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RESOURCE DOCUMENT – *RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS*

Top Ten Skills to Put on a Resume

Top 10 skills to put on a resume

While you can often easily determine hard skills to list based on details in the job description, selecting relevant soft skills is not always as clear. To help narrow down which soft skills to put on a resume, review the various duties of the position and determine which of your personal strengths will help you successfully complete those tasks.

Here are 10 examples of the best resume skills employers may be seeking:

1. Active listening skills

Active listening is the ability to focus completely on a speaker, understand their message, comprehend the information and respond thoughtfully. Active listeners use verbal and nonverbal techniques to show and keep their attention on the speaker. Developing and using active listening skills can show your colleagues that you are engaged and have an interest in the project or task at hand.

Related listening skills include:

- Asking questions
- Note-taking
- Organization
- Punctuality
- Verbal/nonverbal communication

2. Communication skills

Communication skills are the abilities you use when giving and receiving different kinds of information. Some examples include communicating ideas, feelings or what's happening around you. Communication skills involve listening, speaking, observing and empathizing. Having strong communication skills is important in every industry at every career level.

Related communications skills include:

- Active listening
- Constructive criticism
- Interpersonal communication
- Public speaking
- Verbal/nonverbal communication
- Written communication

3. Computer skills

Computer skills involve the ability to learn and operate various technology. Hardware skills allow you to physically operate a computer and can be as simple as knowing how to turn devices on and off. Software skills help you to efficiently use computer programs and applications. There are some software skills that employers may consider as prerequisites to employment, like using spreadsheets or knowing a certain coding language.

Related computer skills include:

- Typing/word processing
- Fluency in coding languages
- Systems administration
- Spreadsheets
- Email management

4. Customer service skills

Customer service skills are traits and practices that help you address customer needs to create a positive experience. In general, customer service skills rely heavily on problem-solving and communication. Customer service is often considered a "soft skill," including traits like active listening and reading both verbal and nonverbal cues.

Related customer service skills include:

- Active listening

- Empathy

- Interpersonal skills

- Problem-solving

- Reliability

5. Interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills are traits you rely on when you interact and communicate with others. They cover a variety of scenarios where cooperation is essential. Developing interpersonal skills is important to work efficiently with others, solve problems and lead projects or teams.

Related interpersonal skills include:
- Communication

- Empathy

- Flexibility

- Leadership

- Patience

6. Leadership skills

Leadership skills are skills you use when organizing other people to reach a shared goal. Whether you're in a management position or leading a project, leadership skills require you to motivate others to complete a series of tasks, often according to a schedule.

Related leadership skills include:
- Ability to teach and mentor

- Flexibility

- Risk-taking

- Team building

- Time management

7. Management skills

Management skills are qualities that help you govern both tasks and people. A good manager is organized, empathetic and communicates clearly to support a team or project. Managers should also be adept in both soft skills and certain technical skills related to their industry.

Related management skills include:

- Decision-making
- Project planning
- Task delegation
- Team communication
- Team leadership

8. Problem-solving skills

Problem-solving skills are qualities that help you determine the source of a problem and quickly find an effective solution. This skill is highly valued in any role for every industry. Solving problems in your role might require certain industry or job-specific technical skills.

Related problem-solving skills include:

- Attention to detail
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Patience
- Research

9. Time management skills

Time management skills allow you to complete tasks and projects before deadlines while also maintaining work-life balance. Staying organized can help you allocate your workday to specific tasks by importance. Deeply understanding your individual, team and company goals can provide a starting point when deciding how to manage your time.

Related time management skills include:

- Delegating tasks
- Focus
- Goal setting
- Organization

- Prioritization

10. Transferable skills

Transferable skills are qualities that are useful to any employer as you change jobs or careers. Transferable skills often include soft skills like flexibility, organization, teamwork or other qualities employers seek in strong candidates. Transferable skills can be used to position your past experience when applying for a new job—especially if it's in a different industry.

Related transferable skills include

- Ambition

- Creativity

- Empathy

- Leadership

- Teamwork

The best skills to put on a resume vary by job type, career level, education and other factors. For example, the skills most important for a commercial truck driver will differ from those of a marketing manager. Before you apply to any job, take time to review the skills that are most valuable to the employer and tailor your resume based on which of your personal skills fall within their requirements.

The goal of your resume skills list is to show the recruiter or hiring manager that you're the best candidate for the role and will bring defined value to their team. By paying attention to the type of candidate an employer is looking for and making connections to your own strengths, you can quickly stand among the competition.

When and How to Write a Cover Letter

Cover letters have long been an important part of the job application process. However, some now suggest that modern recruiting methods may make the cover letter obsolete. In this article, we explore whether you still need a cover letter with your resume and provide you with some tips on how to write a cover letter.

