budgetary activities to fund operations and maximize investments. Oversaw an annual budget of over \$75,000.
- Established and maintained accounts and records of army supplies worldwide. Performed cost-benefit analyses to evaluate outgoing expenses and expected returns. As a result of the cost-benefit analysis, saved over \$18,000 in fiscal year 2007.

The Liberty Group

555 Freedom Ponds, New York, NY 53262
 May Contact Supervisor: John Smith, Phone: 333-333-3333

Research Intern

June 2001 – September 2001
 20 Hours/Week, \$12.50/Hour

Research

- Collected and analyzed data related to customer demographics, marketing and sales trends, and consumer preferences.
- Wrote technical reports of findings to illustrate data graphically and to provide clear recommendations to senior staff.

Volunteer Work**Habitat for Humanity**

Our House Circle, Baltimore, MD 74212
 May Contact Coordinator: Martha David, Phone 514-234-2222

Trainer

April 2009 - Present
 5 Hours/Week

- Conducted orientation and training sessions for community volunteers.
- Developed 8 (30 minute) technical training modules related to time management and project planning. This local training is now being used across the U.S. as a mandatory training for all Project Managers.

Education**Arizona State University**

Phoenix, AZ 85004

Masters of Business Administration (MBA)

Anticipated Graduation 6/11 (18 semester hours complete)

New York University

New York, NY 45212

Major: Business, Minor: Spanish

GPA: 2.95, Major GPA: 3.0

Graduation: May 2009

Skills

- Project Management Professional (PMP) Certified
- Fluent in Spanish and French, Intermediate in Portuguese
- Proficient in MS Office Suite

Awards

- Who's Who Among College Students May 2008, May 2009
- Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal Honorably Served May 2002 - March 2008



Résumé Writing Tips

- This is your best marketing tool, emphasize your strengths.
 - Highlight relevant knowledge, skills, and attributes where you may not have directly relevant experience.
 - State the facts. Avoid belief or judgment statements.
 - Customize your résumé to each job.
 - Focus on areas where your previous experience or education overlaps with the experience or education described in the Job Opportunity Announcement.
 - Provide sufficient detail but use concise language. Avoid information that does not add substance.
 - Use headings to guide the reader.
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Steps for Writing an Effective Résumé

1. Understand the Job

Know the job you are applying for. Understand the type of work you would perform, if selected. Understand what hiring managers consider when determining whether candidates are qualified for a job.

Gather job information

- Job Opportunity Announcement – www.USAJobs.gov
 - “Duties,” “Requirements,” and “Qualifications” sections
 - Locations, security clearances, physical demands
- Organization’s website

Pay Attention to Keywords

Before beginning to write a résumé, think about which keywords best describe your chosen career field. You could be the most qualified person for the job, but you could be lost in a sea of applicants without the right keywords.

Study Job Opportunity Announcements to determine important keywords. Review several job announcements and their questions for your ideal job. Find knowledge, skills, experience, education and other credentials important in your career field.

2. Consider your Qualifications

Getting started writing a résumé can be challenging. It is common for people to get caught up in résumé format before they have really considered the content. One of the first things you should do before you start writing a résumé is to think about all of the things that might make you qualified for a job.

Look to Sources

- Former job descriptions
- Supervisory reviews and feedback
- Transcripts
- Course feedback
- Military honors
- Awards and Recognition
- Customer acknowledgements
- Survey results

Think Outside the Box

- Leadership roles in social organizations
- Volunteer experiences
- Projects
- Professional/academic challenges/successes
- Special assignments
- Travel experiences

Your qualifications are evaluated in two primary ways:

- Your previous experience (paid and unpaid)
- Your level of education
- Training

3. Select a Résumé Format

Chronological Résumés show the most recent experience listed first, followed by each previous job. These résumés are best for those job-relevant paid and unpaid experience. Chronological résumés are the most common format and are recommended for most job seekers. The primary disadvantage of the chronological résumé is it may highlight gaps in employment history or frequent job change. See pages 2-3 for an example of a chronological résumé.

Functional Résumés are organized by skills and accomplishments across all experiences. These résumés are best for those new to the workforce, with no professional or related internship experience. This format could be problematic because it could potentially hide important qualifying information.

4. Create the Basic Outline and Write Job and Personal Information

Create a résumé template so you have a general idea about the organization and visual presentation. Write the Job Information section and Personal Information section, including information described on page 1.

5. Write your Experience

The experience section should demonstrate the quality of your experience, the complexity of work you performed, how independently you worked, the extent your experience is related to the target job, and any outcomes, awards and recognition you received.

The goal is to write your experience as clearly and simply as possible. Make it easy to understand exactly what you did. Focus on quality and substantive content, rather than length. Below are some best practices and pitfalls to avoid when writing your experience.

Best Practice

- Use outline with headings
- Show specialization
- Include accomplishments
- Highlight special projects
- Use plain language
- Focus on quality

Pitfall

- Text block with semicolons
- Generic task list
- Too short/too long
- Acronyms
- Complex sentence structure
- Focus on quantity

Writing your experience can be a little challenging. Break it down into simple steps. Think in terms of outlining your major work activities and then get more specific. The process is broken down into three steps:

Step 1: Outline the major work activities (2-4)

Step 2: Fill in tasks and skills associated with each work activity to show what you did, keeping it simple and to the point.

Step 3: Integrate accomplishments to show results

- Who was impacted as a result?
- How significant was the impact?
- What were the cost savings?
- Did you exceed deadlines?
- Did you receive awards or recognition?
- What changed?
- What improved?



