

New Edition!

HOW TO WRITE A WINNING RESUME

What's the secret to writing an effective resume, one that helps you get the job you really want? This book tells you everything you need to know about constructing a winning resume. The author has years of experience in career counseling and in helping people hunt for jobs. In this book, you will learn how to

- Gather the building blocks you need for a winning resume
- Use verbs and other action words in your resume
- Assemble the essential parts of a resume
- Study sample resumes
- Make a first draft
- Lay out a professional-looking resume
- Type, proof, and reproduce your resume
- Tailor your resume to your level of work experience and personal career needs
- Write effective cover letters
- Produce cover letters
- Keep track of resume mailings
- Follow up on job leads.

Deborah Perlmutter Bloch

HOW TO WRITE A WINNING RESUME

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Author's note: the names of all individuals and companies, the addresses and phone numbers used in examples, sample résumés, and cover letters in this book are fictional.

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About the Author

Deborah Perlmutter Bloch, Ph.D., is an associate professor of educational administration at Baruch College, the City University of New York. Previously, she worked as the director of MetroGuide, New York City's computer-based Career Information System; the coordinator of research for the Office of Occupational and Career Education of the New York City Board of Education; a high school guidance counselor; and an English teacher.

As a consultant, Dr. Bloch has worked with the National Career Information System at the University of Oregon, New York City's Job Center and the Dropout Prevention Program, and the Departments of Labor and Education of several states. She is currently involved in the development of career counseling courses for the University of Wollongong in Australia.

Dr. Bloch is past-president of the National Career Development Association and the Association of Computer-

Based Systems for Career Information. She remains active in these groups, as well as in the guidance division of the American Vocational Association.

She has published many articles in professional and popular magazines and given numerous presentations and workshops for counselors and teachers on how to help people with their career decisions and job searches.

How to use this book: Read this before you begin!

In the tight job market of the 1990s your résumé is the essential spark that can jump start your way to economic success. Your résumé is your opportunity to present the facts of your life in a way that speaks directly to the audience you want to reach.

Who is the audience for your résumé? Are you looking for a first job, a new job, or a turnabout in career direction? The audience is each potential employer. There is also a new and growing way to work called contract employment. Contract workers provide specific services to businesses as they need them. If you want to take advantage of this end of the job market and independently contract out your services, your résumé provides the written evidence of your experience and ability to the audience—the individual in the organization responsible for choosing the service.

If you have a variety of skills and services to offer, you can successfully run a “portfolio career.” This means you

are offering contracted services of varied types to equally varied businesses. Each edition of your résumé can be geared to the service buyer whose needs you want to meet.

Even if you want to go into business on your own, a résumé is probably needed as part of your business plan to convince prospective investors of your expertise and experience.

You know why you want to write a résumé, but you may not be sure how to go about it. Questions of what to include and how to show yourself to best advantage are common. You may have heard terms like *functional* or *chronological* résumé and wonder what they should mean to you. This book will help you understand what to include in your résumé and how to present your information to the best advantage.

You may also have seen ads in newspapers and magazines for “experts” who can help you prepare a résumé, and at this point, you may not really be sure that you should tackle this job on your own. Eliminate any self-doubt. *You are the best person to write your résumé, because no one can know you, your skills, interests, and goals as well as you do.* A professional résumé writer might be able to make the job seem easier, but you will find that you can do just as good a job on your own. And this book will help you make it even better.

This book will provide a step-by-step guide to help you through the résumé writing process. Your questions on what to include to put your best foot forward will be answered, and you will find by the time you finish the book that you understand the process very well.

The Purpose of A Résumé

The purpose of a résumé is to get you considered for a job. It's not likely that anyone has ever gotten a job solely on the basis of her or his résumé, but people often lose the chance to be considered in the first place because of poorly written or presented résumés.

Many of the suggestions included in this book are based on the advice of actual employers in industries such as banking, computers, insurance, advertising, accounting, education, health services, law, merchandising, and others. The people surveyed are responsible for hiring employees from entry-level jobs through middle management positions and experienced professionals to the highest-level executives. Although the employers came from a variety of fields, and they themselves ranged in age from 25 to over

65, their responses to the questions were remarkably similar. Therefore, when you see a quotation from the survey, you can know that one employer said it, but the thought represents the responses of many. The step-by-step approach used in this book is designed to help you produce the kind and quality of information that these professional managers have stated specifically that they want to see.

