

What should I know before writing a résumé for Federal government?

Focused- The most effective resumes are clearly focused on a specific job title and address the employer's stated requirements for the position. The more you know about the duties and skills required for the job—and organize your resume around these points—the more effective the resume.

Pay Attention to Keywords- A single keyword communicates multiple skills and qualifications. When a recruiter reads the keyword "analyst," he or she might assume you have experience in collecting data, evaluating effectiveness, and researching and developing new processes.

Review Job Announcements- This is the best way to determine important keywords. The idea is to find skills, experience, education and other credentials important in your field. You will probably find keywords frequently mentioned by different agencies. Focus on the "requirements," "skills" or "qualifications" sections of job ads, and look for "buzzwords" and desirable credentials for your ideal job.

Be descriptive- Experience descriptions should be simple and straightforward, descriptive, and reduced to only essential information. We want to know what you did on the job. Think about:

- The projects you have worked on
- What your specific duties were,
- What you needed to know to do the job,
- What tools, software, or equipment you used, and
- What you accomplished

Don't be vague- Emphasize nouns and verbs and provide concrete statements of your accomplishments in the correct tense for past or present positions. For example, rather than using "communicates orally and in writing", it's better to use, "Directs work, interviews and hires employees, establishes and reviews performance standards, identifies training needs, effects disciplinary action and performs other supervisory duties for 10 employees".

Use plain English- Describe skills and experience in universally accepted terms common to your occupation and profession that could be readily understood in both the public and private sectors. Minimize the use of acronyms. If used, spell them out at least once and explain what they represent.

Don't be fancy- Keep paragraphs short. Don't use fancy treatments such as graphics, italics, underline, shadows, and reverses (white letters on black background) or signs and symbols such as % # * = and do not type your information in all capital letters.

List only recent training and awards List only training and awards received in the last 5 years.

Headers, Footers, and Page Numbers- Your final document should look like one package. A header or footer can be added on the second and following pages of your resume.

Format- The chronological resume is used primarily. Your most recent experience is listed first, followed by each previous job.

The Sales Pitch- Because applications are quickly skimmed during the first pass, it is crucial your resume competencies get right to work selling your credentials. For example, if an advanced degree is an important qualification, it shouldn't be buried at the end of a four-page resume.

Quantify your achievements- Which of the following entries would impress you more? Clearly a manager out of several resumes would select the one with the use of quantity measures.

- Wrote news releases.
- Wrote 25 news releases in a three-week period under daily deadlines.

Think Money- Think about ways you've saved, earned or managed money in your jobs and extracurricular activities. A few possibilities are the following:

Identified, researched and recommended a new Internet Service Provider, cutting the company's online costs by 15 percent.

- Wrote prospect letter that has brought in more than \$25,000 in donations to date.

Think Time- "Time is money," and it's true. So whatever you can do on your resume or in your competencies to show that you can save time, make time or manage time will grab your reader's immediate attention. Here are some time-oriented entries:

- Assisted with twice-monthly payroll activities, ensuring employees were paid as expected and on time.
- Suggested procedures that decreased average order-processing time from 10 minutes to five minutes.

Specific or General? In the Federal government, the purpose of the resume is to "show" your qualifications so that you can be qualified by meeting eligibility requirements. This means that your resume needs to include more specifics and similar language as the vacancy announcement because the Human Resources Specialist is looking to see if you have the "specialized" or directly related experience requirements of the position for which you are applying.

How Long Should My Resume Be? The resume that goes into the application package should be no more than three to five pages. There are exceptions to this, of course, but use three pages as a guideline. If you do not have the work experiences for three pages, then your resume may only be one or two pages long.

Take the "Have I done the best I can Do" Test- When you are finished writing a section, ask yourself:

- Would a person who is not familiar with my occupational background understand the kind of work that I do?
- Have I omitted any unique, but relevant special experience or skills I possess that might distinguish me from other candidates if my resume reaches the desk of a selecting official?
- Have I adequately described the major characteristics of my occupation or background and skills that are most common to my occupation?
- Have I described my accomplishments in a clear and descriptive manner?

Don't forget to Spell Check- Make sure you spell check your resume. Correct spelling will help ensure your resume has that professional look.

