

# How To Create the Perfect Resume

Nearly [24 percent of hiring managers](#) spend fewer than 30 seconds looking at a resume to determine whether or not a candidate is



qualified for the job. This means **you have six seconds to make yourself stand out** and convince readers to want to learn more about you. Your resume must be relevant, engaging, and perfect. Failure to give employers what they want can turn a month-long job search into a year-long grind.

Fortunately, your next job can find you when you apply through CareerBuilder. Once you've uploaded your resume, hiring managers in your industry and area can review your qualifications and reach out to you for an interview. However, you need to have a killer resume that gets noticed if you're going to get the call. Here's how you can create a fantastic resume that catches the eyes of employers and makes them want to keep reading.

## Prioritize Your Resume Sections

While some people might try to push their education to the tops of their resumes, most employers are looking to see their experience



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and skills. Is it relevant to the job position? There are plenty of sections that people put on their resumes that aren't needed. These elements take up space, conflict with more important information, and even confuse your prospective employer, who is wondering why you would add that information in the first place.

In order to prevent confusion, remember these three sections that you should always have on your resume before you add anything else. Then, if you have extra space, you can fill in others.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

The top of your page should always include your contact information as the header. You can decide how much information to include, but all candidates should include their email address and at least one phone number. If your location is important (maybe you're competing with candidates from across the state) then you



can also include your address. This shows that you're local and don't have to relocate.

## EXPERIENCE

The meatiest part of your resume should be your experience. When employers look at a resume, there's one question on their mind: Can this person do the job? Your experience level will answer that question.

Your experience should explain your hard skills (e.g., writing, programming, and analysis) along with soft skills (e.g., communication and leadership). Soft skills are becoming increasingly important in the hiring process. In fact, **61 percent**



of hiring managers believe soft skills are just as important as hard skills. When they look at your resume, employers want to know that you will pick up the job quickly and that you have the characteristics of someone who requires minimal management.

## EDUCATION

Some students who lack experience may be tempted to put this at the top, especially if there is coursework that is relevant to the position. In some cases, this is okay. Your prospective employer will certainly be more interested in your marketing studies than your experience as a camp counselor, especially if you're unable to turn that camping experience into a marketable business skill.



While most employees said their education helped them get a job, **72 percent** said having a specific skill set was valued more by the employer. For example, a retail sales associate would be strong communication, customer service, and organization skills. If you can prove that you have the skills they need through your experience, move it to the top, before education.

## OTHER SECTIONS

Once you complete the trifecta of contact information, experience, and education, you can move on to other sections if you have room. These sections might include:

- △ Personal statement, objective, summary
- △ Volunteer experience (if it is relevant to the position)
- △ Awards and recognitions
- △ Useful skills not covered in the experience section

The value of each of these sections depends on the employer. For example, some employers will completely ignore a candidate's objective, but others expect it. Ultimately it's up to you whether or not you add these.

## Highlight Your Work Experience

Explaining your relevant work experience tends to be one of the most challenging parts of resume writing. It's incredibly easy for job seekers to overuse phrases and water down what they've done until it blends in with all of the other candidates' qualifications. However, there are a few steps you can take when discussing your experience to wow future managers and human resources representatives alike.

## QUANTIFY WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Numbers will add teeth to your resume by providing factual proof on your accomplishments. Instead of making a list of generic statements and job duties, you can show exactly what you did in your past positions to impress your managers and show how you can grow the company. For example, which of these two statements is more engaging?

- △ Managed lead generation efforts to bring potential clients to the sales team.
- △ Increased lead generation by 75 percent to bring 50 more clients to the sales team monthly.

The second statement shows exactly how much value the candidate brought into the company, while the first line is a generic job duty that anyone could have been assigned. For example, a tax clerk would include the number of people they helped prepare tax form for or how much they increased customer savings on average.

## BE CAREFUL WITH INDUSTRY JARGON

In all likelihood, you will have more than one resume saved on your computer. Smart candidates tailor their resumes based on the job and company. They also tailor their resume based on their audience.

If you're applying for a highly-technical position, adding industry jargon might be appropriate. Experts in your field should be expected to understand what you've done and why it will help the company. However, if you're applying outside of your typical industry or even outside of the company, you might want to limit the amount of jargon you use. Confusing your potential employer is an easy way to get your resume tossed in the trash.





