

HOW TO WRITE **A GREAT RESUME**

THE HIRED GUNS

YOUR RESUME IS THE CORE OF
YOUR APPLICATION MATERIALS
AND IS BY FAR THE HARDEST
TO CREATE.

THAT'S WHY NO ONE LIKES WRITING THEM.

Doing it well can be difficult and time consuming, and while there are a million resources for resume guidance on the market, many of them offer contradictory advice. But once you've nailed the resume, it's pretty smooth sailing.

Figuring out the resume — how you're going to position yourself and how you're going to spin your story — will inform the rest of your job search and will be a reference point throughout the process.

At The Hired Guns, we see thousands of resumes every year and most are pretty bad. There's not much there: No headline, no statement of value, no real sense of narrative. Just a timeline of schools and jobs with no real story.





THE TASK

So just how do you write a great resume? Re-write, re-format, or tweak your resume so that it gives the big picture — so that it shows a narrative, looks professional and is easy to digest.

A great resume has a headline. It says, in a very few words, who this job seeker is and what he does. The reader knows immediately if they're interested enough to read on. This is one section you must customize for each application; each resume you send out should have a customized headline. Applying for an Editorial Director role? Label yourself as an "Experienced Editorial Director." Looking to be VP of Product, but your current title is Director of Product? Call yourself an "Experienced Product Executive." You wouldn't pick up a box at the grocery store if it wasn't labeled, would you?





THE PROFILE STATEMENT

Note that the job seeker quickly and succinctly states his value in about four to five sentences in his professional summary. This isn't your life story. This is a quick statement of the value you can bring to a prospective employer. Think of three or four things that you'd most like to tell an employer about you. Now take those items and craft them into a compelling but brief paragraph.

Note: This is not an objective statement. You should never use an objective statement. Aside from being hopelessly outdated, an objective statement does the opposite of what you want to do – it tells the hiring manager what you're looking for, rather than what you can offer them.



The background of the top section is a blurred image of PHP code. Visible snippets include `language_attributes()`, `<?php bloginfo('charset');`, `<?php bloginfo('width=device-width'`, `<?php wp_title('|', true, 'right');`, `<?php bloginfo('title'`, `<?php bloginfo('pingback'`, `<?php bloginfo('profile'`, `<?php bloginfo('rel=`, `<?php bloginfo('favicon'`, and `<?php echo`.

SKILLS

Look at the next section. You can call this “Areas of Expertise,” “Core Competencies,” or just “Skills.” This is a place to show off demonstrable skills and a great way to pack your resume full of searchable keywords for online use. These can be anything from “WordPress” to “AJAX” to “Channel Sales.” If you’re unsure if a skill is too vague (think “Strong Communicator” or “Team Player”), try this exercise: if an interviewer asked you to tell her about some successes you’ve had using that skill, can you point to something concrete? If so, add it. If not, take it out.

Also note that this is a great place to load your resume with keywords that can help make you searchable online. Think SEO. Think of the keywords you want recruiters and hiring managers to associate with you, and add those.





PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Next, look at how the professional experience is laid out. You see the company name, the dates of employment, the job seeker's title, and, ideally, a brief description of the company itself. This isn't entirely necessary for large companies like Coca-Cola or Apple. But small to mid-size companies should be given a quick blurb describing their size, revenue, product/service, and market position. This will help a recruiter or hiring manager know what kind of working environment you're coming from.

Notice how the job seeker puts all their daily duties in a short paragraph. Don't go overboard here — keep the duties short. Give the reader an idea of the scope of your responsibilities, but don't bore them with mundane stuff. Get to the good part: your accomplishments.

Call out your best work out with bullet points, especially items with numbers attached. Anything you can quantify is great. Did you drive traffic? Increase sales? Reduce waste? Improve efficiency? Anything you can measure, pull out and bullet. This is what will make your resume sizzle.





EDUCATION

This section is pretty straightforward: degree earned, name of institution, and location of institution. That's it. Including extra-curriculars and GPAs on your resume is for recent grads only. And just like the rest of the resume, go in reverse chronological order. Got an MBA? List it first.





GENERAL TIPS

No matter where you are in your career — whether you're looking for a new gig or are angling for a promotion — take these resume tips to heart:

1. Avoid personal information like political or religious affiliations, or volunteer info unless it directly correlates to the job for which you're applying.
2. The same goes for photos. Never, ever include a photo, unless your career is directly tied to your appearance, like acting or broadcast journalism. Even if you're stunning, it's a bad move. It's also illegal in the US for an employer to request a photo.
3. Don't limit yourself. A one-page resume is fine for someone fairly young, but two pages is the norm these days.
4. That said, if a piece of information can be cut without harming your professional narrative, cut it. Two pages is fine as long as it's two pages of useful info. Don't digress and don't waste the reader's time.





GENERAL TIPS

5. Be mindful of your email address. If you don't have a professional-sounding email address, go get one — they're free. First.Last@gmail is always a safe bet.

6. Tailor your resume to each job you apply for. We can't emphasize this enough. This is usually as simple as tweaking your headline and reordering some of your bullet points.

And lastly, don't try to be cute or funny. If someone has ever advised you that "your personality should shine on your resume," they're wrong. Your resume is no place for your personality; save that for the interview. Instead, keep the resume to solid facts. Your resume should be constructed with the screening process in mind, and no one will be screening you based on how funny you are.





THE TAKEAWAY

You've got very little time to snag a reader's attention, so play to your core value. Lead your resume with a short but compelling narrative and make that narrative run throughout your resume. Go light on duties and heavy on accomplishments. Avoid fluff. Keep it to two pages, and don't hesitate to utilize white space to make it digestible and less daunting.





ENJOYED THIS LESSON?

(There's more where that came from.)

Check out our other resources!

**THE HIRED
GUNS**



33 w17th Street
Floor 7
New York, NY 10011

212.366.1918
www.thehiredguns.com