

Federal/Civilian Résumés Progression Topic

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Daree's Background:

- STC WDC 1st VP 2002-3
- Owner of Woodard Communication & Design (<http://www.WoodardCommDesign.com>)
- Technical writer, Résumé writer
- Member of NRWA, on waiting list for NCRW credential exam
- Bachelor of Science in Professional and Technical Communication
- Graduate student at University of Maryland University College

Topics Covered: (G= general concepts, C= civilian, F= federal)

- Keywords- why they're important and where to find them (G)
- Writing interesting copy using the AIDA formula (G)
- Résumé types and when to use them (C)
- E-résumé (ASCII text résumé for email and e-forms) (G)
- Writing KSAs (knowledge, skills, and abilities statements) (F)

General concepts**Keywords**

Keywords (kws) are nouns and noun phrases, not action verbs. To find keywords:

- Review STC publications and newsletters (or documents relating to your field of interest)
- Talk to industry contacts (already in the field), including HR specialists
- Search job descriptions and classified ads from targeted companies (including position descriptions of vacancy announcements)
- Dept. of Labor's Occupational Outlook Handbook at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>
- Use a career placement office or Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) organization (find local JPTA office from DOL at (202) 219-6666)
- Give kws a boost by adding a quantified accomplishment after them when possible
- Weave industry keywords and their synonyms throughout the visual center: in your position title (mentioned in objective statement or qualifications summary), and throughout your experience section in case your résumé is initially scanned by computer
- Place several kws in the "visual center" of the page (top 2/3 of the page) to aid human review

- Enter kws in the file, properties, summary, and keyword areas of Microsoft Word résumé (Use the File > Properties menu options in Word)

Writing Copy Using the AIDA Formula

- Get **A**ttention – with headlines and visual appeal
- Capture **I**nterest- place best points in visual center of the page
- Create **D**esire – show why employer needs you, how you can fulfill their need, and prove your superiority (using numbers, if possible) to fulfill that need (compare to why you buy something)
- Call to **A**ction – entice employer to meet you by offering samples; ask for the interview

Omit “responsibilities include” as a phrase when describing your accomplishments and abilities. Instead, emphasize the results you’ve delivered (quantify whenever possible). Prioritize sentences in paragraphs with the most relevant info listed first.

E-résumé- electronic résumé

How to save résumé in ASCII format (a universally readable format):

- For e-forms (on job web sites) – Select File > Save As > *Text Only*
- For emails - Select File > Save As > *Text Only with Line Breaks*
- Before saving a Word file as ASCII text, change the font of the entire résumé to Courier or Courier New, and change the point size of the entire résumé to 12 pt.
- When editing a Word résumé file saved as ASCII text, edit the odd characters translated to ASCII from bullets, etc. Remove any references to another page of the résumé, such as “Continued” or “Page 2” (Good editing tool for PC users is to use Notepad (Start > Programs > Accessories > Notepad))
- Use up to 60 characters per line to avoid uneven text wraps

Civilian Résumés

General Tips:

- Create more than one résumé to account for unrelated audiences/industries.
- In your contact information at the top of the résumé, use a professional email address that includes your name, not something like Hotbabe2003@myISP.com.

- Use the same font and point size for all body text, and then another font and point size for all résumé section headings. Leave adequate white space between sections.

Résumé sections:

- Objective (focus) statement
 - The position you want
 - The key skills you possess for this position
 - Benefits for the employer (ask yourself how hiring you will meet the employer's needs)
- Qualifications summary
 - Specialization
 - Years of experience
 - Certification, graduate degree, licensure
 - Language skills
 - Technical skills
 - Affiliations
 - Prestigious employers/colleges
- Experience – Use chronological or functional résumé format; functional type is OK for those who:
 - have gaps in employment
 - are just reentering workforce after hiatus
 - are a students or a new graduate
 - are a specialist in particular aspect of a field
 - are currently or formerly part of military personnel
 - have decades of experience

Do not omit dates of accomplishments, because it makes potential employers suspicious that you have something to hide in your employment history. However, you may use years only, instead of the month and year format, to disguise up to an 11-month absence.

To de-emphasize a layoff or demotion that occurred for a reason other than your performance, omit dates of employment and present accomplishments in a narrative format.

