

1. List your technical knowledge first, in an organized way. Your technical strengths must stand out clearly **at the beginning of your resume**.

Ultimately, your resume is going to be read by a hiring manager (*well, maybe, read on*), but before it gets to that point it often has to be logged in by a HR clerk, and make its way past various key word searches (*that is, when you choose to represent yourself*). Therefore, you should use as many relevant buzzwords as you can — which accurately reflects your experience.

If you're a software engineer, list all operating systems you use. Tie in programming languages and platforms with which you're experienced. List all software tools used. Make it obvious at first glance where your strengths are concentrated - so the non-technical clerk scanning for matches against the manager's requirement can make the connection.

This clerk may also generate the "Thanks, but no thanks" letter, and be empowered to make the decision that the hiring manager will never see your resume (*a well connected technical recruiter will bypass this "gatekeeper", and go directly to the hiring manager with it*).

2. List your qualifications in order of relevance. List your degree(s), other educational qualifications and professional training at the top of your resume. May companies stop reviewing it when they don't immediately see a degree. Never put it at the end.

Make sure your education and professional training is the first thing they read, underneath your name.

3. Quantify your experience wherever possible. Use numbers for budgets, time periods, percent of efficiency improved against a metric, lines of code written, number of months to deliver, years of experience — which demonstrates progress or accomplishments in units readers understand and process quickly. Don't make them figure it out (they won't).
4. Begin sentences with **action verbs**. Portray yourself as someone who is active, uses their brain, and accomplishes tasks quickly.

"Designed, developed, implemented and tested" instead of "As a member of technical staff, participated on a team that..." or "Responsible for". The reviewer wants to know what you actually did. Was your participation on the team to keep them supplied with coffee? Talk about your personal accomplishments and direct contributions. They are looking for specificity, a measure of your effectiveness.

5. Don't sell yourself short. This is the biggest mistake of all resumes, technical and otherwise. You believe your experiences are worthy for review by hiring managers. **Treat**

your resume as a company sales brochure. Be sure to thoroughly "sell" yourself by highlighting all of your strengths and attributes (benefits and features).

If you have a valuable or germane skill which doesn't seem to fit into your resume, list it anyway (as its own segment).

6. Be concise. As a rule of thumb, resumes reflecting four years or less experience should fit on one page.

However, **more extensive experience justifies a second page.** At least two pages with >5 years, to a max of three pages with >15 years or experience. Avoid lengthy explanations about projects where you were only one of many participants. Consolidate action verbs where one task or responsibility encompasses other tasks and duties.

Minimize use of articles (the, an, a) and never, never use "I" or other pronouns to identify yourself.

WARNING: The worst resume is the **narrative style**... *"Mr. Jones is recognized as the world's greatest DSP Engineer, and his expertise spans the world's collective knowledge of DSP. Mr. Jones conceived the ASIC prior to receiving the Nobel..."* Very annoying to read. High dose of ego and usually grossly embellished. Trust us, everybody knows you wrote it — it's not a biography, its a resume.

7. Omit superfluous items.

Leave all these things off your resume: social security number, marital status, health assessment, age, irrelevant awards, nonrelated associations and memberships (church, kid's soccer team coach, country club), references, political identity, travel history, hobbies, children's names and ages, salary history and professors in graduate school (that no one knows... because they're not famous).

Do not include: lifestyle preference, religion or a photograph. Also, leave off every job since high school. Working at the supermarket didn't contribute to your engineering experience. Coop engineering blocks only if you have less than three years of experience.

If the resume is lacking dates, it is immediately suspect. Trying to hide age by neglecting to show the degree graduation year doesn't work (they will ask, or assume you just didn't graduate). Likewise, not using dates at all to hide employment gaps is a red flag. Companies and recruiters know the drill. In fact, resumes without dates usually get trashed without consideration.

Don't pepper your resume with proprietary codewords, abbreviations and acronyms. No one outside your company will understand them. Use generic terms to describe the "XB-2764-J Rev 2". Instead, call it a handheld software defined radio that covers 2 MHz to 30 GHz. You get the idea. After the third dose of gibberish, people stop trying to figure it out. They are on to a resume they can understand.

Do include all education and company sponsored professional training, a active or recently expired Secret or Top Secret security clearance, citizenship (optional), licensure

(P.E. with state license number) or certification, your contributions to industry recognized committees or groups and your GPA (optional, only if it was 3.00 or above, and you have less than 5 years of experience).

8. Have a friend review your resume. Pick someone who is attentive to details, can effectively critique your writing, and will give an objective opinion. Take their advice. Get a second opinion if you can.
9. Proofread, and then proofread again. Spell check it, look for grammatical weaknesses, unusual punctuation, and inconsistent capitalizations. Proofread it at least two days from when you wrote it - to catch any hidden mistakes or inconsistencies your brain wasn't processing.
10. Print it on **plain white paper**, using a laser printer.

Don't waste your money on special heavy linen watermarked bond paper in "goldenrod" or "soft lilac" — or any color deviances away from plain white. Your resume will be photocopied (or scanned) many times, defeating any special paper effects.

As most hiring managers will tell you... the ones on the special heavy bond usually contain the history of a candidate with limited skills and experience. He or she thinks their lack of skills will be enhanced by better paper! Seriously, that wasn't intended as humor. And they usually arrive in 10x12 envelopes unfolded.

Also, avoid resume writing services... they are OK for secretaries and museum curators, but it has been our experience that most will do more harm to a technical resume than good. Most resume services are convinced you should summarize your career to one page. You're a engineer or technical manager with extensive skills, abilities and specialized experience on several complex projects... not a convenience store clerk. **Do it yourself**. Additionally, many will tell you that resumes on brightly colored paper will set you apart from the crowd. It doesn't, and it's difficult to read. Skills and abilities are the only thing that will set you apart from the competition.

Hiring managers want to see compelling and relevant experience — nothing more. A resume is in writing, and you don't get to explain anything. Talk to and persuade your target audience.

A knowledgeable recruiter can provide constructive information about the content (what is missing or needs to be tweaked)... and suggest powerful modifications that will **leverage your skills effectively**. He or she knows what a hiring manager is looking for, and by putting your experience in perspective, can open doors that are otherwise closed to you.