

Resumes That Stand Out, Express Uniqueness, and Show Your Value Potential

by Marilyn Tullius, M.S.



Whatever Happened with Resumes?

- 2000 Resumes that looked as if they could have been produced on a typewriter were regarded as outdated. Word processing had been widely adopted
- 2005 Human Resources policies banned headshots to avoid discrimination in hiring
- 2010 Applicant Tracking Systems gained acceptance. The digital scanners rejected resumes with complex formatting such as columns, text boxes, and images
- 2015 Electronic matching of key words in resumes to job postings became common. Resumes were digitally scanned and software “scored” the match rate as a basis for accepting and rejecting resumes. This meant only 15-20% of resumes submitted online were accepted and sent to a human
- 2020 LinkedIn emerged as a powerful connector to company and agency recruiters. L-I continues to rise as a super-power available to job seekers!
- 2021 Online submission of applications surged due to the restrictions of the Covid pandemic, while in-person interviews, networking, and office time declined
- 2023 Uninformed and self-defeating advice floated around online, such as:
One page. Limits space for key words. Not a good idea for most applicants
Minimal sections. Contact, Skills, Experience, Education. You can do so much more to engage your reader and generate impact
Use of templates. Available from Canva, Adobe, MS Word, and others, but questions persist about failure to pass digital scanning. Best to use templates only after testing. Note: Two ways to test are by saving your resume as a Plain Text file and inspecting the result after uploading it to the Cloud
- 2025 Interest by employers in soft skills moved up in importance. AI now aids in preparing resumes, but is most useful as a research tool. Best usage is to enhance individual elements, such as bullet points. Prompting AI with a job description and getting back a resume that produces interview requests is unlikely



Problem *Common advice is to prepare a resume that passes the digital scanning process. This is a compromised view that stops short of giving you a resume that impresses and convinces hiring managers.*



Stand Out by Creating Additional Resume Sections

The basic resume sections (Contact, Skills, Experience, and Education) tell only a fraction of your story and your strengths. The “bare bones” resume is less than engaging for your reader. It denies to the reader important aspects of your personality and energy. Adding sections helps set you apart and gives the hiring manager an impression of how you would perform on the job and fit into the team. So go ahead and share!

Your more abundant information can help your reader see you as a person. Keep in mind that resume length is standardized at two pages. The risk of exceeding one page is low. The additional input raises the possibility that your reader will be inspired to meet you in person and decide to interview you for the job.

Consider using sections such as:

1. **Headline.** Announce your target job category for your next position—where you fit within the world of work. This reinforces your job claim as defined by industry and role. The headline also offers an opportunity to use key words. Examples:

For a Writer

IDEAS | WRITING | CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

For a Public Relations Professional

COMMUNICATIONS—PUBLIC RELATIONS

Educational Institutions | Nonprofits | Multi-cultural Organizations | Government

For a Data Scientist

DATA ANALYTICS DATA-INFORMED DECISIONS
PRODUCTS | PROCESSES | PERFORMANCE | INSIGHTS | STRATEGIES

When you know the job and employer you are applying to, your positioning headline can be replaced with specific information. Example:

Position of interest: Customer Success Manager (the title used in the job posting)
Company name and job number if available

2. **Persona Statement.** This descriptive statement related to your career interest can be a few words that characterize you or a belief you are committed to. It sets a tone that introduces you favorably. Three examples:

Leveraging data to improve decisions, increase efficiency, and achieve goals

Igniting ideas across an array of topics and audiences

Launching, developing, and strengthening organization credibility and impact



3. **Summary Section.** Do not use a narrative paragraph. Chances are very low anyone will read it on the first pass. Expect the reader to limit their total time on your resume to 3 to 6 seconds. They may spend their allotted time on your paragraph (and stop there) or bypass it and move on to other resume sections. Instead of a paragraph in the Summary section, use 3 to 5 annotated points. These points reinforce your claim on the job category targeted in the headline. The points solidify the rationale that you will be an outstanding performer in the position. They also carry key words. For example, note the Summary Section that follows a headline and supports the candidate’s claim at proficiency in the role:

IDEAS | WRITING | CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

SUMMARY

Creative	Engage audiences in the suspense of the story
Innovative	Open vistas of new horizons and imaginative thinking
Impactful	Instill memories through emotion and visual imagery
Versatile	Change the essence of messages to fit media and interests

4. **Capabilities.** In presenting your skills and capabilities, group items within meaningful categories. Your reader needs this help! Seeing similar items clustered together keeps your reader on pace as they skim your resume. You may add labels such as: Technical and Management and sub-labels or items such as software platforms and analytics, as appropriate. Example:

Tools / Software. Presentations | Visualization |)
Technical Skills. Analytics | Graphic Design |)
Project Management. Team leading | Schedules, Budgets |)

5. **Leadership.** Add soft skills. Consider key words and phrases from job postings. Also add qualities and characteristics people might use to describe you such as “go-to” problem solver, self-starter, empathic. Example:

Known for being. Natural leader | Visionary | Strategist | Leader | Persuasive
 Consensus builder | Collaborator | Empathic | Spokesperson | Focused on results

6. **Testimonials.** An alternate name for this section could be “Accolades.” Example:

“He/She/Name met unanticipated event-related challenges and ensured impeccable service that surpassed our expectations.”

7. Additional possibilities for added sections, when appropriate, include:

Professional Affiliations, Memberships	Volunteer Leadership
Languages	Honors and Awards
Training and Certifications	Travel
Relevant Courses	Interests
Projects	Extracurricular



Express Uniqueness and Value Potential

Importance of Being Relevant to Job Postings

Your potential value to an employer depends on how closely you match the job posting requirements. Review and analyze job postings to understand the needs of employers in the category and terminologies used, including key words. AI (ChatGPT and others) can help improve your efficiency at this task.

Resume Experience Section

Employment Entry Overview. Begin with your most recent experience and introduce each previous experience entry with an introductory sentence. This grounds and anchors the reader while providing context related to the employer's products, challenges, and purpose of your position. Importantly, this helps the reader interpret your bullet points.

First Person, Grammatically. Throughout the Experience section you will be talking about yourself, obviously, but without using "I." Be consistent in using the understood pronoun, the absent first person "I," in preference to third person "he/she/name." Here is the difference: "(I) Supervise" versus "(Name) Supervises." First person is more immediate and emphatic.

Bullet Points and Syntax. Begin each bullet point with a strong verb of achievement. Then state how you accomplished the result. This syntax arrangement begins with an action verb and result (that is, Reversed decline). This is the "what," to be followed by the method used to achieve the result ("by motivating high performance team") This is the "how".

Examples and Highlights. You may place highlight examples beneath bullet points. Identify these as separate elements by indenting a few spaces and using a smaller type font. Two to three examples will bring bullet points to life.

Highlight by a Regional Manager of a Computer Store:

Highlight:

Supervised opening of the San Diego store to launch the brand in a new market.

Highlight by Public Affairs Officer for a school district:

Highlight: Connecting with students who shared stories of their challenges and achievements in video interviews.

Append Items to Your Resume

Supplementing your resume with additional pages enriches the resources you can share during your job search. A cover letter is the most commonly used and reinforces the message of your resume. You may develop separate pages to summarize challenges met or projects managed, for example, and you may prepare a list of capabilities with short annotations. Additional supportive pages can present high points of your career journey and strengths. Some points may be useful as conversation starters. You should never substitute these extra pages for the resume you submit online, though.

