



Skills for Employment: Writing a Resume

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The process of finding a job has changed considerably over the last twenty years. In the past, it was easier to make direct contact with an employer. For some companies, you could simply walk in the front door and ask for an application. In some cases, it was possible to get an interview on the spot. Resumes were generally required only for the most professional positions. Today, the employment picture has changed significantly. Landing your ideal job has become increasingly competitive. There is often a flood of applicants and it is too expensive to process all the applications. Many companies are difficult to contact regarding employment. Sometimes, the application process is no longer done on the premises, rather it is done at a state employment office. Many types of positions, not just the most professional ones, now require a job resume. Today's job applicant needs an edge in marketing themselves for a job and should take care in developing an appropriate and well organized job resume.

What exactly is a resume?

One method of marketing yourself and increasing your chances of acquiring a job is to have an effective job resume. The resume is an advertisement about yourself. It is a one or two page statement describing who you are, your interests, your past employment and your capabilities for future employment. A resume is usually prepared such that it is easy to read and understand. The completed resume should be free of spelling errors and professionally presented (either manually typed or printed from a word processor).

The resume is often your first contact with the employer. Therefore, it is very important in

improving your chances of getting a job interview. An employer uses resumes to screen out applicants. Those that appear interesting and qualified on paper will likely get an interview. Your strategy should be to provide as much information about yourself as possible in a concise and easily understood format. Remember, you are trying to sell yourself to the employer. You want the employer to learn as much as possible about the skills and abilities that you possess which fit the requirements of the type of job opening available. The main function of a resume is to open the doors to future contact. Even if you don't get the job in which you were originally interested, your resume may be retained for future employment opportunities with the company arise. The impression you make through your resume will improve your chances of gaining employment with that firm.

An important aspect of a well prepared resume is that it reflects your style and thoughts. You should plan the format, specify the content and either type the final draft or oversee the process. Unlike other employment documents, such as a job application, the resume reflects what you want to say to an employer. This is your chance to put your best foot forward and emphasize your best qualities.

There are some general guidelines as to form and content of resumes. However, there is considerable freedom as to the way you want to write your resume. You can be very creative with your resume or follow a standard format. Creativity can be just the thing that catches an employer's eye. The way you present yourself in a resume can tell an employer a great deal about you as a future employee. The fact you took the time to prepare a resume may indicate to the reader that you are conscientious and would put forth similar effort as their employee.

Resume Worksheet

In developing your resume, it is best to start with a worksheet. This allows you to collect information about yourself and organize it in one place. You can then begin the process of developing and planning a suitable design for the final product. The worksheets at the end of this publication illustrate most of the information you will want to include on your resume. Complete the worksheets based on the following categories:

1. Your name, address and phone number

The top of your resume should include your name, address and phone number. Your name should appear prominently so the reader can immediately identify who's resume they are reading. If your resume is longer than one page, place your name on each page. Be sure to indicate your current address and phone number since this is the only way an employer can identify how to get in touch with you. People have missed out on job opportunities because they neglected to provide an accurate address and telephone number. If you have more than one phone number (office and home), list and label both. If you do not have a phone, list a number where you can be reached.

2. Personal information about yourself and your family.

Personal information about yourself includes age, date of birth, marital status and number of children. This information is not a requirement, but some sample resumes suggest providing it at the top of the resume. Provide this information if you feel it projects a favorable image of yourself. For example, a married man with children may project an image of stability in the community. However, a single woman with young children might be viewed as an employee who will require more time off the job. The resume is not the place to discuss such a sensitive issue. It is best to save this information until later in the employment process. In general, follow the old adage, *when in doubt, leave it out.*

3. Work objectives

Most resumes should include a short statement of a person's work objective. Usually the objective is broad, such as, *An executive secretarial position for a major*

insurance company or A position in the field of auto production. Your work objective could be precise if you have a skilled trade or are looking for a specific position. For example, a more specific objective would be, *An auto mechanic with a major dealership.* The work objective could be described by just one or two words as well, such as *Auto Mechanic* or *Executive Secretary.*

4. Your employment history

An employer is generally most interested in your employment history. This is probably one of the best indicators of your skills and abilities, as well as your commitment to work. The information about past employment should include the company name, your job title, dates of employment and your job duties. Also, consider including your reason for leaving the job, provided it was positive. For example, if you left to take a job with more responsibility or to devote full-time to your family, these are viewed as positive. On the other hand, being fired for not doing your job properly is a negative reason for leaving the job, and should not be included.