**62%** of job descriptions list leadership and management as desired skills

## DISCUSS MULTIPLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR EACH EMPLOYER

Unless you completed one task (and one task only) during your entire employment within a company, you should include a list of three to five achievements under each employer. Not only will this give you more opportunities to highlight all the impressive work that you did, it will also give employers an idea of what your day looked like.

Even if you only worked in one part of the company, most jobs have multiple requirements that you can highlight. For example, cashiers don't just ring up customers; they manage a till to keep an accurate balance, provide customer service when needed, and make sure the merchandise is intact.

If you're unsure whether you're doing a good job discussing your work experience on your resume, ask a friend to read through it then explain to you what you did in your last job, based on the information alone. If he or she struggles to describe it or comes up with a wrong answer, then your experience section still needs work.

## Top Skills Employers Are Looking For

As you draft your resume, remember that there are certain skills that employers are looking for. Most of the soft skills are hard to teach (e.g., listening or critical thinking), which means some employers are more inclined to choose an employee who already has them, instead of hiring someone with a strong set of hard skills but lacks soft skills.

Writing your resume is an important opportunity to highlight these skills and to remember their significance to prospective employers who are trying to decide who to invite for interviews. It's frustrating for employers to find a potential candidate and then realize their personality makes them unhireable as soon as they walk through the door. Highlighting soft skills reduces this risk.

## LEADERSHIP

By using data from Emsi<sup>1</sup>, which pulls economic information from **more than 90 sources** across the web and curates them in an easy-to-read manner, the team at CareerBuilder reviewed job postings for office and non-office hourly jobs. The goal was to determine the most in-demand skills for modern day professionals. The top results, showing up on 62 percent of job descriptions, is a combination of leadership and management.

You don't have to be a manager with employees or interns to prove that you have leadership skills. For example:

- △ What company projects did you take the lead on and push to completion?
- △ What company training or leadership seminars did you attend?

Look for examples that show when you took responsibility and stepped up within the company. This proves that you have initiative and want to lead if you're given the chance. An administrative assistant would cite a company-wide training that went so well the CEO personally praised him or her in a thank-you email.

## INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Very few jobs are siloed today, which means even the most introverted, shy, or antisocial employees are going to work on a team and have to get along with different personalities. As a result, interpersonal skills ranked second as the most important quality for employees from our Emsi data, with 53 percent of job listings requiring it.

An employee with a lack of interpersonal skills can make an office toxic. If one person is a bully or is rude, then the whole team is affected. Fortunately, you can prove that you have interpersonal skills on your resume:

- △ When did you work as part of a team or seek help from others?
- △ How did you resolve a conflict between two employees?

<sup>1</sup> Emsi, *economicmodeling.com*, uses labor market data to connect and inform people, higher education and business with insights that help people find jobs and businesses find talent.



For example, a customer service specialist would explain how they handled multiple customer problems under pressure during the holiday shopping season.

## INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

The third most in-demand skill set employers are looking for is innovation and creativity, with 45 percent of job postings looking for it. Simply put, innovative employees are problem solvers. They're more likely to come up with multiple solutions on their own instead of running to management to ask what to do. Innovative employees are also always looking for the next big idea instead of settling for the status quo. These are the skills companies need if they hope to grow.

To show your innovation, answer the following questions:

- △ When did you come up with a creative solution to a problem?
- △ What new idea did you have that made the company more profitable?

This also gives your employer insight into how you approach challenges and what working with you would be like if you got the job. A bookkeeper would explain how he or she transitioned a company from a cash or accrual accounting method to a hybrid system that provides more transparency and insight.

## Word Choice and Design Tips

The hardest part of resume creation is the content. The bulk of your time will be spent trying to quantify your experience, describing what you did, and choosing the best words for the job. However, this doesn't mean the design elements should be overlooked. Potential employers won't read a single word that you've carefully crafted if your overall design is distracting or messy.

## TRY TO LIMIT YOUR RESUME TO ONE PAGE

Although there may be instances where a resume requires a longer length, such as an executive with over 20 years experience, you'll likely want to keep your resume from extending beyond a single page. Most employers expect resumes to end after one page and don't want to keep going to the next one. Plus, if you're prioritizing



45% of job postings are looking for innovation and creativity

your experience, the second page would likely contain less relevant information.

