

# Resume Writing —

## A Basic Guide for the Person with Little or No Resume Writing Experience



STATE OF WISCONSIN  
**DWD**  
Department of Workforce Development

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# Resume Writing – A Basic Guide

for the person with little or no resume writing experience.

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Resumes and application forms are two ways to provide employers with written evidence of your qualifications and skills. Generally, the same information appears on both a resume and an application form. The way it is presented differs.

Some employers prefer a resume and others require an application form. This booklet presents the basic information to include in your resume.

You want to apply for a job. Do you need a resume? That depends on the kind of job you're applying for.

## RESUME REQUIRED

- Professional, technical, administrative and managerial jobs.
- Sales positions.
- Secretarial, clerical, and other office jobs.

## RESUME SOMETIMES REQUIRED

- Skilled jobs  
(Examples: Baker, Hotel Clerk, Electrician, Drafter, Welder)

## RESUME NOT REQUIRED

- Unskilled, quick turnover jobs  
(Examples: Fast Food Server, Laborers, Machine Loader, Cannery Worker, etc.)

There are many ways of organizing a good resume. Depending on the job, you should choose the format that best highlights your skills, training, and experience.

A resume must be very easy to read so that an employer can see at a glance who you are, where you can be reached, what kind of work you can do, and why you're qualified for that kind of work.

A resume should be short, preferable one page typewritten. It must be error free. It includes honest, positive information that is related to your job goal.

A good resume will open the door for an interview.



### When do you use a resume?

- To respond to a want ad
- To give an employer more information about you than the job application gives
- To send to a company you'd like to work for
- To give to an interviewer so he or she will ask you about the positive things on your resume you want to talk about
- To leave with an employer after an interview as a reminder of your skills and abilities

### Tips for good resumes

You need two types of information to prepare your resume:

**1. Self information.** Completing a background and experience list will give you the self information required to prepare your resume.

- If you've worked before, list your jobs. Next, write down the work duties for the jobs you've listed. Now, think about the skills or talents it took to do each work duty. Write them down.
- List your hobbies, clubs you belong to, sports you've been involved in, church and school activities, and things that interest you. Look at the first item on your list. Think about the skills or talents

it takes to do that item. Write them all down.

- Look at the abilities (talents) identified on your background and experience list. You have talents that you use everyday. Now, find out what JOBS can use your talents.
- Don't limit yourself. The important thing is not the job title, but the skills and abilities of the job.

**2. Job information.** Gather specific information on the job you're applying for. Here's what you need:

- Job duties (to match your skills to the skills needed to do the job). Get your job duties from the job announcement. If the job announcement or ad is vague, call the employer and ask for a description of job duties.
- Education and experience required (again, so you can match your education and experience with that required for the job).
- Hours and shifts usually worked.
- Pay range (make their top offer the minimum acceptable!).

### Selecting information for your resume

The best way to select information that belongs on your resume is to think like an employer. Ask

yourself, “If I were hiring a person for this position, what training and experience would be related?” Give brief, specific, positive information that would be of interest to your next employer. Do not give unrelated or negative information.

### **A standard resume should include...**

#### Contact information

Tell the employer your full name, street address, apartment number, city, state, zip code and telephone number (including area code).

#### Employment goal or job objective

Tell the employer the specific job you are interested in. Good examples are, “An entry-level clerical position”, “A customer-service position in the retail industry”, or, “A manufacturing position utilizing my five years of quality control experience.”

Avoid vague statements like, “A position with growth potential”, or, “A challenging position with a stable company.” Remember, keep it simple and to the point.

#### Summary of Qualifications

Tell the employer your major selling points in 3-5 lines. Be brief, summarize, give facts — not opinions. (*This section is optional*)

#### Work Experience or Work History

Tell the employer about your work experience in one of two ways — either by job titles and dates, or by functions and skills. Later in the publication you will see outlines and sample resumes which will help you decide which way would work best for you.

#### Education

Tell the employer about any job-related training or education. List your most recent training first.

If you are a recent graduate with little work experience, you might want to list the following information before your work history: the name of the school, the degree or certificate received, dates, course titles related to your job goal, scholarships, honors, grades, and extracurricular activities.

If you have been working for over five years, you don't need to give as much information about your education. Name the school, city, state, degree or certificate, or course work and dates (dates are optional).