The continuity of your employment history is very important. Employers will recognize long gaps between jobs and will most likely ask you about them. Try to be as complete as possible in reporting your work history. Avoid the problem of an unexplained period out of work. However, avoid listing jobs lasting only a few weeks. Employment for a short period of time will not be a good indicator of your abilities and is best left unreported. Homemakers should indicate the time they have spent being a housewife and the tasks they performed during that period.

5. Your educational background

Your educational background is important to employers. You will need to provide the name of the school(s) attended, dates of attendance, degrees earned and some details on the subjects you studied. Education should not only include formal education, but also technical. Seminars attended, special classes or training and equivalency degrees (such as a GED) are also important to include. When providing information on special classes or training received, include a

brief description of the course content. This helps the employer understand more clearly the subject you learned. Mention special awards earned in your education, such as a high grade point average or an honors certificate. If you have had technical training, include your skill level and the date of certification as well.

6. Your skills

If you have skills you think will be useful for particular jobs, you will want to highlight them under a separate subheading. Only list the skills in which you either have training or certification or skills in which you have considerable experience. You don't want to be in a situation where you claim a skill in which you have little experience. At the same time you don't want to leave out important information.

7. Military experience

You can view military experience in two ways. In one respect, it is employment to include within the employment history component of the resume. In this case, you would treat it like any other occupation. List your position, dates of service and specific duties. You can also view your military experience as another piece of personal information. Most employers respect military service. Noting you are a veteran is one way of letting an employer know more about your character, abilities and experiences.

8. Honors and awards

If you have received any honors or awards, you should include those of greatest job related significance into your resume. For example, if you graduated with honors from high school or college, you should report the award within your educational history section. You may cite a job related award within your employment history or under activities and interests. Other honors and awards to consider reporting are recognition for service, offices held in professional organizations and awards recognizing your abilities.

9. Personal activities and interests

In addition to the other material, you might also include information pertaining to your personal interests and hobbies. This

information gives the employer a better feel for the type of person you are and your commitment to the local community. Include only significant activities that you are involved in such as an organization that you serve as an officer or committee member. If you hold an office or have received an award be sure and note it. Some examples include:

- School Clubs
- 4-H leader
- Homemaker Club
- Other Extension activities
- Community organizations
- Local elected or appointed offices
- Church groups
- Civic groups

10. A list of references

Your references will be very important to your overall success in finding employment. Employers are anxious to find out what kind of worker you are. Employers want to know your work habits, your strengths and weaknesses and what other people think of you. The best way to find out about these questions is to ask someone whom you have worked for or someone that knows you well. Employers are not looking for a reference from just anyone. They want information from someone who is objective and is able to talk about your abilities. Previous employers are a natural group to turn to for this information. People with whom you worked on committees or organizations are also good reference choices. These people can truly talk about your abilities as a worker. Employers have little interest in references from your friends or relatives since they may have a natural bias towards you.

Most resumes do not actually list references. Instead they include a statement on the bottom of the resume that says, *References available upon request*. Then, on a separate sheet of paper the name, address and telephone number of each reference is typed. This strategy is recommended for two reasons. The first is that it saves room on the actual resume, leaving more space for other items. The second is that it is better not to give out the name of your references unless specifically asked. If an employer wants to

know references, he/she will ask for them.

When you list people as references, always check with them first. Make sure they understand the importance of their comments. Always ask if they are willing to and feel comfortable speaking about you and your abilities to a prospective employer. You may want to give your references a copy of your resume or a list of your skills and work experiences. These can help them talk knowledgeably with a prospective employer about your qualifications. If you do not feel someone will give you a good reference, do not include them in your list of references.