Experience Section Example

What are the major work activities?

What are the associated tasks and skills?

What are the accomplishments and results?

Management and Program Analyst
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
HR Solutions

GS-7
Jan. 2009-Present
Hours/week: 40

Management and Program Analyst, GS-7

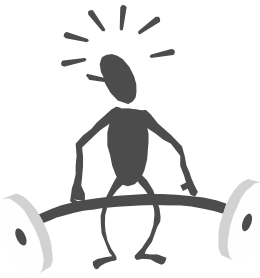
Project Analysis and Coordination

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Your Turn

Think about one of your work, military, or volunteer experiences.


1. List 2-4 major work activities.



2. Pick one of the work activities identified above. Identify 2-3 tasks or skills associated with the work activity.



3. Identify accomplishments associated with each work activity.



- Who was impacted as a result?
- How significant was the impact?
- What were the cost savings?
- Did you exceed deadlines?
- Did you receive awards or



Write your Education

When you write your education, what are some considerations?

What factors influence the best way to present this information?

6. Write your Education

Several considerations influence how you present your education on a résumé:

- How important is education to your career field or the target job?
- What is the major or field of study and highest level of education required?
- Are you a new graduate or do you have many years of work experience?
- Is your experience closely related to the target job?
- Is your education closely related to the target job?

Job seekers with **minimal education beyond high school**

- Emphasize the courses completed, specialized training, on-the-job training
 - List high school coursework that is relevant to the job
 - List any courses completed through community college, technical or vocational schools
 - Include education, training, professional development, or continuing education in the education section and consider organizing by topic area
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Example Education Section 1: Minimal Education Beyond High School

This example shows coursework by topic area.

Education and Training

Information Technology and Management

Spreadsheet Skills Course, Harrisburg Community College	Spring 2006
Information Management Course, University of Phoenix Online	Fall 2005

General Business

Corporate Financial Analysis, Business Series Webinar	Fall 2005
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Basic Accounting Course, Harrisburg Community College

Spring 2004

Chesapeake High School, Anytown, USA

May 2001

Elective Coursework Business Concentration: Business Finance, Economics, Accounting, Management, Data Management

Job seekers with **some college completed**:

- Emphasize coursework completed toward a degree and number of credits completed
- Include honors, significant courses, major papers
- Consider listing other training in the education section

Example Education Section 2: Some College and Specialized Training Completed

This example highlights some more recent job-related training over the college coursework completed. Depending on the relevance of additional training (e.g., if this person is applying to a job requiring project management), it may make sense to list it first.

Education and Training

GovGrad School

Project Management, 3 CE credits	Spring 2005
Managing People and Work Teams, 3 CE credits	Spring 2004

Fargo Community College, Fargo, ND 58102

2001 - 2003

Completed 45 semester hours toward Associate of Arts in Business Administration
GA: 3.10

Significant coursework: Business Finance, Economics, Accounting, Management, Data Management

Job Seekers who are **college graduates**

- Emphasize your college degree
- Include honors, awards, scholarships, GPA, significant courses, major papers or thesis, and assistantships.
- Separate formal education from professional development or continuing education

College graduates with experience should balance education and experience emphasis. Consider what is most related to the target job.

Q. Should I put my education or experience first on my résumé?

A. It depends. Some résumé building software, like the USAJOBS®, Résumé Builder, automatically list education after experience. If you are creating your own résumé, consider what you want to emphasize.

Ultimately, how you describe your education and experience is more important than which comes first.



Example Education Section 3: College Graduate with Specialized Training Completed

This example shows a college degree with relevant coursework listed. It also highlights specialized job-related training, but was placed in an additional section labeled *Specialized Experience and Professional Development*.

Education

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration

Graduated May 2003

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

Major, Finance

Graduated Cum Laude, GPA 3.65

Fulbright Scholar

Relevant Coursework:

General Business: Business Communications, Business Law

Finance and Accounting: General Finance, Global Finance, Accounting

Economics: Macroeconomics, Microeconomics, Economic Analysis, Money and Banking, Econometrics

Human Resources: Personnel Management, Performance Appraisal, Compensation, Organizational Design

Specialized Training and Professional Development

GovGrad School

Administrative Information Management, 3 CE credits

Spring 2005

Software and Spreadsheet, 3 CE credits

Spring 2004

7. Write an Optional Cover Letter

Cover letters are optional, but can be value-added if written effectively. Use the cover letter to highlight strengths above and beyond what is in your résumé. Below is a basic template for a cover letter.

Tips for cover letter writing:

- Be concise, yet sufficiently detailed to stress the points important to the target job.
- Personalize to each job; consider how your credentials relate to the target job
- Emphasize your strongest credentials
- Keep it simple
- Inform reviewers of material enclosed (e.g., résumé, transcripts)

Basic Cover Letter Template

June 30, 2010

Office of Human Capital
Address

Dear _____:

Enclosed please find my _____ for the job of _____.

My relevant experience for the job includes (3-5)

I believe I would be an asset to your organization because (3-5)

USAJOBS® Résumé Builder

USAJOBS® *Résumé Builder* is a tool that allows you to build a résumé within USAJOBS®, and is formatted to ensure that you have all of the basic information required by Federal agencies for your application. USAJOBS® also allows you to upload your own document to your account.

For more information and for a tutorial on the USAJOBS Résumé Builder, visit <http://www.usajobs.gov/infocenter/>

