



Resume Building Blocks & Best Practices



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Introduction

Resumes have three sections or 'building blocks.' The first building block is where you 'State your Case' for your target position. The second is where you 'Make your Case,' and the third is where you 'Enhance your Case.' When combined, they build the case for your target position.

There are guidelines and best practices for each building block and, because every person and their experience is unique, there are also variables. We will provide information on alternatives for non-standard and unique situations.

Resume Best Practices

- Ideal length is 2 pages and is appropriate for most roles and industries, with some exceptions. For example:
 - 1-page resumes are appropriate if you are a new graduate and/or have less than 5 years of experience or are targeting a retirement job that only requires career highlights.
 - 3+ page resumes are used in certain industries, such as Higher Education and Scientific Research, and/or when including a significant number of publications, research, patents, etc.
- Include what's most important for your target role(s). Focus on your accomplishments, not responsibilities
- Use the fewest words to convey meaning. Full thoughts vs. full sentences
- Eliminate personal pronouns like "I" and "my" and filler words like "the" and "a"
- Include the keywords relevant to your target position. Keywords are needed to get through Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS), and for readers to see, at a glance, that you've got the skills and abilities needed for the role they're trying to fill. Do comprehensive research to ensure that you are "speaking the language" of your target role(s).
- Use actual numbers, not text. For example: "Managed 8 projects" not "eight"
- Abbreviate by using symbols. For example: \$1M not \$1,000,000 or 1 million dollars, 17% instead of 17 percent. It's much more impactful!
- Don't use long paragraphs
- Write in the first person, not the third
- Wondering what tense to use? Your Summary should be present tense. Your Experience should be past tense. *An exception if you're currently working:*
 - Job Scope Statement - present tense because you're still doing these things
 - Accomplishments – past tense because you did them
- Font size should be 10.5 pt - 12 pt – your name and category names can be larger if proportional
- Font types – keep it simple! Recommendations include: Calibri, Arial, Tahoma, Times New Roman
- Logos – It's not considered a best practice to use a logo. If you do include logos, be sure to remove them (and any other images) before applying online through an ATS.
- Hyperlinks – Embedded hyperlinks can be used to reference work (a portfolio, web content, or published work), provide additional information, and make things easier for your audience. For example:
 - Resume Header- your email address, customized LinkedIn URL, personal websites
 - Professional Experience- names of companies, published articles

"State Your Case" – Building Block 1

Header

Your **Header** provides important information for your reader – including your name, location, and how to contact you.

JOE C. RIGHT		
Anytown, Anywhere 12345		
jcright@gmail.com	123.456.7890	www.linkedin.com/in/joeright

Name

Whether you choose to include a middle name, use a nickname, a maiden name, or had a name change, be consistent. Use the same name across your entire job search, including branding documents, resumes, social media, and other websites, so you can easily be found.

Degrees

Include **degrees** in your header if they are expected in your industry and role and/or if they help differentiate you. For example, PhD, MD, RN would be expected within Education, Medical, and Research industries and roles.

JOE C. RIGHT, PhD		
Anytown, Anywhere 12345		
jcright@gmail.com	123.456.7890	www.linkedin.com/in/joeright

Certifications

Use **certifications** if current and common in your field. For example, an IT Systems Administrator might include CCNP, a Financial Analyst might include CPA, and a Project Manager, a PMP.

JOE C. RIGHT, CPA		
Anytown, Anywhere 12345		
jcright@gmail.com	123.456.7890	www.linkedin.com/in/joeright

Contact Information

Phone

- Use one phone number and record a professional outgoing message.

Address

- Include City, State or City, Province. Even if the job is remote, employers want this information. For your privacy and security, don't include your street-level address.
- In larger geographic areas, you can use the metro area. For example, Greater Toronto, ON or San Francisco Bay Area, CA.
- If you plan to relocate, or are open to it, you can either use your current location, or your target location. *If you use your target location*, be ready to explain that you don't live there yet, be prepared to interview on-site with short notice, and while it might be negotiable, don't expect relocation compensation.

LinkedIn URL

- Create a customized URL on LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/in/yourname) and include it in your header to reinforce your brand and help recruiters and employers find your profile easily.

Email

- Include a professional email address. Ideally, this will contain your first and last names. For example: joe.right@email.com.

Summary

Your **Summary** is where you 'State your Case' for your targeted position and needs to "hook your reader" in 5-10 seconds. If it's the only thing that someone reads, they'll know who you are and the value you bring.

