

Resumé Tips

Tip 1 – Appearance

- A two to three page resumé is sufficient unless you are required to list your publications.
- If English is not your first language, or your strong suit, ask a friend or colleague with strong writing skills to edit your resumé.
- Use Arial or Times New Roman Font type in 10 or 12 font.
- Apply bullets to list accomplishments or statistics.
- Ensure you proofread your resumé for mistakes. (There should be no errors.)
- Effectively use the "white space" on your page. Guide the reader down the page, providing an occasional break for the eyes.

Tip 2 – Style

- Your resumé should be written in “third person” describing your skills and abilities. This means you should not use "I", "me", or "my".
- Your descriptions should be clear and concise, and your paragraphs should be no more than 4 or 5 sentences (two lines maximum).
- See the example of the chronological resumé style preferred by The City of Calgary.

Tip 3 – Target the Employer and the Position

- Create a specific, customized cover letter and resumé for each job you are applying for.
- If you are new to Canada, you may find that the trade and profession titles you are used to differ from those used in Canada. As you learn about your field of work, you should modify these titles, or add their Canadian equivalents, so that the employer will understand your skills.
- Use titles or headings to illustrate the work you have done or the skills you have attained, these skills should match the title of the position you are applying for. For example, if you are applying for a Human Resources Management position, use skill headings that match the skills The City, the employer, is looking for.

Poor Examples:

- Typing / Filing
- Trained in Customer Relations
- Computer Skills
- Helping People

Good Examples:

- Conflict Resolution
 - Labour / Employee Relations
 - HRIS – Human Resource Information Systems
 - Leadership / Supervision
- See the sample cover letter style preferred by The City of Calgary.

Tip 4 - Analyze Ads and Job Descriptions to Identify Key Words

In a job description or an advertisement, the employer will indicate what they are looking for. To create a powerful resumé, you should carefully read and identify the key words, phrases, or skill descriptions in the ad. Your resumé should use these words and skill descriptions to demonstrate to the employer that there is a match (provided that the applicant does have the relevant skills and experience). Key words and skills are bolded in the advertisement below:

Team Leader, Corporate Billing

- This position is responsible for **supervision and management of positions** in Corporate Billing. The position will maintain the Billing System and **identify opportunities for process improvements in billing, billing policy and procedures**. The position will **prepare management reports**, and **reconciliation of billing processes**. This position will enforce standards to ensure quality and consistency of financial information. The successful candidate will possess a minimum of 13-18 courses recognized as CMA/CGA program prerequisites or a certification or diploma in a related field.

Your resumé should explain your experience within these key areas.

What is your experience in:

- Supervision and management?
- Process improvement?
- Have you developed and enforced policies?
- Done management reporting?

These key areas could be section titles, and/or prioritized at the beginning of your resumé. Utilize the employer's key phrases to demonstrate that there is a match between what you have done and the job you are applying for, even though you may have done this work under a different name.

Tip 5 - Be Specific and Sell Your Accomplishments

Resumé design should get attention but it's really the content of your resumé, the descriptions you include of your skills and abilities that determine how many interviews you generate. Compare the before and after statements from a resumé shown below:

Before:

Maintained records for accounts receivable and accounts payable accounts.

After:

Managed over 1,000 accounts receivable and payable accounts working directly with the Chief Financial Officer.

Start with strong verbs (such as wrote, presented, advised), so that the employer can visualize your leadership. Avoid the use of the word "we", unless you were part of a clearly indicated team project.

Be positive about your skills, explain how your experience uses the competencies the employer is looking for. Be clear, concise and honest about your accomplishments and avoid unnecessary flourishes, which could damage your credibility.

Tip 6 – Use Action Verbs

In order to create a positive image of yourself, use power words/action verbs, rather than passive verbs that do not indicate action.

Action Verbs – examples you might want to use are:

Adapted
Analyzed
Advised
Coordinated
Directed

Delivered
Developed
Generated
Organized
Prepared

Presented
Reported
Supervised
Trained

- Avoid weak verbs such as: did, had, gave, or handled.
- Expressions such as "responsible for" or "duties included" as what you did may not be clearly understood. Repeating "action verbs" should be avoided as much as possible.
- Keep your resumé in the same tense. Use either active tense "coordinating, organizing, analyzing" or past tense, 'coordinated, organized, analyzed' throughout.

Tip 7 – Use Power Words

If you are applying for a management, leadership, or consultant position your resumé should demonstrate you are a leader. If you are attempting to move into a position of leadership you need to express that you have held a leadership role previously.

Power Words - examples you might use to apply to a management position would be:

assigned
coordinated
directed
evaluated

executed
managed
planned
supervised

trained
spearheaded

Tip 8 – Use Quantifiers and Concrete Facts

Quantifiers are words that describe your accomplishments in measurable amounts, using numbers or expressions of "quantity" rather than generic words. Concrete facts are better than abstract ideas. When the employer reads these "quantifier" terms, they receive a stronger visual picture of your success, than if you use generic terms.

Example:

"Significantly increased revenue" is not as powerful an expression as: "Increased revenues from \$200,000 in 2000 to \$1.5 million in 2005 by establishing a new sales territory."

Tip 9 – Write to Your Audience

The City of Calgary is seeking a match of education and experience with their career/job positions and employees. Ensure that the information you provide on your resumé clearly displays that match.

Even though your Myers-Briggs test may have said that you are best suited to work in communications, you will not be considered by The City of Calgary for a professional position unless you can demonstrate relevant education and experience. Do not include Myers-Briggs scores, but do write a resumé in the format relevant for the career field (engineers might talk about the size of the projects they worked on; communications experts might include a sample article).

Most resúmes exclude statements of strong feeling (I am passionate about) unless you are in a field where the job is related to your feelings, such as a social justice advocate. Describe what your previous experience has been in plain language.

Eliminate personal information such as:

- Age
- Birth place
- Photograph
- Marital status
- Religion

This information is considered confidential and employers are prohibited from collecting these details.

For persons who would like assistance with resumé writing or careers in Alberta, are new to Western Canada, or if you are recently graduated, the provincial government offers free career workshops and resumé assistance.

Tip 10 – Prioritize Your Resumé Content

A resumé should be specific to the job posting, and the content should be relevant to the position applied for. Use those examples most relevant to the position you are applying for. Remember that a strong statement, which uses power words and quantifies will affect every statement under it. The first statement in a section should use "Power Words" (see tip 5), and contain "quantifiers" or words that demonstrate the scope of your experience. As you compile statements for your resumé, prioritize them; the most important, relevant, and notable statements should come first in a section. Read the two examples below:

Prioritized example:

- Created and managed a budget of \$1,000,000
- Supervised and trained 20 Accounts Payable staff for 10 regional offices
- Attended safety meetings

Sub-standard example:

- Attended safety meetings. Created and managed a budget of \$1,000,000. Supervised and trained 20 accounting staff for 10 regional offices