If you have little relevant work history, highlight academic excellence, transferable skills (“soft skills”), leadership skills, internship experience, study abroad, as well as relevant coursework, volunteer work, and projects to show leadership, teamwork, and presentation experience: describe the project, list the number in the group, your contribution to the project, and the outcome (“received A”).

If you have limited accomplishments, highlight successes such as: chosen employee of the month, attained 100% attendance record, etc., and statements that reflect productivity, conscientious work, and responsibility. Quantify these statements by using measurable information, e.g., no absenteeism in three years; assumed management responsibilities during manager's two-week absence; awarded "Employee of the Month" due to five positive customer service feedbacks in one week.

If you have professional experience, use your past progress reports and performance evaluations for inspiration in writing detailed, quantified accomplishments.

- Education – For recent grads, this section will carry more weight in the visual center of your résumé than your Experience section, so place it above the Experience section.

If you have graduated, list your major (and minor, if applicable), degree, college name, awards, and final GPA (if 3.0 or higher); indicate dean's list, president's list and semesters achieved; list any other colleges where you attained other degrees related to the sought position.

If you have not completed a degree, list your major (and minor if applicable), college name, degree, and expected graduation date (if still working on this degree), the number of credit hours you have completed and years attended, awards, and cumulative GPA (if 3.0 or higher); indicate dean's list, president's list and semesters achieved.

If you do not have a degree and are not currently working on a degree, place relevant training and skills under a heading of the same name and omit an "Education" section.

- Organizations/Affiliations
 - Use 2 categories (if necessary): professional and community; also list title if you're involvement entailed more than just membership (e.g., if you were active on a committee)
 - Omit dates
 - Omit political and religious activities to avoid potential discrimination (just as you could omit your college graduation date to avoid potential age discrimination).

If you did not had time to participate in college activities because you were self-supporting (paid your own college expenses), highlight this with a statement such as, "Supported 100% college expenses while balancing

academic schedule and maintaining grades,” or “Supplemented tuition with part-time jobs and managed a hectic schedule while maintaining academic excellence.”

- Honors/Awards
 - Omit dates if they are not recent
 - You also can weave any notable professional accomplishments into your qualifications summary or experience section
- Publications, Presentations – optional

Include if your original work was published in a scholarly journal, or if you train or lead workshops, conferences, etc.

Federal Résumés

Different format than civilian résumé; more personal information required (social security number, current salary and hours worked, high school info, etc.)

The major part of the federal résumé that is not present in other types of résumés is the requirement of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities statements (KSAs). These statements are essays that are required by most federal job vacancy announcements to help HR sort through résumés for the best-qualified candidates based on their experience and writing skills. If you omit KSAs that are required in an announcement, your résumé will not be considered for the job vacancy (job position).

The 4 main parts to writing a KSA are Context, Challenge, Action, and Results (CCAR):

1. Context – What is the role you played in the example you are giving?
2. Challenge - What was the challenge of this example or project?
3. Action - What were your specific actions in this case? How did you meet the challenge?
4. Results - What was the outcome of your actions? Be sure to quantify the outcomes whenever possible.

KSAs are usually one to one and one-half pages for each. Always include a variety of clear examples that illustrate the KSAs. Make sure each example for a KSA is discussed in separate paragraphs.

Write in first person (“I”).

Spell out all acronyms upon first usage.

You may include a relevant training course you completed that will support the particular KSA statement. If you encounter a KSA on an area I have no experience in, read the mission statement at the related federal agency website, and do other research information about the subject. Write about your knowledge of the subject.

When you don’t have adequate experience for a KSA, read up on the agency and the position elsewhere and work around that information as your knowledge.

If you don’t understand a KSA, reread the duties and responsibilities carefully to interpret the position, and visit the website of the agency to see if you can understand the context of the position and the KSAs. If that does not help, call the personnel office to ask for an interpretation. Contact information is located at the top of each vacancy announcement.

Note – Creating your résumé online at federal agency websites all but guarantees that you will have to construct few, if any, KSAs.

Résumé-Writing Resources

Block, Jay A., and Betrus, Michael. (2002). 2500 Keywords To Get You Hired.

McGraw-Hill.

Bly, Robert W. (1990). Copywriter’s Handbook: A Step-By-Step Guide to Writing

Copy That Sells.

Criscito, Pat. (2000). Designing the Perfect Résumé. Barrons Educational Series

Enlow, Wendy S., and Kursmark, Louis M. (2001). Expert Résumé for Computer

Jobs. IN: JIST Works.

