



Polishing Your Résumé

Is your résumé the best it can be?
Need to start over from scratch?
Use these insightful tips to create a
winning résumé.

RÉSUMÉ WRITING CAN BE INTIMIDATING. WE WONDER, what do I include, what do I leave out? How do I make it look nice? In what order do I need to list everything? Some of the most common concerns I hear from my career coaching clients are about how to organize their résumé and what pieces of information to include. Here are eleven tips that can help you get started on either creating your résumé from scratch or updating it for your next job search.

1. Brainstorm

The best way to get started is to brainstorm about your natural talents and abilities. Write down everything you've accomplished, even as far back as childhood. This is a confidence boost and also can help you get everything out on paper that you could possibly include in your résumé.

2. Give Yourself Credit

We tend to downplay the things we are naturally good at. This is because we assume that since it comes so naturally to us, everyone must be good at it, right? Wrong. Just because you can easily organize your office and keep your files in amazing working order does not mean everyone can do that. Perhaps you coordinated your local church's picnic and did a spectacular job. Not everyone has that particular skill, so give yourself credit for what comes naturally to you. Do this, of course, while being honest and accurate. It's never a good idea to blatantly lie on your résumé.

3. Talk to Those Who Know You Well

If you're still not sure about your natural talents, talk to family members, friends, and former co-workers. Ask what makes you stand out. What sticks in their minds as areas in which you excel? What favors have you done, or what help have you offered them in the past that made them remember and appreciate your unique talent?



4. Organize in a Way that Is Best for You

One thing people frequently ask me is, "Do I have to put my résumé in chronological order?" The answer is no. Ordering your work experience by date isn't necessary—relevance is. If you prefer chronological order, and it seems particularly appropriate for the job you're hunting for, go for it. But I typically recommend highlighting your skills and accomplishments that are relevant to the position, and organizing the résumé with jobs that are most relevant at the top. If you have a spotty job record, this also helps minimize that issue.

5. Clearly State Your Objective

Make sure your career objective clearly states the type of work you desire—the more specific, the better. Specific objectives are more powerful and hard-hitting. They stand out. If you're not sure what type of job you want, consider working with a career coach or counselor to clarify the next step you would like to take in your career.

6. Keep it Concise and Easy to Read

Enough said. You don't want to send a potential employer a novel. You want the hiring manager to be able to scan your résumé with ease. Keep it short while highlighting why you're the best person for the job. The typical recommended length is one page for an entry-level position, and two pages for a position requiring more experience.

7. Include a Cover Letter

Always include a cover letter with your résumé, unless the person doing the hiring specifies not to. This demonstrates your communication skills, shows you are interested in the job because you're taking time to write the letter, and it can highlight those items you really want them to notice on your résumé. If your writing skills are not great, I highly recommend working with a professional résumé writer for help. (For more on this, see Tip #10.)

8. Show Your Personality

Give the potential employer a sense of who you are as a person outside of work. What's unique or different about you? Where do you spend your time outside of work? Include outside activities and organizations that you are involved in—it helps you stand out in the crowd, or in the pile of résumés, in this case.

9. Emphasize Contributions, Not Duties

Résumés should always highlight what you contributed or accomplished at a job, as opposed to duties or responsibilities. This is another area where people tend to struggle. They want to merely list their job description. Don't do this—explain how you contributed to that organization. Use action verbs and highlight those accomplishments that are relevant to the position you are applying for.

10. Get Professional Help

I just gave you a number of tips for creating a great résumé, but at the same time, I recommend seeking professional help. When I need something that I know is not my specialty, I ask for help from the experts. Professionals know what they are doing and can help you develop a winning résumé that will land you an interview.

Specifically, I recommend two résumé writers to my clients—Jacqueline Simmons and Janice Shepherd. If you'd like their information, visit my blog online at www.halliecrawford.com/blog and search for résumé writers.

If you choose to not seek professional help, at the very least get someone to proofread your résumé for you. The smallest typo can sometimes be the deciding factor for hiring one person over the another!

11. Be Proud

Make sure you feel proud of your résumé. It will show in the interview. If you're pleased with it, that will come across. Your résumé is representative of you—make sure it's something you're proud of. **CM**

About the Author

HALLIE CRAWFORD, MA, CPCC, (Certified Professional Co-active Coach), has her own coaching practice, **Authentically Speaking**, and is also an affiliate with the Center for Balanced Living. For tips, tools, and expert advice on finding a career you're passionate about, visit her Web site at www.halliecrawford.com.

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