Highlight the skills and strengths relevant to your target position, using the keywords and terminology of your target market, not your past company(s). Be bold. You will back up your statements with 'proof' in your Professional Experience section.

Your Summary includes 4 key elements:

1. **Branding Statement** (2 parts)
 - **Who you are** – your Professional and/or Functional Title & Level *and*
 - **The main value or impact** you bring to an organization
2. **Soft Skills** – Personal strengths and attributes relevant to target
3. **Hard Skills** – Specific areas of expertise in your field and function (incorporating keywords)

Your **branding statement** is the first thing that someone sees about you and is truly your differentiator. It's the main message you want your readers to know about you and positions you for your target role(s).

Sample Summaries

Branding Statement- Who you are + Impact

SALES & MARKETING LEADER

Drive New Business to Improve Market Share

Soft Skills

Identify and spearhead multi-million-dollar IT contracts with Fortune 500 accounts. Specialize in executing Strategic Sales Processes, outsourcing engagements, and service marketing programs. Translate in-depth knowledge of clients' priorities, challenges, and requirements into win/win opportunities and high Net Promoter Scores (NPS). Known for motivating and inclusive leadership style and for building high-performing sales and account management teams.

Hard Skills

**Sales & Business Development | Process Improvement | Contract Negotiations
Marketing Strategy & Execution | Key Account Management | Talent Development**

RESOURCEFUL EVENT PLANNER

Minimize Costs while Delivering Quality Events with High Customer Satisfaction

Leverage communication, planning, and organizational skills to execute all details of events, from setup to teardown. Research and identify creative options for limited budgets. Incorporate technology into event design and promotions.

Cultivate and establish long-term vendor partnerships. Use relationship building, problem-solving, and negotiation strengths to collaborate with multiple parties towards meeting tight deadlines without compromising quality. Calm under pressure.

**Trade Shows, Fundraisers, & Banquets | Corporate Meetings & Seminars
Vendor & Volunteer Management | Event Marketing & Promotion**

SOFTWARE ENGINEER

Enhance Systems with Innovative Features & Improvements

Design applications supporting internal and external transactional processes. Expert in all facets of the software development life cycle (SDLC), from analysis and design through development, implementation, documentation, and user training. Deliver full-scale IT solutions by partnering with non-technical audiences and utilizing problem-solving and communication skills.

- Object-Oriented Design & Programming
- Product Conception & Specification
- Data Model & Database Programming
- IT Project Team Leadership
- Agile Methodologies
- Root Cause Issue Troubleshooting

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Languages	SQL, PL/SQL, Java, JavaScript, HTML5, CSS3, Python, C++, C, C#, Go, Typescript, Swift
Databases	MS SQL Server, IBM DB2, Oracle, MySQL, PostgreSQL, MongoDB
Web Technologies	.NET, Framework SDK, ASP.NET Core, Entity Framework Net, XML, JSON, HTML, CSS, COM+
Platforms	Cloud Computing: AWS, Azure, GCP, Linux, AIX, Windows, UNIX, Platform as a Service (PaaS), Heroku, Azure App Services, IBM Cloud Infrastructure (IaaS)

For hands-on users of technology **Technical Skills** is an extension of your Hard Skills, Employers don't want to hunt for crucial information.

"Prove your Case" – Building Block 2

Professional Experience

Professional Experience & Accomplishment Statements demonstrate and prove what you stated in your Summary. Your resume is your marketing material – not a list of every job and responsibility you've ever had. Focus on the past 10-15 years of your experience. If you want or need to include earlier experience, create an Ageless Resume. (See sample on our website).

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE		
NEWNAME CORPORATION , Anytown, Anywhere Senior Manager , Installation Services	Dates in Role	Total Tenure
	2019 – 20XX	2018 – 20XX
Job Scope Statement- optional		
Managed \$80M revenue plan and 400+ associates. Oversaw delivery of 1.3K installations weekly and cable and rigging services for retail and financial clients. Subject Matter Expert (SME) for low-cost region development.		
Accomplishment Statements		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced premiums 40% and drove \$200K savings by creating and implementing international self-service model that secured vendor resources. Developed and implemented supply chain improvement plan, trained teams, and standardized deployment procedures, decreasing deployment and service times 25%. Achieved 78% improvement over profit plan by accelerating low-cost region strategy and driving 8% billable utilization increase over plan. 		

Job Scope Statements

Job Scope Statements are optional but can help to position and differentiate you for the role you're targeting as job titles and responsibilities can vary from company to company.

