

# RESUME GUIDE



## RESUME CHECKLIST

Keep in mind that the resume you use to apply for a particular position should address the skills and qualifications outlined in the job description; therefore, your resume is a fluid document that should continually change. *A prospective employer may decide whether or not to interview you based on spending only 10-30 seconds reading your resume!*

- Contact Information** – Are your name, address, phone number(s) with area code, e-mail address, and LinkedIn URL centered at the top of your resume?
- Summary or Profile of Qualifications** – A summary is generally preferred instead of an objective statement. A good summary highlights your accomplishments and qualifications for the position for which you are applying. Use words directly from the position description if they accurately describe skills and/or experience that you possess. Choose either style: a brief paragraph OR three to five bulleted statements. In either case, summarize your experiences, achievements, and skills in telegraphic phrases – do not use complete sentences. Include computer skills – list individual software (i.e., Proficient in Microsoft Word, Excel, and Access; familiar with SAS).
- Education** – As a current or recently graduated student, list your education before your professional experience. If you are a current student, list your education including your proposed graduation date (for example, Master of Public Health, anticipated date of graduation May 2014). After gaining two to four years of experience in your professional field, list “Professional Experience” before the “Education”.
- Professional Experience** – List name of the organization, city, state, (or country, if international); title; and month and years you held the position. *You may reverse the order if the title gives a stronger impression than the name of the company.* Use bullet points to give a brief description of your responsibilities, followed by specific accomplishments. Begin sentences or phrases with strong action verbs. Instead of simply listing responsibilities that you had, tell your reader what your accomplishments were and what the outcome was. Think in terms of answering the question, “So what?” The prospective employer wants to know that *you* know what your value was to the organization where you worked. Be as specific as possible. Use the “STAR” method: think of a Situation or Task you faced, the Action you took, and the Result: i.e., “Designed and implemented \_\_\_\_\_, reducing errors by 27%.” Will the prospective employer be able to identify the result of the action you took?
- Honors, Awards, Professional Associations** - Include these if relevant for the position for which you are applying.
- Professional Affiliations** - List professional organizations of which you are a member.
- Community Involvement, Leadership Experience** - Employers often seek candidates who demonstrate leadership qualities. List student leadership roles and/or other volunteer experiences that relate to the position. Note: be cautious about listing political or what might be perceived as controversial organizations, so as not to be eliminated on that basis.
- Visually Appealing** – Hold your resume at arm’s length. Is there plenty of white space? Did you use a standard font? (Arial, Cambria, or Calibri?) If it’s more than one page, *is your name and page number on the second page?*
- Proofread** – Did you proofread your resume? Did you ask someone else to proofread?

## BUILDING A SCANNABLE RESUME

### Why do I need a scannable resume?

Some large companies and governmental organizations are using computer software called resume management systems to help sort through the thousands of resumes they receive. This system is programmed to search resumes for a particular number of key words. If your resume does not meet the minimum number of key words, it may never make it to the hiring manager. You may choose to submit a regular resume (that is visually appealing for the recruiter and hiring manager) AND a scannable resume. Acknowledge that you are doing this in the cover letter.

### How does the scanning process work?

- Resumes are scanned into the computer and then analyzed using optical recognition software.
- Optical recognition software changes the image file created by the scanner into a text file that can be searched and edited.
- Software then searches resumes for specific skills and work experience.
- Employers use this technology as a preliminary sorting device to select candidates and to maintain a central database of resumes. Often, electronic scanning is used to sort out the first round of candidates.

### Why are keywords important?

- Keywords are lists of words entered into the computer by the recruiter. The software then searches for these words to appear in your resume.
- If your resume contains a certain number of specific keywords required for a particular position, then you may be considered for an interview.
- Be sure to use specific terminology and current industry jargon. (List specific skills such as SAS, SPSS, instead of just saying “statistical software”.)