For those with no previous work experience, the problem of references can be difficult. One alternative to previous employers are people with whom you have worked with in committees or organizations. Former teachers can be a good choice for a reference. You might also use your county Cooperative Extension agent if you are involved with and use Cooperative Extension services frequently.

Use the resume worksheets as a guide

Use the Resume Worksheets as a guide to help you collect all the necessary information for putting together a good resume. Be as accurate as possible in gathering the information. These worksheets will also be useful in other parts of your job search process, including the job application.

Use your resume effectively

Once you have a working resume, you will want to get it in the hands of prospective employers. Some people try to send it to every prospective employer they can think of. However, this approach is not recommended. If you send it to too many employers, you will risk sending it to many places in which you have no interest. You may also lose track of who you sent it to, thereby creating potentially embarrassing situations. It is far better to develop a strategy of how you will distribute your resume.

How should you use your resume?

The first rule is to put your resume in the hands of people who can help you get a job. This not only includes employers, but also friends and relatives. Friends and relatives can be an important source of information in helping you locate work. If they have a copy of your resume

available, they can be more effective in helping you. Plan to have extra copies of your resume available so you will give them out when opportunities arise.

Resumes are also useful when filling out an application. The employer (or employment agency) controls the kind of information needed in a job application. Often the questions asked and the amount of room available will not allow you to present all of your best qualities. A copy of your resume submitted with the completed job application will give more details about yourself. This is particularly important when working with employment agencies. It will increase the amount of information in your file.

It takes some time to complete a resume that is accurate, well written and error free. Write your resume before contacting employers. Use a resume when contacting an employer directly, either in person, in a letter or by phone. Once you contact an employer, refer to your resume. Either hand the resume to him/her or send it in the mail. Initial contacts are short. Employers often prefer to take a resume and examine it later. If interested, they will contact the applicant about an interview. Thus, it is to your advantage to always have a copy of your resume with you when you contact employers.

If you send a resume through the mail, send a cover letter along with it. Do not send a resume without a cover letter. The cover letter introduces yourself, your skills, interests and intent. A resume without a cover letter can confuse the employer as to why you contacted him/her. The cover letter should be short, informative and concise. Include several brief statements about yourself and your interest in the company. A thank you for their consideration is also a must. Do not go into detail in the cover letter. Save the details for later contacts, such as a job interview. A sample cover letter within this publication can serve as a guide for writing such a letter.

Adapted from:

Career Assistance for Farmers Modules by Thomas W. Ilvento, Anthony Hollinsworth and Mark A. White, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky.

Additional References:

The Job Search Program by the Jewish Vocational Service and the Kansas Cooperative Extension Service.

Minor Revision of:

Skills for Farmers: The Resume by Sarah E. Drummond, Jennifer Dodrill and Beverly Bailey, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.

Resume Worksheet

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Age: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____

Married: _____ **# Children:** _____

WORK OBJECTIVES:

PREVIOUS WORK EXPERIENCE: (start with most recent job)

<u>Company</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Responsibilities</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

EDUCATION: (start with the most recent)

<u>School</u>	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Area of Study</u>	<u>GPA</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Resume Worksheet

SKILLS AND INTERESTS:

Certified Skills

Work Skills

MILITARY EXPERIENCE (date and branch):

HONORS AND AWARDS:

PERSONAL ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS:

Resume Worksheet

REFERENCES:

Full Name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Business #: _____

Full Name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Business #: _____

Full Name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Business #: _____

Full Name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Business #: _____

Full Name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Business #: _____

John S. Carter
5821 S. First
Smalltown, OK 76543
(405) 555-5555

Job Objective: Maintenance Position

Education and Training:

1969-71 Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK
Major: Construction Management

1968 Town High School
Town, OK 75432
Received High School Diploma

Work Experience:

1975 to present Washington Square Apartments
5200 South Washington
Smalltown, OK 76543

Duties: Maintain and operate machinery and equipment;
responsible for the upkeep of 100 apartment
units; supervise maintenance and repair of
household appliances.

1972 to 1975 Yeiser Construction
Yourtown, OK 76431

Duties: Supplied and arranged hardware; handled and
installed anchors and explosives; maintained and
operated heavy equipment.