Are cover letters important?

Yes, cover letters are still important. Even if your cover letter goes through the application process unread, an employer may still expect to see it attached to your resume. This is especially true if the hiring manager asked for a cover letter as part of the application process. A cover letter also shows the employer that you take the job opportunity seriously and are prepared to take more initiative to be considered for the job. It's also possible the hiring manager will actually look at your cover letter when selecting applicants to interview.

Purpose of a cover letter

A cover letter gives you the chance to highlight anything on your resume in more detail to point out your special qualifications. A resume documents your skills, education and experience. With a cover letter, you can make the connection between the resume and the job. This could mean that you may not have to customize your resume as much for each job application, since you can use your cover letter to show how your skills and experience are relevant. Your cover letter also allows you to show your writing skills, which is important for creative and administrative roles. These could all be important considerations for the hiring manager when selecting quality candidates for an interview.

When do you need a cover letter?

There are occasions when you need to include a cover letter with your resume. These include:
- When the job application tells you to include a cover letter
- If the hiring manager or recruiter asks for a cover letter
- When you know the hiring manager by name or have an existing relationship
- If someone referred you to the job, in which case you should mention who referred you in the cover letter

When should you not include a cover letter?

On the other hand, there may be times when you should not include a cover letter with your resume. For example, if the job application explicitly states that you should not send a cover letter or if the application process doesn't provide a way for you to submit a cover letter with your resume, which sometimes happens with online application forms.

How to write a professional cover letter

As you adapt each cover letter to make it relevant for each job application, there are certain things you should include in all of them:

The hiring manager's name

If possible, address your cover letter to the hiring manager. This information may be given on the job posting. Alternatively, you could call or email the company and ask to whom the application should be addressed. If you are unable to get the person's name, you can replace it with their job title, team or department.

Your contact information

Be sure to include your name, email address and phone number on the cover letter. This information will be on your resume as well, but putting it all on the cover letter can help save the hiring manager time. Also, should your cover letter and resume be separated, the hiring manager can still contact you.

The job title

Quote the exact title of the job for which you are applying. You can put this at the beginning of the letter, either on its own line ("Re: Systems Analyst/Programmer position") or in your opening sentence.

The correct tone

Your cover letter should be formal and professional. However, you can adapt your cover letter to fit the style of the business. Check the company's website and social media to help you determine the appropriate tone to use.

What you offer

Discuss how your skills and experience can contribute to the company's success. This is an opportunity to show how much you know about the business. It also allows you to demonstrate how the qualifications on your resume line up with the needs of the company. Look for keywords in the job description and be sure to include them in your cover letter.

A call to action

This is simply a closing line thanking the hiring manager for considering your application, and inviting them to read your resume and call anytime to schedule an interview. If there are times you are not available, this would be a good place to mention them.

Cover letter templates

You can use this template to guide you when creating your cover letter. After you have decided on the information to include, you can change the wording to suit your own formal style and the tone of the business.

Basic cover letter

[Your name, address, email address and phone number(s), either as a header or on the left side of the page]
[Date]

Re: [exact job title] position

Dear [Mr./Ms.] [hiring manager's name],

I was excited to find the above open position at [company name] and would like you to consider me for the job.

As you can see from my resume, I have [relevant recent experience, including the number of years and a brief description of what you did].

[Paragraph providing any additional experience and education that fits with the job requirements and demonstrates your suitability for the position].

Thank you for your time and consideration. Feel free to contact me [best time to contact or "anytime" if you have no preference] at the above number if you would like to schedule an interview.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

Cover letter with resume attached

If you are writing an email with your resume attached, you can adapt this template to fit that format. For example:

Subject: [exact job title] position

Dear [Mr./Ms.] [hiring manager's name],

I was excited to find the [job title] position at [company name] and would like you to consider me for the job. [A brief statement explaining why you want to work for the company].

As you can see from my attached resume, I have [relevant recent experience, including the number of years and a brief description of what you did].

[Paragraph providing any additional experience and education that fits with the job requirements and demonstrates your suitability for the position].

Thank you for your time and consideration. Feel free to contact me [best time to contact or "anytime" if you have no preference] if you would like to schedule an interview.

Sincerely,

[Your name]
[Your phone number(s)]

You can also use this format for online submission forms where space is provided for a cover letter.

Cover letter example

This is an example of a completed cover letter. Use this as a guide to creating your own.

Jasmine Jones
Boulder, CO 80309
jazjones@email.com
(720) 555-5432

Mr. Trent Jennings
Development Manager
CMI Web Solutions
222 Corporate Park Road
Boulder, CO 80301

Re: Web Developer position

Dear Mr. Jennings,

I was excited to find the above open position at CMI Web Solutions and would like you to consider me for the job. I have great admiration for CMI's willingness to explore new technology and also their sense of corporate responsibility. I believe the skills I have will contribute to CMI's continued success and give me an opportunity to grow in my career.