- Include information that will help explain your roles; job dimensions, range and level of responsibilities, staff size, budget, reporting relationship (if significant or unique).
- Don't say, "Responsible for....", instead start with a verb. For example: Managed staff of 5.

Accomplishment Statements

Accomplishment Statements demonstrate the strengths, expertise, and impact that you stated in your summary. They include actions and results (measured whenever possible) and can be written as Actions that lead to Results or Results by Actions.

- Include one accomplishment for each year in a position, on average.
- If you're thinking, "I just did my job. What else do they want to know?" ask yourself this question; Why should they hire me and not another candidate? Position yourself as someone who brings value by driving results!
- Start with a past tense, impactful verb and avoid beginning with "Successfully" or "Efficiently", etc. This can be assumed. Would you put anything on your resume in which you weren't successful?

Compare these two statements:

- *Responsible for employee safety program.*
- *Created and deployed safety training across the organization, which resulted in zero lost-time accidents in 8 years.*

Who would you want to hire? The person "responsible" for it, or the person who ensured zero accidents in 8 years?

First Step – Jog your Memory: Accomplishments include your work on special projects, challenging situations, team, or individual goals. They can also include what you helped avoid. Be sure to include accomplishments that are relevant and important to your target companies.

Take some time to reflect on your work history so you can recall your contributions.

- **Review:** old resumes, saved performance reviews, calendars or documents (showing your efforts).
- **Identify:** goals of your position(s), awards, official or unofficial accolades, feelings of pride.
- **Collaborate:** gather input, recollections, and perspective from others.
- **Brainstorm:** review the questions below to spark ideas.

Brainstorming Questions to come up with Accomplishments

What ...

- Problem did you identify or solve? (Why needed? Results?)
- New procedures or systems did you identify, create, or implement? (Why? Benefit?)
- Products, programs, or ideas, did you suggest or roll out? (Why? Results?)
- Did you do for the first time at your company? (Why? Results?)
- New business, customer(s), or market growth did you add? (What? How?)
- Did you handle with fewer resources or in shorter time? (Why? Outcome?)

When did you ...

- Earn recognition or receive an award(s)? (Why earned?)
- Lead or work on special projects? (How did you contribute? Results?)
- Manage a difficult or unusual situation? (Which one?)
- Meet or exceed job objectives or KPIs (key performance indicators)?

How did you ...

- Streamline or improve a process? (Which one? How much?)
- Reduce errors? (Which ones? How much?)
- Increase revenue or market share or impact the bottom-line? (What? How much?)
- Improve productivity? (Benefit? How much?)
- Save money or reduce costs? (What? How significant?)

Guidelines for Accomplishments

- ✓ Aim for 1 accomplishment per year, in a position. *(Earlier roles will have fewer unless those roles are specifically relevant to your target position.)*
- ✓ Focus on your **ACTIONS**, the skills you applied, so employers see your contributions. (For example: analyzed, summarized, created.)
- ✓ Avoid starting with a **passive or vague term**. (For example: duties included, responsible for, worked with, assisted with.)
- ✓ Write in past tense.
- ✓ Include 1-3 lines of text.
- ✓ Quantify results, whenever possible.

Accomplishment Formula:

Accomplishments need 2 key elements:

- **Actions: what you did** (showcase your strengths & expertise)
- **Results: outcome** (showcase on the impact/contribution you can make)

Action + Result OR Result + Action

Example

Action - Negotiated with outside supply companies + Result - saved \$5K annually on office supplies

Negotiated with outside supply companies which saved \$5K annually on office supplies.

OR

Result - Saved \$5K annually on office supplies + Action - negotiated with outside supply companies

Saved \$5K annually on office supplies by negotiating with outside supply companies.

Accomplishment Statements – Editing Examples

- 1 Each statement needs an Action + a Result.

Original Statement: Supervised temporary and permanent employees.

Problem: Missing Result. Action is day-to-day duty.

Better

Reduced temporary labor expenses 30% by supervising staff.

Solution: Add Result.

Better

Reduced temporary labor expenses 30% by implementing cross-training and adjusting staff scheduling.

Solution: Add specific actions.

2 Break complex projects into smaller parts.

Original Statement: Designed high-quality training for Onboarding, Sales, Service, and Quality Assurance and delivered to new hires and vendors which increased Sales' close rates from 30% to 60% and retention from 65% to 95%.

Problem: One complex Accomplishment Statement and no other Accomplishments under job.

