

## Resume-Writing Tips by Heather Wright

Whether you are writing your first resume or are updating one you have already written, it is important to remember that your resume can help a potential employer form an opinion of you before you even meet for an interview. Here are some tips to keep in mind when writing one:

1. Be sure to include action verbs when describing your accomplishments and work experience. Take, for example, these two descriptions of the job duties of a cashier:
  - Was responsible for sales transactions and customer service in a busy retail environment.

This description does not include any action taking place, because “was” does not indicate a specific action. Instead, it links the writer with a descriptive word “responsible.”

- **Conducted** sales transactions and **provided** customer service in a busy retail environment.

This sentence uses “conducted” and “provided,” which are action verbs. An action is taking place in this description, and the writer of the resume performed these actions. Action verbs can be more convincing to a potential employer and should be used whenever possible.

Here is another example, this time with a teaching position:

- Was a high school English teacher who was responsible for class instruction and developing original lesson plans based on student learning outcomes.

Again, “was” does not show any action taking place.

- **Instructed** high school English and **developed** original lesson plans based on student learning outcomes.

With “instructed” and “developed,” the writer indicates they were performing an action.

2. It is a good idea to use descriptive, vivid language when listing your skills on a resume. This way, you can highlight how well you perform a skill, whether you are advanced, intermediate, or a beginner. The left column contains skills without any descriptive words, and the column on the right contains descriptions indicating skill level.

Skills: Basic list

Microsoft Office  
Time management  
Customer service  
French  
Adobe Photoshop

Skills: More descriptive

Highly skilled in Microsoft Office  
Demonstrated time management abilities  
Exceptional customer service skills  
Intermediate proficiency in French  
Working knowledge of Adobe Photoshop

3. Be sure to include specifics in your resume. Relevant details and achievements can help you stand out from the rest of the crowd and could make you more noticeable to hiring managers. These two descriptions belong to the same management position.
  - Managed employees in a retail setting.  
This is a general description that does not highlight any details or accomplishments.
  - Hired and supervised 15 employees at a branch that was repeatedly recognized for achieving the highest sales in the district.  
This description highlights specific responsibilities and achievements.
4. Tailoring your resume to a specific position you are applying for is a great idea. If you use a one-size-fits-all approach to writing it, potential employers may notice that the skills you mention are not specific to those mentioned in the job posting. Instead of sending the same resume with all your applications, read the job description again and note the specific skills and experience the employer is looking for. Then, you may have a better idea of what skills, accomplishments, and experience to highlight in your resume for this particular job application. This is especially important in the current job market, as many companies use resume filtering software that is designed to eliminate from the next round any resumes that do not include relevant skills or experience. As a result, if any of the

“buzzwords” in the job announcement apply to you, it may be a good idea to include them so you can show you have read the posting thoroughly.

5. Proofread for errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. After you have proofread it yourself, have another person proofread it as well, as sometimes others can catch mistakes you do not. It is important to make a good impression, and sometimes spell-check may not catch all the errors, particularly if one word is confused for another. Note the errors in the following job descriptions, which Word did not catch:

- Cut clients’ hair and perform other cosmetology-related duties such as perming or **dying** hair.

The above spelling of the bolded word is a form of the verb “to die,” indicating the loss of life, rather than **dyeing**, which means changing the color of something.

- Conducted nighttime neighborhood patrols and **warmed** nearby officers of any suspicious activity.

Rather than “warming” nearby officers, this person would want to **warn** them instead.

6. Be careful not to use fonts or formats that are too elaborate. Since resumes are often submitted online, it is important to use something attractive, yet simple, that computerized systems can decipher. Additionally, whatever fonts, format, bullets, etc. you choose, make sure you remain consistent throughout the document.