As you can see from my resume, I have worked at Boulder Interactive Solutions for the past five years as a programmer/analyst. While there, I have utilized my Python, CSS and HTML skills to create or redesign numerous client websites. Each of these projects required client interaction and negotiation to bring their vision to life. Also, over the last six months, I have been given supervisory responsibility for two junior developers. This has helped hone my delegation and training skills.

My previous work experience includes maintaining Java-based call center software and developing productivity applications in Visual Basic. In my spare time, I volunteer at a local rescue shelter maintaining the website I developed for them three years ago (www.boulderanimalrescue.com).

Thank you for your time and consideration. Feel free to contact me anytime at the above number if you would like to schedule an interview.

Sincerely,

Jasmine Jones

Ways to Start a Cover Letter

To create an effective opening to your cover letter, follow these steps:

1. Convey enthusiasm for the company
If you are genuinely attracted to the company's brand or have used their products or services before, this is a great opportunity to say so. Employers value authentic enthusiasm because it often translates to highly motivated and successful employees.

Example: *"I was excited to see that Company ABC is hiring an event manager skilled at increasing brand awareness and driving growth with high-traffic events—especially since I've attended several of your company's speaking events myself. With my 5+ years of experience coordinating successful events in the corporate space, I'm confident I'm a great fit for the role."*

2. Highlight a mutual connection
If you were referred to this job by a former colleague, the beginning of your cover letter can be a place to mention that connection. It grabs the hiring manager's attention because they'll want to see why someone they know and respect recommended you for the role. Here are some tips on doing it tactfully:
- Avoid using extreme words like "*greatest*" or "*best*"
- Show excitement and gratitude
- Keep it brief and let the recommendation speak for itself

Example: *"I was excited to learn of this job opportunity from my former colleague, Alex Johnson. He and I have worked closely together for many years, most recently on a complex data analysis project at XYZ Company. He thought that I would be a good match for this position on your team."*

3. Lead with an impressive accomplishment
Write a stand-out opening paragraph that leads with an impressive achievement and features quantifiable results. Here, it's important to connect the dots between how you added real business value during your previous experience with how you can apply it to the new role.

Example: *"Last month alone, I more than doubled Company X's Instagram followers and ran two successful Facebook ad campaigns that generated $25K+ in revenue. I'd love to bring my expertise organically expanding social reach and delivering ROI to the social media manager position at Company ABC."*

4. Bring up something newsworthy

Kick off your cover letter with evidence that you've done your research – and a little bit of flattery. If the company you're applying for was recently in the news, mention it in the opening line and tie it into why you admire the company. To avoid sounding insincere with your compliments, bring up a specific event, fact, notable statistic or award the company recently won!

Example: *"When I saw that Company ABC was featured in Fortune Magazine last month for its commitment to renewable energy and reducing waste in the workplace—all while experiencing triple-digit revenue growth—I was inspired. With my track record of reducing costs by 30%+ and promoting greener workplaces, I'm excited about the possibility of taking on the account executive role to expand your company's growth and work towards a more sustainable future."*

5. Express passion for what you do

Passion is one of the greatest driving factors behind success. And since hiring managers are looking for candidates who can be advocates for their company and come with a strong work ethic, starting off by expressing your passions and motivations is a real attention grabber.

Example: *"I've been passionate about writing since I was the editor in chief of my middle school newspaper. Throughout my 10+ years of experience, I've channeled this passion into a personal blog with 20K+ monthly readers, featured articles on Forbes and Teen Vogue that have garnered over 40K views, and a writer's workshop I founded for inner-city teens."*

6. Tell a creative story

Even though you probably won't be submitting your cover letter to a creative writing contest, don't be afraid to inject some humor, charisma and creativity – as long as it's appropriate for the specific job and company. Hiring managers don't want to read a novel, but they are looking for something that catches (and keeps!) their attention. Do some research on the company culture, examine the tone of the job posting and use your own judgment when going the creative route.

Example: *"I looked up at the clock and gasped. It was exactly two hours before a critical meeting with one of our biggest clients – and my boss had just asked me to completely redo our entire sales pitch. Under this time crunch, I reworked our pitch from the ground up, collaborating with teams across several departments to deliver a completely new presentation on time. The best part? Our client loved the pitch, and we closed the sale within 30 minutes."*

7. Start with a belief statement

Impress the hiring manager by opening up with a short and impactful belief statement that mirrors the organization's values and goals – without making it seem like you copied and pasted the mission statement from their website.

Example: *"As a teacher, I believe every student deserves the opportunity to learn at their own individual pace, let curiosity direct their learning, and participate in hands-on activities that encourage growth, especially in STEM."*

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