PENCIL OR INK

Most of us know what's expected on a good resume: education, professional experience, contact information, awards, certifications, and the like.

But there's a difference between good and great. **And when recruiters spend an average of just six seconds reviewing a resume, the onus is on the applicant to craft a truly winning resume.**

So, how do you take your resume from good to great?

A *great* resume shows why and how you're the best candidate for the role to which you're applying.

Here's how to craft a winning resume:
- Connect the dots
- Make it scannable
- Emphasize achievements over responsibilities

Let's look at each of these in detail.

Connect the dots
Your resume should present a cohesive narrative, essentially communicating the notion that "Everything I've done up to this point has led me to [X role] at [X company]."

Does this sound over-the-top? It's not when the competition's stiff.

To make a narrative cohesive, tie together diverse experience:
- Create a headline at the top of your resume to neatly summarize experience and clearly position you for your ideal role. Aim for brevity and clarity.
- If the position requires an advanced degree or special certifications, highlight those (place them at the top). The same is true if you've gone back to school to make a career transition – you'll want to lead with the relevant credentials, rather than previous (less-relevant) work experience.
- Professional experience should demonstrate your preparedness for the position you're applying to. For example, if you're applying to a product management job but haven't always been a product manager, prioritize all relevant experience. This could mean any experience influencing stakeholders or understanding customer needs that you've gained in other roles.

Make it scannable
Part of being a prime candidate is having a resume that people actually want to read. Make it *easy* for your audience to digest your resume by using a legible font (in a legible size), keeping content to one page, and leaving enough white space (don't fill every inch with text).

Chances are, you'll need to make some cuts. And that's OK; the point of your resume is to pique the interest of recruiters and hiring managers so that they *want* to learn more about you. It's a teaser, not a full-length feature.

When deciding what to remove, be guided by the job posting. What kinds of qualifications, experience, and credentials is the hiring manager looking for? Emphasize the content that demonstrates how your experience matches. Remove anything that distracts from that.

It can be difficult to see the forest for the trees. If you're struggling to trim your resume, it can be helpful to get a third-party's objective perspective.

Achievements over responsibilities

This is one of the most, if not *the most*, important lessons of crafting a winning resume. To truly differentiate yourself from other applicants, you must show what you achieved – not just what you did. For example, "Was responsible for managing a team of sales reps," is much less impressive than "Led sales team to generate a 10% increase in revenue."

Numbers and stats help, of course (they're memorable), but it's not feasible to include them in every single line of your resume. And you don't *need* them to show the positive outcomes of your work. For example, an office manager might say "Increased team's productivity and morale by creating a new office organization system." That's much more compelling than "Responsible for creating new office organization system."

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Most of us don't look forward to writing and updating our resumes. But with the right approach – connecting the dots, making it scannable, highlighting achievements over responsibilities – you'll increase your likelihood of getting to the interview stage. Not to mention, a solid resume is a great way to boost your confidence in the job search process.

Other Resources

- "How to Write a Resume That Stands Out," Harvard Business Review, https://hbr.org/2014/12/how-to-write-a-resume-that-stands-out
- "Improve Your Resume by Turning Bullet Points into Stories," Harvard Business Review, https://hbr.org/2016/05/improve-your-resume-by-turning-bullet-points-into-stories
- "10 Top Executive Resume Tips for 2019," Forbes, https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2018/12/14/10-top-executive-resume-tips-for-2019/#1dd7533b1a47