The purpose of the résumé is to get you an interview! The résumé must catch the attention of the reader so that it goes in the pile “to be considered,” rather than the pile “to be discarded.” A résumé that makes the first pile and stays on top of it is a winning résumé.

Your Goals

Your goal is to produce a winning résumé—and there are essential steps in the logical sequence of right moves to reach that goal.

Step 1. Explore the details of your life for skills and accomplishments, names, dates, and places.

Step 2. Translate your skills and accomplishments into power terms and the language of the job you are seeking in the industry that interests you.

Step 3. Present the material in a way that holds the attention of the reader and reveals the very best about you.

Step 4. Write a cover letter that provides direction to the reader of your résumé—your prospective employer or buyer of your services.

The chapters of this book will help you through these steps to reach your goal—a winning résumé.

Chapter 1, “Building Blocks,” includes a series of work sheets on which you will explore and develop your educational and occupational history. It includes a self-assessment questionnaire which will pinpoint the relationships between your abilities and a number of jobs.

Chapter 2, “Actions Speak Louder than Words—Use Verbs!” shows you how to translate the building blocks into active, effective statements for your résumé.

By the time you finish *Chapter 3, "Assembly,"* you will have a draft of your résumé.

In *Chapter 4, "Getting Physical,"* you will learn details of paper, layout, and typing. The mystique surrounding word processing, paper selection, and reproduction will be eliminated, probably saving you some money. *Chapter 4* concludes with specific directions for proofreading your résumé.

You will see in *Chapter 5, "Made to Order,"* how your résumé can be tailored to reach employers in different fields, and how to customize your résumé if you are in a special situation. This chapter will be of particular help if you are looking for your first job, if you are trying to change careers, or if you are returning to the work force after having been unemployed for awhile. You will see how to use the "Building Blocks" in different ways.

Chapter 6 is about how to write a covering letter, an essential part of each résumé. It also includes suggestions for keeping track of résumés you've sent.

In all of the chapters, plenty of models and examples are given.

The last chapter, *Chapter 7, "Beauty is in the Eyes of the Beholder,"* summarizes the advice given by the personnel officers who were interviewed for this book, and gives you their final check list for do's and don'ts.

A list of *Related Resources* at the end of the book provides ways and means of identifying recipients of your résumé.

Finally, you will find an *Appendix* of brief job descriptions. This will prove helpful to you in finding the right words and phrases for your résumé and in thinking of the specific job titles of jobs you might want to seek.

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Building blocks

1

Build your winning résumé from pages and pages of your work, career goals, and life details that are then carefully selected and rephrased.

The first step in preparing your résumé is to gather the information that you have to work with. The purpose of this chapter is to help you gather and write down a great deal of information about yourself which may be useful to you in preparing your résumé. It is true that a brief, concise résumé is the most effective, and you will want to be sure that the final form of your résumé is not wordy, overdone, or long-winded. However, to begin with, you will need to take stock of all the experience, knowledge, and skills that you have to offer.

Consider Chapter 1 as your *information builder*. In each of the sections you will have a chance to jot down all the details you can think of. You will never use them all in the final version of your résumé; you will *choose* the details that are most applicable to the job you want. But before you can choose the best items to include, you will need to

develop good, long lists of personal notes. Don't be afraid to write down a seemingly minor activity or accomplishment. *If you did it, you learned something from it*, and it may be useful. Put it down on paper, where you can look at it, and consider it as you build your résumé.

A winning résumé is built up step-by-step, using the elements which employers want to see quickly, and easily, as soon as they look at the résumé.

For the purposes of this book, we will call these elements *Blocks*—they are the *Building Blocks* of all résumés. These Building Blocks include all the kinds of information that employers need, in order to consider you for a job: information about your education and training, work history, and the like.

The first step in preparing your résumé is to gather information about yourself, and write it all down. Later, you will refine this information, boil it down, and rewrite it in the best wording, and the best order for the job you want to win.

Too many times, job applicants make the mistake of trying to write a rough draft of the whole résumé. They try to write *brief statements*, and never really look at all the experience they have had, and all the work they have done.