Gaither, Richard. (1995). The Wizard of Work. CA: Ten Speed Press.

KSA Builder (KSA template) http://www.resume-place.com/ksa_builder/template

KSA Handbook- <http://www.bop.gov/hrmpg/ksa/hrmksahndbk.pdf>

Rosenberg Arthur D., and Hizer, David V. (1996). The Résumé Handbook : How

to Write Outstanding Résumé and Cover Letters for Every Situation.

Adams Media Corporation.

Troutman, Kathryn Kraemer. (2002). Electronic Federal Résumé Guidebook. MD:

The Résumé Place.

Troutman, Kathryn Kraemer. (2002). Ten Steps to a Federal Job. MD: The

Résumé Place.

Whitcomb, Susan Britton, and Kendall, Pat. (2002). E-Resumes. NY: McGraw-

Hill.

Whitcomb, Susan Britton. (2003). Résumé Magic. IN: JIST Works.

Yate, Martin. (1987-2002). Knock 'em Dead. MA: Adams Media Corporation.

Federal Résumé Websites and Resources

FEDERAL JOB SEARCH WEB SITES

The Résumé Place, Inc. – Home of the Federal Résumé
www.resume-place.com

Government Executive Magazine - Federal Employment and “What’s Going on”
in the Government
www.govexec.com

Federal Job Search.com - <http://www.federaljobsearch.com/>

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Office of Personnel Management’s official job search site -
www.usajobs.opm.gov

Federal Résumé Information – Official Instructions on “what to include”:
<http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/EI25.htm> (read Step 3)

Important Federal Job Info page – FAQ - <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/b.htm>

Federal Salaries - <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/B5A.htm>

Veteran's Information - <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/EI3.htm>

Federal Jobs by College Major - <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/EI23.htm>

Student Internships (partial list) - <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/EI13.htm>

Federal Employment Info for People with Disabilities -
<http://www.opm.gov/disability/>

Senior Executive Service Job Info - <http://www.opm.gov/ses/>

FEDERAL JOB AND GOVERNMENT INFORMATION:

The White House - <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>

FirstGov - <http://www.firstgov.gov/> - A website where you can find most government service and program information.

ALL Federal agencies

http://www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/Federal/All_Agencies/index.shtml - Look for Federal jobs, mission statements and programs at each agency's website!

SPECIFIC JOB SEARCH:

Information Technology Jobs: <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/a14.htm>

Hot Jobs (hard to fill): <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/whatshot.htm>

Student Jobs: <http://www.studentjobs.gov/index.htm>

EMAILS WITH FEDERAL JOB LISTINGS:

Office of Personnel Management's page – free - <http://profiler.usajobs.opm.gov/>

Federal Job Search – www.federaljobsearch.com - not free, but excellent

POSITION DESCRIPTIONS FOR FEDERAL JOBS

General Schedule Classification Descriptions – Most Federal Jobs -
<http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/html/gsseries.htm> - Find keywords in these descriptions for your résumé.

Hot ! New ! Draft Family Position Classification Standard for Administrative Work in Investigation, Enforcement, Inspection, and Compliance Group, GS-1800
<http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/html/whatshot.htm>

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR FEDERAL JOBS

Veteran's Administration Core Competency List and Description

<http://www.va.gov/visns/visn02/emp/learning/index.html> - Included in the book as well.

DEFENSE CIVILIAN JOBS:

U.S. Navy and Marines – Civilian Jobs – www.donhr.navy.mil

U.S. Army – Civilian Jobs – www.cpol.army.mil

U.S. Air Force – Civilian Jobs - <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/>

SOME OF THE PROPOSED AGENCIES OF THE HOMELAND SECURITY DEPARTMENT

Transportation Safety Administration – www.tsa.gov

Immigration and Naturalization Service – www.ins.gov

U.S. Customs Service – www.customs.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency – www.fema.gov

U.S. Coast Guard – www.uscg.mil

Secret Service – www.secretservice.gov

Animal and Plant Inspection Service – www.usda/aphis.gov

FBI – www.FBI.gov

Environmental Protection Agency – www.epa.gov

Drug Enforcement Agency – www.dea.gov

PLAIN LANGUAGE WRITING TIPS:

www.plainlanguage.gov (click the How To link)