

RESUME WRITING TIPS

Ask 20 experts for the best way to create a resumé and you'll get 20 different answers. But if you are an engineer or professional with five or more years of post-graduate experience, most experts will agree on the following tips.

Please note: A human resources representative will spend less than a minute on your resumé before they move on to the next one in the pile. *So make it easy by highlighting the important points — your specialty, experience, licensing, and milestones.*

Formatting and Content

Do use:

- ❖ Bulleted lists – bullets help bring important points to the fore and are easy for the reader to grasp right away
- ❖ Microsoft Word or rich text (.rtf) formats for a clean, professional appearance. Opinions vary regarding PDF, but we advise against it.
- ❖ Ample white space – don't make your resumé copy-dense. With plenty of room between sections and wide margins, your reader's eyes won't be bombarded, which means they're likely to spend more time and glean more information. Italicize names of the *organizations* for which you worked and the *university(ies)* attended
- ❖ Left justification
- ❖ Short descriptive phrases (rather than complete sentences)
- ❖ Action words such as *responsible, implemented, directed*, etc.

Use sparingly:

- **Bold**, underline, large fonts

Avoid using:

- ❖ Plain courier text
- ❖ Columns, tables and text boxes
- ❖ ALL CAPS
- ❖ Headers and footers (parsing engines don't recognize them)
- ❖ HTML, PDF
- ❖ *Fancy fonts* or more than two — max three — different fonts
- ❖ **Color**
- ❖ Photos or graphic elements
- ❖ Full justification (keep it left)

- ❖ Full sentences - the fewer words the better
- ❖ *I, me* or your name in the body of the resumé
- ❖ "Accomplishments" – save them for the interview
- ❖ Combined font enhancements, i.e., **Work History** (underlined *and* bold)
- ❖ References or the statement, "*References provided upon request,*" as this merely states the obvious
- ❖ Over-capitalization. Only capitalize:
 - Proper names
 - Places
 - Company and university names
 - Titles - when they appear before a name, not after
 - Acronyms
 - Section titles

If you include a summary (we like them if well written):

Summaries should appear at the beginning of your resumé and clearly describe, in two or three brief sentences or 3 or more bullets:

- ❖ Your professional specialty, experience, and distinctions,
- ❖ What type of engineering position you are seeking, and
- ❖ Geographic preferences (i.e. are you willing to relocate?)

Here is an example of a strong, well-phrased objective summary:

SUMMARY

- ❖ Licensed structural engineer, Stanford MS; US Citizen
- ❖ 15 years steel design & project management in high-seismic regions; designing and managing projects up to \$50 million
- ❖ Seek position as project manager or structural department head with top-100 engineering consulting firm.
- ❖ Presently living in California; willing to relocate within the western region

Do not include a Summary that reads, "*Looking for a good job as a structural engineer with a company that treats employees well.*" It means nothing.

Be specific!

Engineers often describe themselves as generalists with a multitude of skills and experience, thinking this will help them be considered for more positions. The opposite is true.

Most employers look for specialists, not generalists. If you have more than one specialty, customize a resumé for each.

Education Section Content

Include:

- ❖ School Name
- ❖ Location
- ❖ Degree/years earned
- ❖ Class standing or GPA (no matter how long ago)

Job History Section Content

Your resumé should include the past 10-15 years. Be sure to include company name, city, your title/position, employment dates, and a brief description of your duties. Further detail and project lists should appear in an addendum.

When you are done

- ❖ **Run spell** check and double-check capitalization of proper names, places and terms, such as *AutoCAD*
- ❖ If you are not a native English speaker, ask someone who is to check your grammar
- ❖ Re-read your resumé very carefully and remove every extra word

Don't get lazy. Customize.

Each ad you respond to should be sent a resumé specific to that position. De-emphasize or delete irrelevant experience or training.

Your resumé must position you as the ideal candidate, a **made-to-order** answer to their employment needs. Be sure those who are responsible can immediately see how you meet or exceed their specific requirement(s).