

# How to Write a Great Federal Resume

*(Courtesy of National Park Service Human Resources Office in Washington)*

Always have an up-to-date resume ready to go: your dream job could open tomorrow!

## Format

- Make it beautiful. Use a nice format with plenty of open space; make it pleasant for the reader to look at and easy to read. The resume that looks good stands out among the applications and is more likely to get extra attention. A nice-looking resume also conveys professionalism and shows that you care about your work.
- Place your name at the top of every page. Number the pages.
- Start with a page providing all of your stats and relevant data. Place your name prominently (in larger type) at the top, along with the position you are applying for and the vacancy announcement number. Include your address, phone, e-mail, date of birth, highest grade level achieved and time in grade, etc.
- Use a consistent format throughout, using bold, italic, underlining, fonts and colors strategically (but sparingly) for best effect.

## Employment History

- Start your employment history on a separate page.
- Never use more than one page for a description of any job.
- Don't carry over a job description from one page to the next.
- Don't use long paragraphs. They are tiring on the eye. Limit paragraphs to three or four sentences at most and skip a line between paragraphs.
- Feel free to use bullets to highlight accomplishments or duties. Bullets make it easier for the reader and help to call attention to items.
- Spend more time explaining recent jobs, and use shorter descriptions for older jobs. Only include positions more than 10 years old if they substantially contribute to your experience and knowledge for the position for which you're applying. You can also list older positions without going into detail about your duties.
- Never quote from your position description. It reads poorly, it's bureaucratic and shows that you didn't put effort into your application. Use your own words to describe your job in simple, plain-English terms.
- Make sure descriptions of previous jobs are in the past tense and descriptions of current jobs are in the present tense.
- Always include the dates (month, day, and year) of both the start and the end of each position. If you were in more than one grade level during the time you occupied that position, do not only list the last/highest grade. Give the dates you were in each grade.
- Include detail assignments that contributed to your qualifications for the position for which you are applying. Include the detail start and end dates (month, day, and year).
- Don't overlook your volunteer and religious work. Include significant

experiences that contributed to your knowledge and experience, especially positions of leadership.

- Don't assume the reader understands technical terms. Explain them in a way that anyone reading your resume can understand what you do.
- Never use acronyms or abbreviations without spelling them out the first time.
- Give the name and CURRENT telephone number of your supervisor in the position, not the telephone number at the time you were there. Do the research to make sure the information is accurate, especially for positions in the last several years. If the supervisor is retired, state that. If you are being considered for a job, call recent supervisors to alert them that they may be receiving a call for a reference and thank them in advance for their assistance.
- If you don't want your supervisor contacted, state that specifically and don't provide a telephone number. I do not recommend this course of action, however, as it raises a red flag.
- It is not necessary to list supervisory names and phone numbers for other than the most recent positions. However, be prepared to provide the information upon request.

## **Other Information**

- Include significant training courses, especially recent ones that contributed to your qualifications for the position for which you're applying. Be sure to indicate course name, provider, length of course and date (year is sufficient).
- Include significant awards such as performance awards, honor awards and significant STAR awards; explain what they were for and give the dates. Do not list minor awards.
- Include all special or technical skills, certifications or licenses related to the position for which you are applying.
- Do not provide personal references.

## **And remember . . .**

- Proofread, proofread and proofread again. Put it down and come back the next day and proofread it with fresh eyes.
- Use spell check! Spelling and grammar errors are a big no-no. Have someone with good writing skills review your resume and help catch errors and typos.
- Save it on your home computer and also keep a backup copy on a thumb drive, CD or external hard drive.
- Make a note on your personal calendar to remind yourself to review your resume every six months to see if it needs updating. Have you moved? Have you taken a significant training course? Did you get an award? Did you complete a special assignment or have a notable accomplishment?