Include your high school unless you have a higher degree. Never include your grade school or middle school.

#### Military Experience

Tell the employer the branch of service, your highest rank, type of discharge, and date of separation. List any special assignments, duties, clearances, collateral duties, and decorations that relate to the job that you are seeking. Technical military training can be listed under the Education heading on your resume. (A Military heading is only listed if you have military experience.)

#### Special Skills and Abilities

Tell the employer any other information you feel might help you. (*This section is optional.*) You might want to include information about knowledge of foreign languages, volunteer or leisure activities, memberships in professional organizations, special skills such as typing, computers, machines you can operate, licenses or certificates you possess. Do not provide personal information such as your age, sex, marital status, or handicaps.

#### References

Tell the employer simply that, “References are available upon request,” or, “References gladly furnished upon request.” Do not list references on your resume. Instead, have them typed on a separate sheet of paper and have them available if the employer asks for them. You should have three to five references listed. They should be people who know you and your work — not your relatives. Be sure to get each person's permission to use him or her as a reference.

## Resume Outlines and Examples

The following pages have outlines and examples of two of the most commonly used basic resumes.

**Example 1** lists each job separately, starting with your most recent job and working backward. Specific information is given about each job.

### Example 1 Outline

First Name, Middle Initial, Last Name  
Street Address, Apt. No.  
City, State, Zip Code  
Area Code/Telephone Number

#### Employment Objective

Tell the employer the specific position you are interested in.

#### Summary of Qualifications

A brief summary of your best selling points

#### Work History

Company Name  
Your Job Title

City, State

Dates of employment

Describe your duties, skills, responsibilities:

- State your major accomplishments, achievements, skill area.
- Start each with an action verb; try to keep each to 1-2 lines.
- Use an asterisk (\*), dash (-), or bullet (•) to draw attention to each statement.
- Give specific results to show your qualifications.
- List your most important accomplishments first.

(Use the above format for additional employers. Start with your most recent job and work backward. Give the most space to more recent and more relevant work.)

#### Education

School

City, State

Degree

Dates attended (optional)

#### Military (Optional)

Branch, rank

Type of discharge (optional)

Dates served (optional)

#### Special Skills and Abilities

Interests, hobbies, foreign languages, clubs, etc.

#### References

Available upon request.

# Example 1 Resume

Tammy P. Farrell  
1234 Major Street  
Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54481  
715/555-4444

## Employment Objective

Seeking a position as a retail sales clerk.

## Summary of Qualifications

Five years successful experience in direct retail sales.  
Excellent communication skills; sincere commitment to providing quality customer service.

## Work History

|                             |                          |              |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| ShopWell<br>Sales Associate | Stevens Point, Wisconsin | 2001-present |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|

Assisted customers with item selection, operated computerized cash register, balanced cash register daily, monitored inventory and stocked shelves.

- Set new monthly sales record, surpassing all sales associates for any given month in company history.
- Accurately balanced cash register daily. Never was short.
- Maintained detailed paperwork for inventory control. Operated automated inventory equipment.
- Handled customer problems with patience and sensitivity.
- Promoted to sales associate lead worker after one year. Trained new associates.

|                         |                    |           |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| PickRite<br>Sales Clerk | Rosholt, Wisconsin | 1999-2001 |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------|

Operated computerized cash register and automated scanning equipment for the local branch of a large department store chain.

- Worked cash register and scanning equipment in all departments.
- Conducted inventories. Reconciled counts against inventory control systems.
- Entered data into computer for special orders.
- Received customer service and inventory control training.
- Trained two new sales clerks.

## Education

|                            |                    |         |               |
|----------------------------|--------------------|---------|---------------|
| Rosholt Senior High School | Rosholt, Wisconsin | Diploma | 1996 graduate |
|----------------------------|--------------------|---------|---------------|

## Military (Optional)

|         |                     |           |
|---------|---------------------|-----------|
| US Army | Honorable Discharge | 1996-1999 |
|---------|---------------------|-----------|

## Special Skills and Abilities

Able to speak, read and write Spanish

## References

Available upon request.

## Resume Outlines and Examples

**Example 2** lists the 3-5 skill areas or functions you performed that are related to your present job goal, briefly describing the work you've done within each area. Very little attention is given to when and where.