1971 to 1972 Cowden Manufacturing
Smallvillage, OK 78901

Duties: Packed and loaded supplies.

Skills: Auto Mechanics
Heavy Machinery Operation
Construction
Carpentry

Interests: Mechanics
Sports
Fishing

References Available Upon Request

**References for
John S. Carter**

Mr. Henry Morgan, Head Custodian
Smalltown Elementary School
Smalltown, OK 75432
405-555-0000

Mrs. Connie R. School, Teacher
Smalltown High School
Smalltown, OK 75432
(405) 555-8900

Mr. Dan Weber
Extension Agent
Your County Extension Office
Box 321
Yourtown, OK 76431
918-555-1000

5821 S. First
Smalltown, OK 76543
September 30, 1989

Mr. Charles D. Hammer, Personnel Director
Pennworth Industrial Inc.
1010 Industry Road
Bigtown, OK 76859

Dear Mr. Hammer:

Enclosed please find a copy of my resume. I am interested in applying for the position of maintenance worker as advertised in the Bigtown Journal.

I have had considerable experience in maintaining machinery from my work in construction and at Cowden Manufacturing. My work for Washington Square Apartments has also helped train me in this field because I must maintain and repair a number of small and large appliances during the course of my workday. I also do all my own work on my and my family's automobiles, both early and late models.

I would appreciate it if you would review my resume. I will telephone your secretary next week to seek an appointment with you.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

John S. Carter

Kay J. Resident
Route 2 Box 347
Ourtown, OK 74737
(918) 555-8932

- Objective** To secure a position as sales clerk where friendly, efficient treatment of customer is important.
- Experience**
- Secretary/Treasurer of Ourtown Extension Homemakers club
- * Managed checkbook and collected annual dues
 - * Budgeted for activities of 800 Ourtown Extension Homemakers
 - * Produced detailed financial records
 - * Prepared reports for national and state Extension Homemakers organization
 - * Developed computer skills
- Home and child-care management 1967-present
- * Prepared nutritious meals for a family of five on a limited budget
 - * Designed and sewed clothing for three children
 - * Managed family schedules and activities
 - * Developed interpersonal skills in conflict management and communication
- Community volunteer experience
- * Served as 4-H youth leader 1981-present
 - * Chaired fund drive for Our County Red Cross 1983
 - * Planned and organized parent volunteer program, Ourtown School 1982-84
 - * Served as treasurer for Extension Homemakers club
- Personal Characteristics**
- * Able to communicate-organize thoughts and ideas effectively, express them clearly in speaking and writing
 - * Skilled at following detailed instructions
 - * Expert at getting things done
 - * Effective in dealing with many kinds of people with understanding and fairness
 - * Skilled in organizing and administering events/programs
 - * Able to promote ideas and products
- Education** Graduation from Ourtown High School, 1966

Kay J. Resident
Route 2 Box 347
Ourtown, OK 74737
(918) 434-4334

Michael R. Owner
Personnel Manager
Michael's Clothes Store
Smalltown, OK 74477

Dear Mr. Owner:

I have long been a customer of Michael's Clothes Store and have been pleased with the service and merchandise. Now that I am seeking employment, I know that your store is a place where I would enjoy working.

My experience working with people in responsible positions in the community would make me a valuable employee. In addition, my skills as secretary and treasurer for my local extension homemakers club have given me valuable experience in bookkeeping and record keeping. I meet people well and enjoy serving others.

I would like to have the chance to meet with you to discuss my experience and job opportunities at your store. My resume is enclosed for your review. I'll arrange to come for an interview at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Kay J. Resident

Enclosure

References for Kay J. Resident

**Kathy Jones
Extension Home Economist
Our County Courthouse
Newville, OK 73621
(918) 555-6392**

**Susan H. Freeman
Extension 4-H Agent
Our County Courthouse
Newville, OK 73621
(918) 555-6393**

**Timothy Smith, Director
Our County Red Cross
3619 East 9th
Newville, OK 73621
(918) 555-0961**

**John H. McCall, Minister
First Methodist Church
414 Maple Avenue
Ourtown, OK 74737
(918) 555-6284**