



**Resume Writing Guide**

## Introduction

So you want to create your technical resume? Your resume is usually your first--and sometimes your only--impression on a prospective employer. It is critical that you create a resume that grabs the attention, details the appropriate information, and gets you in the employer's door. This guide gives you resources and advice on writing resume content that will get you the job you want.

*Here are some tips and advice on creating a strong resume:*

- **Contact Information.** Include the most appropriate forms of contacting you in an easily accessible format. Forms of contact should include phone numbers (home and cell), emails and your mailing address. Try to avoid using your business telephone and email as the only form of being contacted as this can change over time and many recruiting agencies store your resume for the future. If you have moved on from your current job there will be no way of contacting you.
- **No Bland Writing.** Use power verbs. Show how you acted upon things, how you made things happen, not how they just happened or came to be. Stating that you were 'involved' with the delivery of a project does not provide any detail to your skills and responsibilities. Describe what your particular duties and efforts were that helped the project or initiative come to fruition.
- **Accessible Layout.** Organize your information in a layout that allows the recruiter or interviewer to be able to pick out the main points of your technical writer resume quickly. Make effective use of headings, bullet points, and spacing. Do not make it look like a book with paragraphs of written text.
- **Match Your Resume to the Desired Job and Salary.** If you are aiming for a high-profile job, you'd better supply a high-profile resume.
- **Write with a Professional Approach.** Try to stay away from humorous comments regarding who you are, what you have done and what you are looking for. Everyone loves it when they come across a resume that is peculiar in some way and they do stand out, but they are not taken seriously.

## Top Ten Technical Resume Writing Tips

1. **List your technical knowledge first in an itemized fashion.** Use as many buzz words as you can conjure up which reflect your work and school experience. List all operating systems and UNIX flavors you know. List all programming languages and platforms with which you're experienced. List all software you've thoroughly used. This will satisfy the visual curiosities of hiring managers and OCR scanners conducting key word searches (at Taos, every resume received is thoroughly reviewed by a real live human being).
2. **List your qualifications in order of relevance, from most to least.** Only list your degree and educational qualifications first if they are truly relevant to the job for which you are applying. If you've already done what you want to do in a new job, by all means, list it first, even if it wasn't your most recent job. Abandon any strict adherence to a chronological ordering of your experience.
3. **Quantify your experience wherever possible.** Cite numerical figures, such as monetary budgets/funds saved, time periods/efficiency improved, lines of code written/debugged, numbers of machines administered/fixed, etc. which demonstrate progress or accomplishments due directly to your work.
4. **Begin sentences with action verbs.** Portray yourself as someone who is active, uses their brain, and gets things done. Stick with the past tense, even for descriptions of currently held positions, to avoid confusion.
5. **Don't sell yourself short.** This is by far the biggest mistake of all resumes, technical and otherwise. Your experiences are worthy for review by hiring managers. Treat your resume as an advertisement for you. Be sure to thoroughly "sell" yourself by highlighting all of your strengths. If you've got a valuable asset which doesn't seem to fit into any existing components of your resume, list it anyways as its own resume segment.
6. **Be concise.** As a rule of thumb, resumes reflecting five years or less experience should fit on one page. More extensive experience can justify usage of a second page. Consider three pages (about 15 years or more experience) an absolute limit. Avoid lengthy descriptions of whole projects of which you were only a part. Consolidate action verbs where one task or responsibility encompasses other tasks and duties. Minimize usage of articles (the, an, a) and never use "I" or other pronouns to identify yourself.
7. **Omit needless items.** Leave all these things off your resume: social security number, marital status, health, citizenship, age, scholarships, irrelevant awards, irrelevant associations and memberships, irrelevant publications, irrelevant

recreational activities, a second mailing address ("permanent address" is confusing and never used), references, reference of references ("available upon request"), travel history, previous pay rates, previous supervisor names, reasons for leaving previous jobs, and components of your name which you really never use (i.e. middle names).

8. **Have a trusted friend review your resume.** Be sure to pick someone who is attentive to details, can effectively critique your writing, and will give an honest and objective opinion. Seriously consider their advice. Get a third and fourth opinion if you can.
9. **Proofread, proofread, proofread.** Be sure to catch all spelling errors, grammatical weaknesses, unusual punctuation, and inconsistent capitalizations. Proofread it numerous times over at least two days to allow a fresh eye to catch any hidden mistakes.
10. **Laser print it on plain, white paper.** Handwriting, typing, dot matrix printing, and even ink jet printing look pretty cheesy. Stick with laser prints. Don't waste your money on special bond paper, matching envelopes, or any color deviances away from plain white. Your resume will be photocopied, faxed, and scanned numerous times, defeating any special paper efforts, assuming your original resume doesn't first end up in the circular file.

## Do's and Don'ts of Resume Writing

### Do's:

- use strong action words to describe your skills/experience. Use short, bulleted, point form statements, not sentences.
- clearly set off headings/sub-headings and large margins with lots of white space.
- outline your accomplishments.
- use a computer and effects such as bolding and underlining.
- print your resume with a quality laser printer or have copies printed on a high-quality photocopy machine
- use white or light coloured (cream, grey, or ivory for example) 8 1/2 x 11 bond paper. Stay away from flashy colours or odd sizes.
- staple the pages of your resume. Don't bind it or put it in any type of folder. include a short and simple cover letter.
- proof-read! Avoid any typos or grammatical errors. Read it out loud. Have someone else check it a second and third time.
- keep your resume two or three pages in length ( note: there may be exceptions where longer resumes may be the norm – do your research!).
- be honest.

**Don'ts:**

- Don't use the word "I", write in the third person.
- Don't use abbreviations except those that are well known.
- Don't present the information scattered around the page, BE ORGANIZED.
- Don't use long paragraphs and sentences. This takes too long to say too little.
- Don't submit a resume that is poorly typed and printed and that is hard to read. Your resume will look unprofessional and so will you.
- Don't give only the bare essentials of dates and job titles. Tell them what you did; they want to see how you made a contribution to your previous place of employment, especially in the last 5-10 years.
- Don't include personal information: height, weight, sex, health, marital status are not needed and should not be included on today's resumes.
- Don't use fancy typesetting, binders, photographs or exotic paper. This confuses the reader. Clean and simple is best.
- Don't lie. You can be fired for making false statements on your resume. Besides a resume is supposed to represent you and the skills you have, not someone else's.