### Example 2 Outline

First Name, Middle Initial, Last Name  
Street Address, Apt. No.  
City, State, Zip Code  
Area Code/Telephone Number

#### Employment Objective

Tell the employer the specific position you are interested in.

#### Prior Experience

Major skill areas or functions (list 3-5)

- bulleted skills, successes or accomplishments
- short phrases that start with verbs
- result-oriented statements

(Use the above format for additional skill areas or functions.)

#### Work History

|              |             |                     |
|--------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Company Name | City, State | Dates of employment |
| Job Title    |             |                     |

(Use the above format for additional skill areas or functions.)

#### Education

|        |        |             |                           |
|--------|--------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Degree | School | City, State | Dates attended (optional) |
|--------|--------|-------------|---------------------------|

#### Military (Optional)

|              |                              |                         |
|--------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Branch, rank | Type of discharge (optional) | Dates served (optional) |
|--------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|

#### Special Skills and Abilities

Interests, hobbies, foreign languages, clubs, etc.

#### References

Available upon request.

# Example 2 Resume

Tammy P. Farrell  
1234 Major Street  
Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54481  
715/555-4444

## Employment Objective

Retail salesperson

## Prior Experience

### Sales

- Set new monthly sales record, surpassing all sales associates for any given month in company history.
- Worked cash register and scanning equipment in all departments.
- Set-up advertising signs and displays to increase sales.

### Customer Service

- Handled customer problems with patience and sensitivity.
- Greeted customers and assisted them with item selection.
- Answered customers' telephone and in-person inquiries.

### Record Keeping

- Conducted inventories. Reconciled counts against inventory control systems.
- Entered data into computer for special orders.
- Kept layaway records current.

## Work History

|                             |                          |              |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| ShopWell<br>Sales Associate | Stevens Point, Wisconsin | 2001-present |
| PickRite<br>Sales Clerk     | Rosholt, Wisconsin       | 1999-2001    |

## Education

|         |            |                    |               |
|---------|------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Diploma | Rosholt HS | Rosholt, Wisconsin | 1996 graduate |
|---------|------------|--------------------|---------------|

## Military (Optional)

|         |                     |           |
|---------|---------------------|-----------|
| US Army | Honorable Discharge | 1996-1999 |
|---------|---------------------|-----------|

## Special Skills and Abilities

Able to speak, read and write Spanish

## References

Available upon request.



## Cover Letter

Most employers prefer that a resume be mailed with a letter of introduction. This letter is called a cover letter. A cover letter should tell the employer which position you are interested in and why you are qualified for the position.

It should cover 1/3 to 2/3 of an 8-1/2" x 11" sheet of paper and should be on the same size, grade, and color of paper as your resume. It is best to use a personal computer, word processor or typewriter to write your cover letter. Some information in your cover letter may also be on your resume; it is all right to have some overlapping information. Be sure your letter does not have spelling, grammatical or punctuation errors. Have another person proofread it before you mail it.

## Cover Letter Outline

Your Current Street Address  
City, State, Zip Code  
Telephone Number  
Today's Date

### TWO LINES OF SPACE

Name of Individual  
Official Title  
Name of Company  
Mailing Address  
City, State, Zip Code

### ONE LINE OF SPACE

Dear Mr./Ms.:

### ONE LINE OF SPACE

#### Paragraph 1 - The Opening/Your Introduction

1. Give your reason for writing the letter.
2. Tell the employer the position in which you are interested.
3. Tell where you found out about the job opening.

### ONE LINE OF SPACE

#### Paragraph 2 - The Body/Your Hook

1. This is 1-2 paragraphs that tell the employer why you are qualified to do the job.
2. Include information about your education, work experience, job-related skills, accomplishments, personality, availability, etc., that relates to the employer's needs and the position for which you are applying.
3. Keep this section brief; give only the highlights of qualifications.

### ONE LINE OF SPACE

#### Paragraph 3 - The Closing

1. Tell the employer you are interested in interviewing for the available position.
2. Thank the employer for considering you for the position.

### ONE LINE OF SPACE

Sincerely,

### THREE LINES OF SPACE

Your signature in ink  
Your name typed

# Cover Letter Example

1234 Major Street  
Stevens Point, WI 54481  
715/555-4444  
January 5, 2002

Ms. Judy David  
Store Manager  
Michael's on the Mall  
5678 Minor Street  
Stevens Point, WI 54481

Dear Ms. David:

The position you listed on JobNet at your store in Stevens Point for an experienced Retail Salesperson is one I am very interested in and for which I am very well qualified.

