

Resume Tips

Purpose of a resume:

1. **Make a good first impression** - Your resume may be the only chance you have to make an impression, so you want it to be a good one.
2. **Sell yourself** - A resume is a brief, concise document that presents and effectively sells your most relevant and positive credentials for employment.
3. **Get an interview** - An effective resume is designed to get you an interview, not a job.

Tips to Consider:

1. **The Basics** - The first thing on your resume should be your name (bold and larger font than the rest) followed by your contact information such as your address, email address, and phone number. Make sure this information is accurate and up to date. You should also include it at the top of each page of your resume. Without this information, the employer cannot contact you.
2. **Don't be too fancy** - Do not use a colored background, fancy fonts, or images throughout your document unless it is directly related to the job you are applying for. You want to grab the attention of the employer based on your qualifications, not based on your document. Remember, your preferences may not be the same as the person reviewing your resume.
3. **Font size** - Try to keep your font size around 12. Don't make the font really small to reduce the page count and don't make the font really big to take up space.
4. **One or Two pages** - If you are just graduating and do not have a lot of work experience then a one page resume is appropriate; however, if you have several jobs or several years of work experience then you may need more than one page to express yourself. For most jobs you should try to limit your resume to two pages or less. Certain jobs in academia or research may ask for a curriculum vita which is usually longer than two pages.
5. **Sell yourself** - The resume may be the only contact you have with the person screening the job. The content must address the business need and show what you have to offer. Just as organizations advertise their products/services on TV and in magazines, the resume is your advertisement to the organization selling your skills over the other candidates. Remember, there may be 5 other applicants or 95 other applicants so you need to sell your skills.
6. **Avoid too much personal information** - Most employers are ethical and avoid discriminating against applicants. Certain information cannot be considered when making hiring decisions. Birth dates, personal photos, hobbies, marital status, personal health and affiliations are usually not important to the job you are applying for; therefore, don't include this information on your resume.
7. **Tailor your resume and cover letter for EACH position** - Many applicants create a generic resume and send it out for every job of interest. Most often this is just a waste of time. You should take the time to review in detail the job advertisement and the required

qualifications. Tailor your resume and work experience to support what the employer is looking for. Address each point in enough detail that the employer can easily find the information on your resume and cover letter and understand your depth of experience. One resume does not fill all.

8. **Stick to the truth** - Don't try to embellish your experience, job titles, or education. If you don't have work experience, include your summer jobs and/or volunteer work. If you've not finished your degree, list the expected completion date. Many applicants have lost out on great job opportunities because the employer discovered through reference checks, background checks, or other verifications methods that the applicant lied about his/her past.
9. **Use bullet points** - Most employers are not going to take the time to read paragraphs of text on your resume. Your goal is to communicate a lot of information as quickly and clearly as possible. Use bullet points and short sentences to describe your work experience but make sure you include enough information to address the employer's job requirements.
10. **Use effective job titles** - Most employers will make a judgment about your resume in 10 seconds or less. Therefore, you want your job titles or summaries to be as descriptive as possible. Instead of Accounting Manager you may want to describe yourself as Manager of Accounts Receivable.
11. **Use action verbs** - Action verbs are used to quickly communicate your experience and/or achievements. Examples include coordinated, assisted, managed, planned, designed and implemented. You can find many online lists of action verbs to assist with your resume writing.
12. **Do not include jargon or slang** - Many employers use in-house jargon to describe tools, events, and processes. Make sure you spell out your experience so that others outside your organization will understand the depth of your knowledge and experience. Many military jobs/titles fall into this category. The military has created a language translation guide to help veterans better explain their previous experiences in language that non-military employers will understand. Also keep in mind that some people reviewing your resume may not have the technical expertise to interpret your resume, so decode the information so a novice will still have an understanding of what you do.
13. **List all of your work experience and dates of employment** - In most cases you should list all of your work experience. Sometimes it may be appropriate to group several jobs together during a time period. For instance, if you worked at multiple fast food restaurants, retail stores, and a grocery store over a seven year period while attending college, you may want to group those jobs together if they do not have anything to do with what you are applying for now. Most employers do not want to see gaps in employment so try to show everything you've done or at least be prepared to address the gaps.
14. **Add quantitative data** - Make sure the reader of your resume understands the breadth and depth of your experience. Include numbers to show the size of the department, the amount of the budget, or the percentage increase you were responsible for.
15. **Proofread** - This cannot be emphasized enough! One small typo and your chances of getting an interview may be gone. Proofread your document several times. Walk away and come back to it later and proofread again.

16. **Ask someone else to review your resume** - Get a second and third opinion. See if these readers understand the information you are trying to convey. Sometimes we read what we intend to type instead of what we actually type. Ask these people to give you suggestions for improvement. Also, get them to proofread the document while they have it.
17. **Update the resume regularly** - If you take on additional duties at work, receive an award, or complete a degree, you may want to include this additional information on your resume. Don't wait until you need the resume, you may forget to include the information.
18. **Keep the salary in mind** - the image you create with your resume and your cover letter should match the salary and responsibility level that you are applying for.

Additional online resources (not associated with George Mason University):

Yahoo resume information - <http://hotjobs.yahoo.com/resume>

Monster resume information - <http://career-advice.monster.com/resumes-cover-letters/careers.aspx>

Job Star resume information - <http://www.jobstar.org/tools/resume/index.php>

Resume Tips - http://jobsearch.about.com/od/resumetips/Resume_Tips.htm

Action Verbs - <http://www.resumetoolbox.com/action-verbs.html>

De-militarizing your resume - <http://jobs.virginia.gov/emplvetdemilitarizing.html>