In this section you will explore and identify the key work experiences and accomplishments of your life. To do this, you will explore, through writing, all of the areas of your life that are related to work. The areas are as follows:

Block A: Education and training

Block B: Licenses and certificates

Block C: Work history

Block D: Related experience such as consulting, teaching or training others

Block E: Professional organizations, association memberships, and unions; committee memberships and offices held

Block F: Hobbies, community activities, volunteer work and leisure activities

Block G: Special abilities related to your work such as knowledge of a foreign language

Block H: Publications or presentations at meetings, conferences, or conventions

Block I: Skills assessment questionnaire

Before beginning work on this chapter, look over the list of Building Blocks. Remember that this book is written to help many people, each of whom has had a different set of experiences. If one of the Building Blocks has no meaning for you, do not try to force your life to fit the book: just skip that block! For example, if you are not active in community organizations, or if you have never made a speech or presentation, or published an article, ignore those pages and concentrate on the Building Blocks that can be used to show the experience that you have had. In the spaces given for your Personal Notes, you can jot down informally your own experiences.

Block A: Education and Training

Concentrate on abilities, accomplishments, and energy you showed in school or college if you are a beginning worker.

Use this Building Block to identify your accomplishments in education. If you are looking for your first or second job, this section is very important in your résumé because this is the area in which you can show the ability and energy you have through the activities you took part in, in school. If you have been out of school, and working for a while, or are well advanced in your career, then you will probably just want to list any degrees you have earned, any special coursework which is of particular relevance to the job you are seeking, and any honors you have been awarded. If you have taken recent additional courses, those may be useful to include, as well.

Complete each of the sections below with attention to detail of names and dates. If you are uncertain of the dates or spelling of names, circle the item for research later. Then come back to fill in the missing information. In each section, begin with the most recent and work backwards into your past.

School History

In this section, you will list the names of all the schools you have attended, from high school to the present time. You may have only one school to list, or you may have several.

Keep in mind:

- All of your education is important to list.
- Start by listing your most recent schooling first.
- This list *is not the final form* for your résumé: it is for your own use.

Two examples of possible lists are included below to give you an idea of the kinds of schools you may want to list.

EXAMPLE

Name of School: New York University, New York, New York
Major or Area of Concentration: Business Administration
Degree or Credits Earned: Bachelor's Degree
Dates: September 1990–June 1994

EXAMPLE

Name of School: Price Academy of Business, Baltimore, Maryland
Major or Area of Concentration: Bookkeeping, Records Management
Degree or Credits Earned: None
Dates: September 1992–January 1993

Name of School: Parker High School, Baltimore, Maryland
Major or Area of Concentration: Accounting
Degree or Credits Earned: Diploma
Dates: September 1988–June 1992

Personal Notes

In the space below, write in all the school, college, and training programs you have completed. Be sure to write down *all* the educational background you have.

Name of School: _____

Major or Area of Concentration: _____

Degree or Credits Earned: _____

Dates: _____

Name of School: _____

Major or Area of Concentration: _____

Degree or Credits Earned: _____

Dates: _____

Name of School: _____

Major or Area of Concentration: _____

Degree or Credits Earned: _____

Dates: _____

Evidence of Knowledge

In this section you will want to think carefully of all the special courses or course content that you have had that might be of interest to the employer. If you were applying for a job as a carpenter, and you had also taken school courses in cabinet making, you would want to mention that special area of knowledge because it would qualify you for a broader field of jobs.

EXAMPLE

Course of Particular Interest: Systems Analysis

Relevance to Job: Seeking job in health services field. Field is increasingly computerized.

Personal Notes

Course of Particular Interest: _____

Relevance to Job: _____

Course of Particular Interest: _____

Relevance to Job: _____

Course of Particular Interest: _____

Relevance to Job: _____

Course of Particular Interest: _____

Relevance to Job: _____

Evidence of Independent Study

Many people neglect to mention special projects they have taken part in, where training may have contributed something of value to their educations or they revealed their energy or special skills. An employer may find that "something extra" in just such information. In this section, write down all the projects you have taken part in, on your own.

EXAMPLE

Special Projects and Papers: Worked on year-long project to aid elderly with nutritional needs.

Relevance to Job: Job requires skill with people of varied backgrounds.