For the past three years I have worked as a salesperson in retail stores in the area. I have operated computerized cash registers and automated inventory control systems. I bring experience in stocking shelves, reconciling inventory levels, marking merchandise, balancing cash registers and handling customer comments and requests.

I enjoy providing friendly service to customers. My store manager once told me that my desire to help customers kept them coming back. During one month, my sales totals set a company record.

I have enclosed my resume for your review. I am very interested in the position you have available and look forward to meeting with you to further discuss my set of qualifications.

Sincerely,

Tammy Farrell

Enclosure

## Application Letter: An Alternative to a Resume

In some situations, a traditional resume might not be the best way to contact an employer. Depending on the employer's preference, the field of work and your qualifications, you may want to use a Letter of Application.

This is a personal letter you write to an employer that tells which position you are interested in and why you are qualified for that position. It should fill 1/2 to 2/3 of an 8-1/2" x 11" sheet of white or light-colored bond paper. It must be error free. Have another person look it over to make sure it is perfect before you mail it.

An outline and a sample for a Letter of Application follow.

## Application Letter Outline

Your Current Street Address  
City, State, Zip Code  
Telephone Number  
Today's Date

### TWO LINES OF SPACE

Name of Individual  
Official Title  
Name of Company  
Mailing Address  
City, State, Zip Code

### ONE LINE OF SPACE

Dear Mr./Ms.:

### ONE LINE OF SPACE

**Introduction:** Tell the employer what position you are applying for and how you learned of the opening.

### ONE LINE OF SPACE

**Body:** Tell the employer why you are qualified for the job. Include information about your education, work experience, job-related skills, accomplishments, personality, availability, etc., that relate to the employer's needs and the position for which you are applying.

### ONE LINE OF SPACE

**Closing:** Ask for an interview.

### ONE LINE OF SPACE

Sincerely,

### THREE LINES OF SPACE

Your signature in ink  
Your name typed

# Application Letter Example

1234 Major Street  
Stevens Point, WI 54481  
715/555-4444  
January 5, 2002

Ms. Judy David  
Store Manager  
Michael's on the Mall  
5678 Minor Street  
Stevens Point, WI 54481

Dear Ms. David:

Please consider this letter my application for the Retail Salesperson position listed on JobNet in Stevens Point. I believe I am qualified for this position.

With over three years experience as a retail sales clerk, I have demonstrated my abilities to operate computerized cash registers, accurately monitor inventory levels, and provide quality, friendly service to customers.

In my most recent position, I set a new monthly sales record, surpassing all sales associates for any given month in company history. After one year, I was promoted to head sales associate. I really enjoy retail sales.

I would appreciate an interview with you to further discuss my qualifications.

Sincerely,

Tammy Farrell

# Resume Checklist

- Use 8-1/2" x 11" paper, 1-2 pages
- Choose ivory, white, cream, buff or light gray paper
- Use personal computer, word processor, typewriter or typesetting
- Keep margins 1" wide at sides and bottom
- Check for and correct any spelling, punctuation, typing or grammatical errors
- Write short and to-the-point statements
- Keep it brief; write a summary, not a life history!
- Use short phrases beginning with action words to demonstrate accomplishments and results
- Provide positive and honest information
- Use a simple, professional, easy-to-read style
- Have others look it over to make sure it's perfect
- Leave off personal information such as height, weight, age, sex, marital status



- Emphasize important information by underlining or using capital letters when appropriate, but don't overdo it
- Don't list wages, company street addresses, references, salary requirements, personal problems
- Provide examples of your qualifications
- Look at your resume through the eyes of an employer and ask yourself, "If I were an employer, would I want to interview this person?"

## Application forms

Resumes are required for some jobs, and are sometimes required for other jobs. An employer may have you complete an application form instead of submitting a resume. On some occasions, an employer may ask you to complete an application in addition to your resume.

When you fill out an application form, make sure you fill it out completely and follow all instructions. Do not omit any requested information and make sure that the information you provide is correct.