Most people succeed at limiting their resume length by utilizing bullet points. This makes the resume scannable and allows the employee to assemble a few quick thoughts. It's also important to choose professional fonts such as Arial or Calibri that are easy to read.

## AVOID OVERUSED WORDS

Employers will review dozens of resumes before they decide on a candidate to call in for an interview, which means that if you've included bland, overused words, they'll probably gloss over yours. This is another reason why quantitative data helps — almost anyone can say they have experience, but few can prove how much that experience benefited the company.

A list of the most overused words on resumes include:

- △ Expert
- △ Organizational
- △ Responsible
- △ Strategic
- △ Extensive Experience
- △ Driven
- △ Motivated

These words don't need to be banished from your resume, but they should be severely limited.

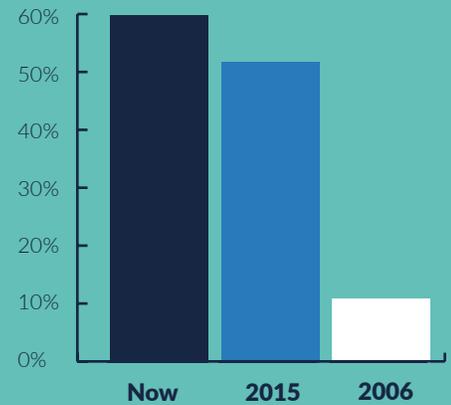
## KNOW WHAT TO LEAVE OUT

Knowing what to omit is almost as important as knowing what to include. These can distract your potential employer from all the great things you have done and quickly move your resume to the rejection pile:

- △ Professional photo or headshot
- △ Hobbies that aren't relevant to the position
- △ Salary expectations
- △ Social media links (unless applying for a social media position)
- △ Irrelevant positions from several years ago



## 60% of employers research candidates on social media



Resume design is another opportunity to ask your friends or family for help. Hand them your resume and ask them what immediately stands out. Where do their eyes immediately go? You might think your design makes sense, but a second opinion can uncover potential issues.

## Resumes of the Future

Once you format and draft your resume, it's possible to continue using the structure for the next several years. However, while many parts of resume creation stay the same, others are changing. Technology has greatly altered how we look for jobs and will alter how we apply for them, as well.

### COVER LETTERS HAVE CHANGED WITH THE POPULARITY OF EMAIL

Historically, job seekers have been asked to submit a resume and cover letter for any position they applied for. While many companies still ask for cover letters, job seekers are often confused as to how they should submit them in this digital era. Most employers recommend writing a brief introduction in the email body and then using the cover letter (as a separate attachment, along with the resume) to go into more detail than can be covered in the email. As with the resume, job seekers should tailor their cover letters to the jobs they're applying for, instead of sending out standard cover letters for every job they apply for.

### APPLICATIONS ARE BECOMING EASIER

While it's recommended that candidates tailor their resumes to the jobs they're applying for, more application processes are becoming streamlined. Candidates can upload their resumes to a job site like CareerBuilder and apply to most positions with one click. This reduces the overall time spent applying and speeds the job search process.

Try to design a "mass appeal" resume that could apply to almost any employer you reach out to. This can be your go-to for online job boards and positions that you're unsure of. It can also be your base for tailoring your resume for specific positions.

### EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING AT SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

What you do in the privacy of your own home isn't your employer's business, but what you put out for the world to read is. Last year, CareerBuilder found that **60 percent of employers** research candidates on social media to learn more about them, compared to 52 percent in 2015 and 11 percent in 2006.

This research doesn't necessarily mean potential employers are looking for negatives. Six out of 10 employers said they're looking for proof to back up a candidate's qualifications. However, learning about a candidate's personality can help determine whether they would be a good cultural fit. Someone with perceived anger problems or a lewd sense of humor might become a human resources liability or bully other employees, causing them to leave.

The traits of a good job candidate will always remain the same, no matter how resumes are formatted and sent to potential employers.

For more information on resume content, structure, and use, check out CareerBuilder's helpful tools for job seekers and really get to know the job application process. We provide a variety of analytics and resume keywords to give you an advantage over the competition. Once you upload your perfect resume, you'll be able to see which companies are interested in you, right from our homepage! We also have salary insights, top cities to apply, and descriptions in our [Explore Careers pages](#). We know that armed with the right information and tools, you'll land that dream job!