### How do I make my resume more scanner-friendly?

- **Formatting:**
  - Do not use intricate formatting techniques such as tables or columns; graphics; shading or lines
  - Use one inch margins on all sides (do not use “Wizard” templates)
  - Use only basic bullets.
- **Text:**
  - Use only capital letters and / or boldface for emphasizing text – no italicized or underlined text.
  - Use a font size of 10-12 points, preferably 11pt (use Arial or Times New Roman font type)
  - Put a space before and after every slash mark. (For example: “and/or” becomes “and / or”.)
  - Put your name, address, and contact information on separate lines. Center your address directly beneath your name. Use separate lines for multiple phone numbers and email addresses.
- **Paper and printing:**
  - Use plain white paper only and black ink (laser-quality printing preferred); do not fold or staple
  - If faxing the resume is necessary, use a fine resolution, and send an original by mail. (Acknowledge this in the cover letters that accompany the faxed and mailed resumes.)
- **How do I use keywords effectively?**
  - Include keywords in a “Summary” section between your contact information and the body of your resume. Use short, complete phrases, such as “Proficient in Minitab, SAS, Paradox, and Access.”
  - Keywords are likely to be nouns, so use concrete words, titles, and terms to describe experiences. For instance, use “high-level computer skills” rather than “highly proficient in computing technology.”
  - Refer to the position description and use the same phrases, wording, and titles to describe your experiences and skills.
  - Include interpersonal traits in your summary: time management, team player, dependable, responsible, etc.
  - Spell out abbreviations and acronyms the first time. For example: Minnesota Environmental Health Association (MEHA)

## RESUME FORMAT

### YOUR NAME

Street address  
City, State ZIP  
Email address / 612-125-4321  
LinkedIn URL

- One phone number and email address  
- Add your LinkedIn URL

### SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Skills customized to position description
- Skill two
- Skill three

Use the position description to guide your summary – this will help you capture the key words

### EDUCATION

**University of Minnesota School of Public Health**, Minneapolis, MN  
*Master of Public Health – Nutrition*

expected month year

**Boldface the school, not the degree!**

**University of St. Thomas**, St. Paul, MN  
*Bachelor of Arts, Natural Science; Spanish minor*

month year

### RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

**Organization One**, City, State  
*Position Title*

- Analyze...
- Collaborate....
- Develop...

date - date

**Use consistent structure:**  
- Include location for each position  
- Align dates on right side of page  
- Start each bullet with a strong action verb

**Organization Two**, City, State  
*Position Title*

- Taught...
- Planned...
- Evaluated...

date - date

**Other sections might be "Awards," "Military," "International Experience" or "Professional Affiliations"**

**Organization Three**, City, State  
*Position Title*

- Managed...
- Facilitated....

date - date

### LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Leadership/Volunteer Position One  
Leadership/Volunteer Position Two  
Leadership/Volunteer Position Three

If you must go to a second page, be certain your name is in all capitals and bolded in the upper left-hand corner, with "Page 2" on the right-hand side. A second page is appropriate if at least 1/3 of the second page can be filled.

### RELEVANT COURSEWORK

**Relevant coursework is useful to include if you have limited relevant experience**

## FEDERAL RESUMES

For years, KSA's were largely considered the most dreaded aspect of applying for a government job. KSA's (knowledge, skills and abilities) are questions that assess a candidate's suitability via written responses. Each open position typically had a list of corresponding KSA's, requiring much thought and resulting in a resume package that was sometimes a dozen pages long. But since 2010, most federal positions have eliminated KSA's – though a small percentage of supervisors may continue to use them.

With KSA's going the way of the dinosaur, today's candidates may be tempted to shout "hooray" and forget they ever existed. Successful applicants, however, must still find a way to incorporate the KSA principles into their federal resumes, creating a new hybrid resume that positions them at the top of the candidate pool.