# Resume Worksheet

- Step 1:** Read this brochure.
- Step 2:** Review the samples provided in this brochure.
- Step 3:** Tear out and complete this worksheet
- Step 4:** Write your resume using the information from your worksheet.
- Step 5:** Check it for errors. Have others check it, too.
- Step 6:** Have your resume word processed, typed, or typeset.
- Step 7:** You're ready! Now USE YOUR RESUME!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (with Area Code) \_\_\_\_\_

---

**EMPLOYMENT OBJECTIVE** (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

**SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**WORK EXPERIENCE:** List most recent jobs first.

1. Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Duties/Accomplishments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Employment (year to year): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Duties/Accomplishments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Employment (year to year): \_\_\_\_\_

3. Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Job Duties/Accomplishments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dates of Employment (year to year): \_\_\_\_\_

---

**SPECIAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**EDUCATION:**

Technical School and/or College: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates Attended: \_\_\_\_\_  
Degree/Certificate or courses taken: \_\_\_\_\_  
High School: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates Attended: \_\_\_\_\_  
Diploma or courses taken: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**MILITARY EXPERIENCE:** (optional and if not used elsewhere on this resume)

Branch of Service: \_\_\_\_\_  
Highest Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
Type of Discharge: \_\_\_\_\_ Year of Separation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Duties: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

**OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE:** List job titles/positions you want to show but do not want to go into detail about, i.e. short-term jobs, part-time jobs, volunteer work, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# 10 Tips for an Effective Resume

1. If possible, use a computer to prepare your resume. There are computer programs that make it easy to produce a professional looking resume. Your Wisconsin Job Center, school, library, or quick print shop can help.
2. Do not include irrelevant personal information (age, weight, height, marital status, etc.).
3. Do not include salary and wages.
4. Center or justify resume headings. Avoid the use of abbreviations.
5. Be positive. Identify your accomplishments.
6. Use action verbs. For more information, read the publication, "The Right Words to Use in Your Job Search" (DETJ-9463-P).
7. Be specific. Use concise sentences, Keep it short (one page is best).
8. Make sure your resume "looks good" (neat and readable).
9. Proofread the master copy carefully. Have someone else proofread it carefully.
10. Inspect photocopies for clarity, smudges and marks.



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## Using Electronic Resumes in Wisconsin and nationwide

The information for your resume can be fed into databases as an electronic resume.

Electronic resumes are searchable by potential employers who aim to select resumes for further scrutiny.

In Wisconsin, you may post your resume on Job Center of Wisconsin, an internet-based service.

Visit <http://JobCenterOfWisconsin.com>

From the "Job Seeker Tools" menu on the toolbar, you will first need to establish an account. Once you have your password-protected account, return to the "Job Seeker Tools" menu and choose, "Create/Update Résumé". Complete instructions, and help text is available on the web site.

When posting a searchable resumes, it is important to accurately represent your work experience, education and training, skills, and availability. Be sure to use keywords and phrases specific to your education, skills and work experience.

Job Center of Wisconsin permits searches on the following fields for your matching keywords:

- **Employment Profile**
- **Work Experience**
- **Education**

You are in control of the information you provide. No personally identifiable information will be displayed to the employer. If the employer decides to contact you, it will be by email.



**Your Wisconsin Job Center features additional publications to guide you with your resumes and applications**

Personal Data Record  
(DETJ-4937-P)

Thoughts on Resumes  
(DETJ-4658-P)

The Right Words to Use in Your Job Search  
(DETJ-9463-P)

**Publications are also available through Wisconsin Job Centers on these topics related to job search success**

**INTERVIEWING**

Keys to Successful Interviewing  
(DETJ-6951-P)

Hidden Elements of Interviewing  
(DETJ-9484-P)

Informational Interviewing  
(DETJ-9407-P)

**JOB SEARCH**

Qualities an Employer Looks for When Hiring  
(DETJ-8459-P)

Networking  
(DETJ-9455-P)

Where to Look for Job Opportunities  
(DETJ-9467-P)

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We invite your comments. Send an e-mail message to: [jobcenterofwisconsin@dwd.wisconsin.gov](mailto:jobcenterofwisconsin@dwd.wisconsin.gov)

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**Job Readiness publications:**

- Personal Data Record
- Resume Writing – A Basic Guide
- The Right Words to Use in Your Job Search
- Transferable Skills
- Employment Skills

**Publications available in these topic areas:**

- Job Readiness
- Interviewing
- Job Search

