

An effective summary is one of the most important parts of your resume because it tells a potential employer exactly why you qualify for a job and how you can fulfill their needs. That is a lot to pack into a three to five sentence summary, but it is critical to creating a resume that will get you to the interview phase.

Customize the summary

The summary is a key place to customize your resume so that it matches your attributes with the potential employer's needs. Use this section to highlight your qualifications in a way that parallels the qualifications they want in that job; in other words, tell them specifically how you can benefit them.

Use concise, active language that gives specific information about you. Instead of saying you are an "excellent manager", for example, say that you are an "excellent manager with a proven record of motivating employees and meeting department goals". Can you see the difference? How could you make this statement even stronger without making it long and confusing?

Try this for yourself. Start with a basic description of something you want to emphasize about yourself, and then make it stronger. Use action words that are specific about the attribute you want to emphasize and describe exactly how you demonstrate that attribute.

Structure of the summary

There are a variety of ways to structure the summary part of your resume, so you should try several methods to see what best shows off what you have to offer a potential employer. Most experts suggest that your summary be three to five sentences long, but that is it. Anything longer than that becomes too wordy and drawn out, losing its effectiveness and power.

Here is a general description of common elements in an effective summary:

- Brief descriptive phrase about of your profession
- Succinct phrase about your experience in that profession
- Additional concise statements that emphasize the scope and/or variety of your skills; your diverse background; a notable accomplishment; or a relevant personal/professional characteristic

You do not have to include all of these elements in your summary, and in fact, most people should not use them all or the summary will become too long. Think about your profession and what the potential employer is seeking, then select the pieces of your background that best capture how and why you are the best choice for the job.