

FEDERAL RESUMES: CONTENT AND FORMAT

Federal resumes vary significantly from any other job search documents you will ever prepare.

A successful resume is one that places your unique experience/qualifications in a format that meets the needs of individuals reviewing it. When developing your resume, keep the following in mind:

- Your resume is a detailed sample of your work (including unique qualifications and experiences).
- It should demonstrate how well you organize and present information.
- It will demonstrate your ability to produce quality work – clean, neat and free of errors.

RESUME HEADINGS/SECTIONS

Your resume must include all items required by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), including, but not limited to:

Identification/Personal Information

- Full Name
- Mailing address
- Email address
- Telephone number(s)
- Country of citizenship
- Veteran's preference
- Reinstatement eligibility (if appropriate)
- Highest federal civilian grade with series and dates held

Work Experience (May also include Relevant, Unpaid Experiences)

- Job title (including series and grade in government jobs)
- Duties **and** accomplishments
- Employer/Company name and full mailing address
- Supervisor's name/telephone number, and permission to contact
- Starting and ending dates
- Hours per week
- Salary
- Prepare a separate entry for each position

In describing "work" experiences, remember to:

- Include strong, action verbs and accomplishment statements to describe your duties and demonstrate your experience.
- Stress relevant recent and successful accomplishments.
- Include accomplishments resulting from special/unusual events (internships, co-ops, workshops/conferences).
- Consider including volunteer or outside activities, if they are relevant.
- Mention awards and honors to document the quality of your accomplishments.
- Provide details such as titles/dates of trainings, reason for awards, software used and how it was used, so that you receive full recognition for your qualifications.

Education

- Colleges and universities (including city, state and zip code)
- Type and year of degree(s)
- Major/minor/concentration (If no degree, include total credit hours earned)
- High school including name, city and state, and date of diploma or GED

Other Qualifications (Additional Headings to Consider Using)

- Foreign languages (and level of proficiency)
- Special skills (computer, laboratory, field, equipment competencies, etc.)
- Licenses or certifications
- Awards, honors, and recognition

- Training for both formal classroom as well as informal on-the-job training
- Relevant projects/coursework
- Research projects

Summary

Inserting a "Summary of Qualifications" at the beginning of your resume can be effective in demonstrating how you are a strong candidate. A brief 5-8 line paragraph or bullets can direct the reader's attention to your qualifications.

RESUME CONTENT

KEYWORDS

Keywords are critical and can significantly increase success in the federal job search. Regular use of keywords may result in referrals, selections and interviews. Utilizing keywords will help you write top notch resumes tailored to specific vacancies.

Places to Look for Keywords:

- Mission statement
- Duties
- Qualifications
- How candidates will be evaluated
- OPM job descriptions

Tips for Identifying Keywords

- Break out a highlighter
- Research 2-5 announcements for common keywords and skills
- Identify **nouns**, **proper nouns**, and **action words** used frequently or that seem to be of significance
- Look for patterns, similarities, repeated words in key documents/resources

GENERAL RESUME GUIDELINES (DO):

- Locate written career papers such as older resumes, evaluations and position descriptions
- Find your list of relevant classes/trainings
- Obtain a copy of your college transcripts (for your reference or inclusion with your application materials)
- Analyze vacancy announcements for keywords
- Create your resume in **.doc**, **.txt** or **.rtf** formats
- Select an easy to read typeface, usually 11-12 point font
- Left-align (flush left) text with ragged right margins
- Use headings, subheadings and ALL CAPS to add emphasis to important information
- Set margins for 1 inch on all four sides
- Utilize white space and spacing to make the information accessible and easy to read
- Expand on information in your resume (Federal resumes are generally 3-5 pages in length)
- Create easy to scan paragraphs (6-8 lines) to describe responsibilities and accomplishments
- Write experiences in a "traditional" resume format (reverse chronological order – most current to least current experiences)

GENERAL RESUME GUIDELINES (DON'T):

- Write one federal resume and use it for all positions
- Use too many acronyms or abbreviations
- Copy and paste text straight from the announcement and your position description
- Use a resume builder to write your resume
- Write your resume in one paragraph
- Use a long list of bullets to describe your duties/responsibilities/accomplishments
- Include graphics of any type in your resume/required documentation
- Use **bold**, *italics*, or underlining to format content
- Use bullets to describe duties, responsibilities and accomplishments