Better

Designed and delivered Onboarding, Sales, Application Systems, Customer Service, and Quality Assurance (QA) training that streamlined new hire acclimation and increased retention from 65 to 95%.

Improved ongoing training, assessments, and created sales training collateral, resulting in doubling sales close rate in call center from 30% to 60%.

Solution: Break large projects into pieces.

3 Can't quantify or don't have any 'numbers'.

Original Statement: Facilitated training that improved retention.

Problem: Vague statements don't stand out.

Better

Facilitated training for 200+ new hires, within Call Center with 500+ staff supporting \$20M services business; resulted in improved retention.

Better

Improved retention by facilitating new hire training in Call Center with 500+ staff; creating 'family' environment, increasing feeling of connection, and bridging communication and information gaps.

Solution: Include situational details.

- Ask, why was this so challenging?
- Check online for details about business size and other facts.
- Brainstorm with colleagues.

Solution: Speak to value or impact of your work.

4 Wordiness & consolidating statements.

Original Statement: Successfully developed and implemented a new improvement plan for all the supply chain teams in the organization. Responsible for providing team member training and standardizing the procedures for all of the deployments. This plan reduced deployment and service times by approximately 25%.

Problem: Wordy accomplishments aren't read.

Better

Decreased deployment and service times 25% by developing and implementing supply chain improvement plan, training teams and standardizing deployment procedures.

Solution: Use minimum words to convey the same meaning.

- Remove words already assumed (successfully, approx., in the organization)
- Define or remove duplicative terms (new improvement, all teams)

Strong Action Verbs by Skill Area

Managed | Executed

anticipated	applied	assessed	authorized	budgeted
conducted	controlled	coordinated	cured	defined
determined	directed	disbursed	dispatched	established
executed	expedited	guided	implemented	influenced
initiated	inspired	integrated	led	managed
molded	negotiated	orchestrated	overhauled	planned
provided	resolved	revised	solved	staged
streamlined	updated			

Developed | Planned

achieved	adapted	assembled	built	conceived
consolidated	constructed	contracted	crafted	created
designed	devised	engineered	fashioned	formulated
generated	imagined	improved	innovated	inquired
inspected	invented	mapped	modeled	nursed
performed	prioritized	programmed	reengineered	reproduced
sculpted	shaped	sketched	structured	styled
synthesized	visualized			

Detailed | Analyzed

adjusted	administered	allocated	appraised	arranged
calculated	checked	communicated	compared	compiled
confirmed	diagnosed	documented	estimated	evaluated
examined	facilitated	forecasted	gathered	grouped
identified	interpreted	investigated	maintained	organized
projected	reconciled	recorded	reevaluated	researched
reviewed	surveyed	tabulated	troubleshoot	verified

Interpreted | Communicated

advised	briefed	clarified	composed	consulted
conveyed	counseled	delivered	demonstrated	drafted
drew	explained	expressed	framed	graphed
hosted	illustrated	informed	instructed	interviewed
lectured	observed	persuaded	presented	promoted
published	recognized	reported	spoke	summarized
trained	translated	translated	wrote	

Sample Results for Accomplishment Statements

What **Results** have you achieved? How have your **Actions** impacted the organization?
See below for some ideas.

Enhanced Profitability	Reduced Turnover	Ensured Safety
Increased Sales	Reduced Capital Investment	Improved Methods
Reduced Costs	Improved Quality	Upgraded Plans
Increased Earnings	Increased Return on Investment	Increase Customer Satisfaction
Increased Productivity	Conceived New Products	Improved Accuracy
Reduced Rejects	Developed New Products	Shortened Lead Time
Raised Efficiencies	Eliminated Unnecessary Procedures	Reduced Downtime
Improved Morale	Reduced Energy Requirement	Saved Time
Increased Awareness	Improved Training	Automated Systems
Increased Inventory Turns	Improved Customer Relations	Expanded Product Line
Reduced A/R Days Out	Enhanced Operations	Designed Equipment
Improved Corporate Image	Minimized Liability	Reduced Errors

"Enhance your Case" – Building Block 3

Once you've 'Stated Your Case' in your Summary, and 'Proven Your Case' in your Professional Experience, this section is where you 'Enhance Your Case' for your Target position. Include the information that supports how and why you're qualified. If you're wondering, "Should I include ...?" ask yourself, "Does this truly enhance my case?" Consider these categories.

