

How to Tailor Your Resume



Figure Out Everything That Matters to the Hiring Team.

Read the job description.

Read the job description. Read it again. Now write all over it. Highlight anything that answers this question: what is important to the recruiter? Highlight key words and phrases, words that are repeated in more than one place. Jot down any questions you have. *Don't* make the mistake of only highlighting things that align with your experience. The long list exercise isn't about you – it's about the hiring team's needs. Your goal should be to capture every single item that is important to *them*.

Make the long list.

Type out a list of all of the words and phrases you highlighted. We'll call this the long list. Ideally, your resume should directly address as many long list items as possible – and not much else.

Figure out what you don't know.

Take note of anything you highlighted in the job description that you don't fully understand. These are potential gaps that might hurt your candidacy. Look up anything you don't understand. Better yet, if you can, ask someone who already works in that field to explain it to you.

Make the short list.

Read everything again, this time asking the question: what is *most* important to the recruiter? Come up with a list of the 5 to 10 things that are critically important to the hiring team. Anything listed in the job description as a required or strongly preferred qualification should be on the list. We'll call this the short list.

Tailor Your Resume to Show the Hiring Team What They Want.

List relevant experiences.

Call the next section Experience. Organize your experiences in reverse chronological order. You can break this up between several Experience sections (e.g. Work Experience, Extracurriculars, etc.), but you don't have to. Do what makes the best sense for the story you need to tell.

Add bullet points.

Write bullet points for every experience. Every bullet point should relate in some way to the short list or the long list. If you write a bullet point that doesn't do one of these things, delete it.

Add other sections if you need them.

Add additional sections after Experience only if they help you highlight items on the short list or the long list. A Technical Skills section is often a good place to list a handful of random technical skills from the long list (e.g. coding languages, software platforms, foreign languages, etc.).

Read Your Resume the Way the Hiring Team Will.

Do the 6-second test.

Hand your resume to someone who doesn't know anything about your experience. Give them 6 seconds to read it, then ask them to summarize your qualifications. If their answer matches the short list you wrote, then you know your resume is telling the right story for this job.