

One of the most important parts of creating a strong resume is keeping it short and to the point. It is very easy to write long, drawn out sentences that flow into lengthy paragraphs describing every little detail of your skills and attributes. The easiest way to fall into this trap is to sit down with a resume format and start to "fill in the blanks" for each section, so think about using another method to build a resume that says more with less.

### **Get it all out**

When you first start on your resume writing odyssey, write down as many details as you can think of to describe your skills, attributes, and any other things about yourself that you think are important. The same holds true for writing about previous job positions you have held; write down all of the relevant responsibilities and accountabilities for each position.

If you are like most people, you will end up with a document that is quite lengthy and often rambling in structure. This is perfectly fine, because the goal was to get everything in your mind down onto paper, even if it comes out a bit jumbled. The more material you have to start with, the easier it is during the editing process to pick and choose only the best elements to keep.

### **Pick out the most important**

Now comes the fun part - picking out the points that are really important and keeping them. Look for key words or phrases that describe skills and attributes that you want to highlight. For example:

'supervised a team of five salespeople for three years, during which time the group met or exceeded all sales goals at all times, with minimal personnel turnover'

can turn into:

- supervision
- motivation
- accountability for goals
- employee retention

Go through this winnowing process for everything you wrote, remembering that it likely will take several rounds to really pare things down to size.

Do not pressure yourself to get it just right the first time; in fact, one of the best things you can do after working on your resume for a while is to put it aside for 24 to 48 hours and let things percolate a bit. During that time, occupy yourself by researching and learning more about resume writing and how to say more with less.

### **Take another look**

After taking a break to search out ideas and input, go back to your list of skills and attributes and re-evaluate your important points. For each one, ask yourself these questions:

- Does it use strong action words?
- Could it be said with fewer words?
- Is the statement crisp and concise?
- What will it mean to the reader?

Once you have developed a list of strong skill and attribute statements, ask a trusted friend or colleague to review them. They should look for strength and clarity of statement, and be able to tell the key message that each statement communicates.

### **Put it all together**

When your skill and attribute statements are in good shape, you are now ready to start actually putting your resume together. You should have many more statements than you can actually use in a resume, so use different combinations of statements to tailor your resume for different purposes. For example, if you are interested in a supervisory position, structure your resume with the statements that best reflect your supervisory skills and attributes. Or, if you are interested in a position that is different from your previous positions, structure your resume with statements that reflect the skills and attributes needed for the new position that you possess.

### **The ideal length**

In most cases, the ideal length for your resume should be no more than two pages, and preferably one page whenever possible. If you make a habit of tailoring your resume for each job position you seek, using only the skill and attribute statements that are relevant to that job, you will nearly always end up with a smart resume that is crisp, clear, and to the point.