Education	Awards	Professional Affiliations
Certifications	Community Leadership	Presentations
Technical Skills	Volunteer Experience	Training
Professional Development	Military Experience	Patents
Foreign Language Fluency	Board Membership	Publications

Education

- Include both degree name and acronym. For example, Bachelor of Science (BS).
- Include major (if relevant), institution name, and location.
- Graduation date is optional. We recommend only including it if you're a recent graduate (3-5 years).
- Omit GPA unless you're a recent graduate (3-5 years) and have an exceptional GPA.
- Multiple degrees? Start with highest-level achieved.
- Education goes after Experience section of resume. May include this section *before* Experience if:
 - Recent Graduate (within last 3-5 years).
 - Targeting jobs in Sciences and/or Research at Academic or Scientific Institutions, or Higher Education.

EDUCATION

Master of Business Administration (MBA), Operations Management, University Name, Anytown, Anywhere
Bachelor of Science (BS), Finance, University Name, Anytown, Anywhere

How to show 'in process' education and training

EDUCATION

Pursuing **Master of Business Administration (MBA)**, Operations Management,
 University Name, Anytown, Anywhere,
 Expected graduation: Dec 20XX
Bachelor of Science (BS), Finance, University Name, Anytown, Anywhere

EDUCATION

Coursework towards Bachelor's degree, Accounting,
 University Name, Anytown, Anywhere

OR

Completed 60 hours towards Bachelor of Arts (BA), Accounting

Take credit for
 what you've done!

Certifications & Licenses

- Include relevant credentials. Double check acronym wording and spelling .
- If inactive or expired – use qualifier such as “formerly held” or “inactive status”.
- In-process work – include with qualifier. For Example: “Studying for Professional in Human Resources (PHR) certification, expected completion, October, 20XX”.

Professional Development

Professional Development is a great “catch-all category” if you have a variety of Professional Development activities. If what you have is ‘Training’ or ‘Certifications’ you can place those activities into their own categories. However, to save space, it can be easier to combine them in Professional Development. The categories you choose to use are determined by your content – and the space you’ve got on your resume!

- Focus on what truly enhances your case! Curate your list to include relevant information.
- Include any ‘in process’ activities, including training and certifications.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Six Sigma Black Belt Certification, 20XX
Project Management Certificate, 20XX
Leadership Development Program
Successful Negotiating Techniques
ISO Audit Training

Technical Skills / Technical Knowledge

Where should I include Technical Skills and/or Technical Knowledge?

- For technically focused roles requiring specific and critical skills, include a Technical Skills category on Page 1 between the Summary and Professional Experience sections.
- For non-technical roles, include a Technical Skills category on Page 2 after Education section.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Languages	SQL, PL/SQL, Java, JavaScript, HTML5, CSS3, Python, C++, C, C#, Go, Typescript, Swift
Databases	MS SQL Server, IBM DB2, Oracle, MySQL, PostgreSQL, MongoDB
Web Technologies	.NET, Framework SDK, ASP.NET Core, Entity Framework Net, XML, JSON, HTML, CSS, COM+
Platforms	Cloud Computing: AWS, Azure, GCP, Linux, AIX, Windows, UNIX, Platform as a Service (PaaS), Heroku, Azure App Services

TIP
Remove outdated technology that’s no longer used.

Awards

What should I include and where should they go?

If you've earned awards, you should definitely include them! You can either create an Awards category below your Education category or you can use your award as the **Result** of your **Actions** in an accomplishment statement in your Experience section.

- Include why you earned the award. Instead of "Earned President's Club" be specific, "Earned President's Club Award reserved for top 1% of sales team".
- Include year award was earned, if recent.

AWARDS

Hero Award, ABC Company, for exceeding savings goals by 10% on new installation, 20XX
Circle of Stars, XYZ Company, for innovation in Program Development

Community Involvement & Volunteer Experience

Consider if and how the information is professionally relevant to your target audience. Don't include everything you do outside of work, just those things that enhance your case for your target role.

- If you're planning a career change and you've got volunteer experience that supports your new role, be sure to include it!

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Project Leader, Habitat for Humanity
Volunteer Coordinator, Emergency Preparedness, Red Cross

Foreign Languages

- Include language and level of proficiency. For example: Conversational, Fluent, Bilingual.

Personal Interests & Hobbies

- Do not belong on your resume! *Exceptions might be made* if they are directly related and enhance your case for your target role. For example:
 - Black Belt in Jujitsu (target is a Personal Security role).
 - Golfer with a low handicap (target is a Sales role where hosting golf outings is expected).
 - Marathon runner (targeting an Athletic Shoe manufacturer).

