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What To Include On Your Resume (And What You Can Ditch)



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What should absolutely be included on your resume? And what can you ditch?

My new client, Frank, was struggling hard with this question. He had only three years of professional work experience -- and his resume was three pages long.

I had to hand it to him -- the kid had spirit. Frank was an active volunteer, had won plenty of academic accolades during his college career and had taken on a lot of different job responsibilities in the three years he had been with his current company.

If you have an extensive work history, a two-page resume might be necessary.  But your resume should virtually never be three pages long.

Did I mention that the average time a recruiter spends looking at your resume is [six seconds](#)? There's no time for a page flip.

Here are a few fast, hard rules for what should -- and shouldn't be on your resume.

1. References available on request.

Ditch it. It's implied that you have professional references who can speak on your behalf. No need to show up to an interview and push a hard copy into your interviewer's hands, either. Though it's a smart idea to have those references ready to send over.

2. Your GPA.

Only if your industry calls for it. Such as, if you're applying for a role in investment banking or engineering. The only other time your GPA is worth including is if you're a semi recent grad and you graduated magna cum laude -- or with notable academic accolades.

If you do decide to include it, keep in mind that as your work experience grows, your GPA loses its relevance. The more work experience you gain, the less your GPA will be seen as an indicator of your performance as much as factors like your promotions and your level of responsibility and growth.

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3. Company descriptions.

If you've worked for a company no one has ever heard of. If any of the companies on your resume are very off the grid, you'll want to give a company description beneath it. Include 1-2 lines about what the company is and does. This would fall below where you list the company name and before you start your bullets about your job. But there's no need to have a company description for every company you've worked for.

4. Computer skills.

If computer skills are specific and essential to your job. Use your discretion on this one. If you're applying to a role as a programmer or technician and your knowledge of certain computer systems is tantamount to your role, include a list of your computer skills. If this is not the case for the job you're applying to, there's no need to waste space saying that you're "Microsoft proficient."

5. Internships

If you have limited professional work history. Keeping internships on your resume is only helpful if you're in your first or second job. Otherwise, the only internships you should keep on your resume more long-term are ones that are powerful branders, such as a White House internship... Or something that will add immediate value and position you as a top performer. Otherwise, that space on your resume is better used sharing your professional work history.

6. Your address.

It depends. This is a controversial topic, and some recruiters would say it's not necessary to include your personal address due to the privacy risk that it entails. But in my professional opinion, it helps to put your address. The reason being that some recruiters may believe that you don't live locally if you leave your address off. On that same note, if you're currently employed in the same city that you're job-hunting in and your resume shows that, you can choose not to include your address.

7. An objective statement.

Ditch it. Objective statements are out of style. If you've got an extensive work history, or are looking to make a career pivot that doesn't completely make sense on the resume alone, include a summary statement. It should consist of a few quick, strong statements at the beginning of your resume to summarize your skills and experience. This helps a prospective employer quickly get a sense of the value you could offer (remember, you've got six seconds here).

If you have a pretty linear or straightforward career path, this space is probably better used for additional bullet points in each of your roles.

8. Every single facet your job entails.

Only include high-impact bullet points. Don't talk about the stuff you're not proud of if it's not serving the way the reader will see you. It's important that hiring managers know how you're spending your time at work, but they don't need to know about the 60% of your job that you don't want to be branded by. For example, if you're filing almost half of the time, yet applying for a job that demands a significantly increased amount of responsibility, really focus on the work you do that requires more from you. Focus on that remaining 40% of what you did, and find the accomplishment in that. Just because you spent most of your time in one way, does not mean it needs to be shared.

Most of all, the resume you write is more about where you're going than where you've been. It's about really tracing the line of where you want to be and translating those related details on your resume.

Once I helped Frank get clear on the path that he wanted to pursue, he was able to pinpoint which parts of his three-page resume were going to help him get there -- and which he could do without.

Within a few weeks of sending out his condensed and improved one page resume, he landed three job interviews.

That's the power of being on the same page -- with an effective resume.

Watch on Forbes:

Ashley Stahl coaches job seekers to find their purpose and land more job offers. She also runs [CAKE Publishing](#), a ghostwriting house that helps influencers create content.