

# HOW DO I WRITE A RESUME?

## What is a resume?

*A resume forms one of the most important parts of any job application process and is usually a one to four page document. It outlines a job applicants work history, background, education and skills with the goal of gaining an interview. When well written and presented, a resume can appeal to an employer to give the applicant an interview. In addition to details on work history, skills, and education resumes can also have optional sections like an objective, career highlights and personal interests.*

## What goes on a resume?

A typical resume includes information focusing on some or all of the following areas:

- Contact information
- Work experience
- Education
- Accomplishments
- Credentials
- Professional memberships
- Skills and attributes
- Referees
- Extra information like personal interests can be included, but tend to be nonessential these days OR dependent on the role.

### Personal Details

Your resume should start off with your personal information such as name, address, contact numbers, e-mail (if available). It is not customary anymore to disclose things like, age or date of birth, marital status, health, race or gender. These demographics leave the door open to potential discrimination and have no impact on whether you can do the job.

### Employment History

Outline your career history in the most recent order. The structure to follow for each role is: Job title, employer, dates, what you did, for whom and when.

# HOW DO I WRITE A RESUME?

## Career Overview

This is an optional extra on a resume which can give a positive statement about your background, both personal and career goals and your experience. When writing this section try to:

- Keep it short and to the point;
- Highlight your career goals; and
- Highlight what you hope to achieve.

A Career Overview should provide the reader with a quick preview of what he or she will find in your resume. It is there to make sure they actually read through the resume. It should be a few sentences and written as one paragraph. It should include a smattering of your professional, academic and industry training. Some personal attributes are optional. As stated, your career goal could serve as the last sentence.

eg. I am a motivated individual seeking a career in the health industry. My extensive training in the areas of nursing has given me the foundations upon which I hope to build my career within Queensland Health.

This example has been tailored to suit the company the person is applying with (Queensland Health). A more generic statement can be used. Ensure the statement is adapted around the position being applied for. Also, avoid airy, fairy statements. If a sentence doesn't contain factual information, ditch it.

## Education

Quite simply, this section should include all formal and informal education and training undertaken. This should be in date order from most recent to least recent. This should include the name of the course (e.g. Bachelor of Science, Senior Certificate), the institution, and the year in which the qualification was gained. If still in the process of studying, indicate when the course started and leave a dash.

Start with your highest qualification first. Unless you are fresh out of school, leave your secondary school history out.

Education and Training section can cover university, TAFE training, industry courses, in-house courses, and any other professional training.

# HOW DO I WRITE A RESUME?

## **Achievements**

Achievements show potential employers what you are made of and what they can expect you will do for them.

Up to three per job is good and be specific. List the things that you did that you were not paid to do. Items would include staff awards and special commendations. Also ideas you put forward, scoped out or helped to implement that led to a cost saving or an increase in revenue or delivered new clients or resulted in higher levels of customer service or time efficiencies. The key here is results.

Please note meeting a target is not an achievement - it's doing what you are paid to do. Exceeding a monthly target is an achievement. Indent your achievements by one tab on your resume to make them stand out.

## **Plugging resume gaps**

Employers and recruiters don't like mysteries so if you have been out of the workforce it is better to try and explain the gap in your resume.

It is a good idea to write a short paragraph explaining the gap and inserting it into the right place in your career history. Remember, your career history is in reverse chronological order. Add in a line about any new skills or training you acquired.

An example would be: let's say you are a mum returning to the workforce, you could write something like:

Home manager/full time mum - January 2006 - September 2009

Skills acquired: Excellent organisational skills, communication skills and the ability to multi task. During this time I completed both a MYOB course and a first aid certificate. I managed the books for my husband's plumbing business and I created and managed the roster for volunteers at my daughter's child care centre.

## **Personal Attributes**

A personal attributes section is another optional extra but also an important section in providing the employer with information about your personality. This gives a rather impersonal document some personality. Also, methods used for recruitment and selection in today's market are more and more making use of personality profiling. Psychologists have linked personality traits to

# HOW DO I WRITE A RESUME?

work habits so it is in your best interest to be aware of your positive personality traits and to mention these on your resume.

## **Describing your positive attributes**

For some great ways to describe your attributes search 'personal attributes list' in Google or chat with us. Be sure to use words which are not cliché' such as 'easy going' and do your best to relate the words back to the job you are applying for. You could even use words which they have used so long as you really have those qualities. Here are just a few of many popular examples:

- Inventive
- Proactive
- Enthusiastic
- Results oriented
- Quality focused
- Organised
- Practical

## **Skills/Attributes**

Also titled 'key credentials' or 'demonstrated skills' this is another section that is under used. It is an important way to communicate succinctly – usually in dot point form – just exactly what your stand out skills are. Resumes tend to always be too long and due to the short amount of time an employer spends reading the resume, making sections easy to read enables the employer to take in more information. Using a section on skills can give clear concise information about what you can offer the employer.

## **Professional Memberships**

Include only those relevant to your career as well as an indication of how active you are in the organisation.

# HOW DO I WRITE A RESUME?

## Other Interests

This section is used sparingly usually because people don't think their personal interests have any bearing on whether you can do the job. In reality, they don't, however, this section merely provides a talking point or a point of difference. Your personal interests will give an indication of what you are like as a person. For example – a person who likes reading, sewing, craft and classical music conjures a completely different image to a person who likes sky diving, salsa dancing, action movies and bungee jumping!!

## Referees

Your list of referees are last on a resume, they are the names of people you have nominated to give you a good reference, not just a reference! You should of course have permission from them to name them as a referee and let them know when you have applied for a position or got to the interview stage. As well as the person's name, include their current position, company worked for, and their contact phone number.

## Some important things to remember

- Describe your skills, abilities, and attributes and what you can do for the employer.
- Highlight achievements for each of your previous positions.
- Keep language simple and direct.
- Capitalise or use bold print to emphasise certain aspects you want to highlight – use one treatment or the other, but not both.
- Do not cram your resume – a cluttered resume is hard to read. Leave some information to talk about when you get an interview.
- Only use professional-sounding email addresses as this is a marketing document promoting you.
- Keep the resume to 3 pages maximum if possible.