### Choose the Right Format

Before getting into the all-important content of your resume, it's important to think about getting the "look" right. First, be prepared to go the distance. Candidates who have never applied for a federal position may opt to simply submit their standard one-page resume, which is a very costly mistake. **Properly composed federal resumes – even without separate KSAs – are pretty lengthy.** Unless you're just starting out, it's unlikely you'll be able to squeeze everything into even two pages.

Second, stick to a traditional format. Many job seekers, especially those who are switching careers, are creating functional resumes that eliminate most timelines and focus almost solely on skill sets. This is a no-go on federal resumes. When you're preparing a resume for Uncle Sam, **put things like work experience and education in reverse chronological order, complete with dates that are as exact as possible (down to the day)** in part because it helps hiring managers determine length of your experience, and hence, what level you're eligible to apply for.

Third, federal resumes need to please both electronic and human eyes; some resumes don't come into contact with humans until the scanners have vetted them. To please the computers, avoid any funny stuff: **no colored fonts, charts or graphs, italics, underlining, two- or three-column formats, parentheses, tabs or bullet points.**

### Here are the DO's:

- Use dashes or asterisks to create lists
- Stick with left justification only
- Keep everything uniform – spacing, font size, etc.
- Pick a sans serif font such as Arial

### Read Carefully

Now it's time to dig into the content. **The foundation for an outstanding resume begins with reading the job posting thoroughly. Make a list of the keywords you find** because these are critical in identifying the knowledge, skills and abilities the hiring agency is looking for – but may not list out in KSA's anymore. Identifying keywords and looking for ways to incorporate them is not to be confused with repeating job postings word for word, a tactic that doesn't give the agency any information about your qualifications. Instead, **tailor your resume for the specific job posted.**

## FEDERAL RESUMES (Continued...)

### Use Examples

One of the reasons federal resumes are so lengthy is because applicants are encouraged to **go into detail** about their experiences. Examples illustrate your experience in a way that a simple recitation of facts can't, and the more precise your example, the better. If you're trying to convey that communication is one of your skills, you can say, "I am an excellent communicator in both written and verbal formats." But it's much more effective to add, "For example, I initiated a weekly inter-office newsletter that informed our 50-person staff about the week's deadlines, production schedules and team-building events such as office picnics. In addition, I was selected to interview clients for our company's end-of-the-year report due to my ability to successfully converse with a broad range of people."

But **evaluate your resume** carefully to **ensure the information you include is pertinent to the job. Details and examples are expected**, but it's not a license to ramble on about your entire history in hopes that the employer will find what she needs in the tangle of words.

### Numbers Talk

When integrating your knowledge, skills and abilities, the best way to quantify those is with numbers or percentages that back up your claims.

- **Dollars:** Your ability to save a company money is a huge selling point; after all, the government has a well-publicized debt problem. So be sure to include how your actions or knowledge resulted in cost savings for former employers. Be specific: 20 percent, \$15,000 annually, etc.
- **Time:** Implementing strategies that save time is another big plus, in part because it allows companies to do more with less – often resulting in cost savings as well. "I computerized the company's records system, eliminating manual filing and saving 5 hours each work week" means more than just listing the system itself. Working within deadlines also falls into the "time" theme, ie: "I met publishing deadlines every month of my five-year employment."
- **Quantity:** If you indicate that you designed web sites – and leave it at that – the employer won't know if you created one web site a year or one a day. "I designed three web sites each week consisting of all graphics and text for the landing page and five additional tabs." That sounds a lot more impressive than once a year!

### Don't Forget the Basics

You probably already put things like your full name and phone number on your resumes, but the federal government needs much more. Unless you're applying for a senior position, which involves even more requirements, this checklist covers the mandatory information:

- Mailing address
- Social Security number
- Job Title and number for which you're applying
- Work experience, including salary/wages and contact information for your place of employment and supervisor
- Education, beginning with high school
- Proof that you're a veteran (ie: copy of discharge certificate), if applicable
- Full details about any prior federal employment (including GS-level)
- Awards, honors and certifications related to the job for which you're applying

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