

Resume Tips 3: Top 7 Suggestions for Resume Job Descriptions

Your resume looks great. You've shaken virtual hands with the reader. Now it's time to show off your knowledge, skills, training and accomplishments from your previous jobs. Current thinking in the recruiter world is that past performance predicts future success, so present yourself as a go-getting person of action and get yourself selected for the next round. In Part 3 of our resume series, we review the top ideas for selling your work experience, and convincing the recruiter you have what it takes to do the job.

1. **Be careful about how header information is organized in your job descriptions:** We read from left to right, and top to bottom. Recruiters scan that way, too. This means the most important information should be top-left, and least important bottom or right. Of Company Name, Employment Dates and Position, which are most important? Arrange this information accordingly, with position and company on the left, and employment dates on the right.
2. **Help make work contexts clear:** If you worked for an organization that is not well known, a one line description under the company name (industry, niche, products, turnover) can help a recruiter understand your work context, and bring the job description to life.
3. **Keep job descriptions brief:** Describe your skills and accomplishments, and not just your duties. Each bullet should be 2 lines or less. For anything more, delete unnecessary information or split the description into multiple bullets. Limit descriptions to 7-10 bullets for current role, and 4-6 for previous jobs. Include major achievements and awards or recognition.
4. **Tailor, Tailor, Tailor:** Go through the job posting you're applying for and highlight keywords and competencies. Make sure these make it into your resume, either in your profile or job descriptions. Edit your resume every time you apply for a position. Where possible use the exact terms found in the job posting as this will help get you selected by electronic screening systems.
5. **Make life easy for yourself:** Tailoring is a lot of work. If it helps, create a comprehensive base resume. This can include all jobs, all job activities, and all accomplishments. It can run for several pages. Then, when it comes to applying for a specific job, go through the base version and delete jobs and information that don't apply. Just remember to edit a copy, not the original, or you'll lose everything you edited out!
6. **Avoid vague, wishy-washy expressions:** "Responsible for various financial planning and budgeting paperwork." How many vague terms can you find in that sentence? Responsible for? State what you DID. Various? List the main ones. Paperwork? Name the documents you produced.
7. **Use power verbs:** Each job bullet should start with a "power verb." Verbs should be present tense for current position (invest, lead), and past tense (invested, led) for former jobs. Using continuous forms (investing, leading) makes it feel like you spent time doing things but didn't complete them. A comprehensive list of power verbs can be found [here](#).
8. **Qualify and quantify:** If your work had an impact on cost, or profit, or efficiency, or customer retention, shout this from the rooftops, and back up your claims with numbers and descriptive words to help the recruiter imagine your work style and accomplishments. Numbers. Percentages. Ratios. Time. Dollars. All of these add credibility and impact.
9. **Don't go too far back in your job history:** Unless you've job-hopped or worked a number of short-term contracts, only include your last 3 or 4 positions. Leave out anything more than 10-15 years old unless the knowledge or skills are vital to the job you're applying for, and are not included in recent experience.

With your job descriptions complete, and layout and other content refined, you should now have a resume that impresses recruiters and hiring managers, and sells you as a candidate. If you haven't already, it's now time to hit the streets and phones to do some networking. And remember, your resume is never "finished"... you'll need to re-work it for every new contact and application!