Creating a Resume and Cover Letter

BY THE END OF THIS COURSE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO:

Create a Comprehensive Resume by following detailed steps as well as the starting points of a basic cover letter.

Creating a Resume and Cover Letter

- Videos
- Guides for Creating a Strong Resume
- Online Courses
- Step-by-Step Instructions for Creating a Comprehensive Resume
- Cover Letter Quick Tips

Videos

Resume Writing: How to Create a Strong Resume:



USAJOBS Two-Page Resume Webinar (Federal Resume):



How to Write a Cover Letter that Actually Gets Read-Indeed:



Guides for Creating a Strong Resume

From quick tips to action verbs, to different resume samples, this resource page from Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences can help you get started on your resume:

- Create a Strong Resume

Use this resource to gain knowledge on how to write a resume for a federal job:

- USAJOBS Help Center-How do I write a resume for a federal job?

Online Courses

In this course learn what a resume is, what to include, how to use Microsoft's resume templates, and resume tips:

- Creating Resumes in Microsoft Word

In this course design, write, and format a professional resume that stands out:

- Create a Resume in Google Docs

Step-by-Step Instructions for Creating a Comprehensive Resume

Step 1 (Choose the right format)

A format is the style and order in which you display information on your resume. You can choose from three commonly used resume formats depending on which is right for you-chronological (or reverse-chronological), functional or a combination.

Chronological- A chronological resume puts the professional history section first and is a good option if you have a rich professional work history with no gaps in employment.
Functional-The functional resume format emphasizes the skills section and is a good option if you are switching careers or have gaps in your work history.
Combination-The combination resume format is a good option if you have some professional experience because it emphasizes both skills and work history equally.

Step 2 (Include your name and contact information)

Your resume should begin with your name and contact information, including your professional email address and phone number. You have a choice about whether or not to include your mailing address. Your name should be highly visible at the top of your resume with a bolder or larger font than the rest of the document but no more than 14-point size. You might also include a link to your online portfolio if your profession warrants it.

Step 3 (Tailor your resume for each position)

Revising your resume to tailor it to each position you apply for is important. For each job, adjust the keywords in the skills section so that they are a great fit for what the employer needs. Be sure you change what's emphasized in the professional history and education experiences sections to mirror what's listed in the job description.

Step 4 (Add a resume summary or objective)

After your contact information, you can include either a resume summary or an objective statement. An objective statement quickly explains your career goals and is a good choice for those with limited professional experience, such as recent college or high school graduates. A resume summary is a short statement that uses active language to describe your relevant work experience, skills and accomplishments.

Step 5 (List your soft and hard skills)

Take a moment to consider which skills make you a great fit for the job. Review the job description and highlight keywords that you have had proven success with in the past. Consider both hard (technical) and soft (interpersonal) skills, as well as transferable skills you can use when changing careers or industries. Create a skills section with the keywords that are relevant to the employer. List any required skills like certifications or licenses first. Since it's paired with the job description, this section needs to be customized for each job application.

Step 6 (Detail your professional history)

Write your professional history section in reverse-chronological order. Start with your most recent job and provide a short description, including the company name, month and year you started and left, your job title and a few key achievements during your time at the company. You might also include your relevant accomplishments or achievements during each job.

When listing your professional history, keep a few best practices in mind:

- Use numbers to measure your impact when possible.
    - Example: "Developed new process for requesting supplies, reducing fulfillment time by 10%"
- Use keywords from the job description.
- Be brief:
    - Try removing filler words like "and" and "the." Only list details or duties to key achievements instead of multiple lines describing your role.
- Use action verbs
    - Examples: "developed," "saved," "drove" and "managed."

Follow the same process for other work experiences. If you do not have an extensive professional history, include internships and volunteer opportunities following the same format.

Step 7 (Include an education section)

An education section will be especially valuable if you have limited work experience or are transferring to a new industry. Include information such as:

- Relevant coursework
- Grade point average (if above 3.5)
- Participation in relevant clubs or organizations
- Leadership positions held
- Awards, achievements or certifications

When writing your education section, including the institution's name, dates of attendance and degree or area of study. If you are applying to mid- or higher-level positions, you might remove all but the name of your school and dates of attendance to make room for the more relevant professional experience on your resume.

If you have a certification or licenses relevant to the job description, include them in the section as well. To save space, you can leave off any credentials not directly related to the job requirements.

Step 8 (Consider adding optional sections)

If you have significant white space on your resume, consider adding an achievements or interests section. This can help supplement a shorter resume, especially for those with limited work and education experience. Ensure the achievements and interests you list support your career goals and are relevant to potential employers.

Step 9 (Proofread your resume)

Carefully review your resume for spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. Reading your resume backward can help you identify errors by presenting the words in a new order. You can also ask trusted friends, colleagues, professors and family members if they can review your resume. Third-party opinions can help reveal new information you might have overlooked.

If your resume is more than one page, look for ways to shorten each section by removing filler words or extraneous information. Two pages may be acceptable if you are applying for high-level positions or industries like healthcare or academia.

Cover Letter Quick Tips

Address the hiring manager by name: It's worth doing a little research to find a real person you can speak directly to. If you can't find that name, it's okay to use "To whom it may concern."

Customize your letter for each application: Spend a few minutes looking at the job posting, the company's LinkedIn Page, and their website. Add a few salient specifics to your letter each time.

Highlight transferable skills: Your resume lists your job history, but here's a chance to show how you can use what you've learned from previous jobs to rock your new position.

Show what you can add to their culture: Your research should give you a good idea of the company's values and office culture. You know what it might be like to work with them—show them what it's like working with you.

Showcase achievements: Your resume should already focus more on achievements than responsibilities, but your cover letter is a chance to give yourself an extra shoutout. Highlight one or two accomplishments you're particularly proud of or that are particularly relevant to this employer.