

How to create YOUR executive resume

First, get in an executive state of mind!

A resume for an executive-level position must demonstrate that you are prepared to *lead*, *influence*, and *make decisions* at the head of the organization. As you prepare your executive resume, consider how to best highlight your leadership and decision-making skills.

Tailor your resume to your target position.

Each resume you submit for a position should be tailored for that specific position. This means that you should create different copies of your resume for different target positions and organizations. Highlight skills and experiences that align with the target job description and organizational values and needs.

Resume sections to include:

Resume header. Your resume header should include your full name, phone number, and email address. In today's workforce, Hotmail, Yahoo, MSN, and AOL email addresses may seem out-of-touch with current technology given many organizations rely on Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace for their online operations. Consider using an Outlook or Gmail address instead. Additionally, including your full home address is no longer necessary. Instead, consider featuring a professional social media account (e.g., LinkedIn) in place of your address. Use hyperlinks for your email address and LinkedIn.

Qualifications summary. Resume writing is marketing! Instead of an objective statement that includes what you want from the employer, a qualifications summary communicates your professional brand and the value you will bring to your target position and organization. Format your qualifications summary with three to six bullet points (each no more than two lines) with information such as (1) years of experience in a certain field or role, (2) highest degree received, (3) management experience, (4) areas of expertise, and (5) professional recognition. Your qualifications summary should immediately follow your resume header, ensuring your most relevant credentials, skills, and achievements are prominently featured at the top!

Relevant experience. Consider your previous experiences that are most relevant to your target position. For each of these experiences, include the name and location of the organization, the years you worked there, and your job title in reverse chronological format (i.e., start with your most recent experiences and then work backward). Instead of simply summarizing your job responsibilities, focus on quantifiable results achieved (e.g., promotions, increased responsibilities, time or money saved, problems solved). Typically, you should be able to effectively highlight results achieved in three to five bullet points. The positions most relevant to your target position *and* your most significant experiences should occupy the most space on your resume. Exclude irrelevant experiences (e.g., your previous job as a pizza delivery driver) and experiences from more than 15 years ago.

Education. If your professional experience outweighs your education (which may be the case as a seasoned professional), it is recommended to put your professional work history above your education. If you have a higher degree, you likely already highlighted this in your qualifications summary. Ultimately, the decision of whether to include your education section before or after your experience section is up to you! In this section, list your degree(s) earned starting with the most recent and working backward. List each school attended, including name and location, degree and year of completion, and field of study. If you're currently taking classes, note the degree and by when you anticipate completing it.

Additional sections. Include additional sections for *relevant* professional affiliations, certifications, awards, presentations, publications, and community involvement.

Other experience (optional). If experiences from more than 15 years ago are *still* relevant to your target position, then consider including these positions in an “Other Experience” section with abbreviated details. Because you are tailoring your resume to your target position, know that you may not need to include your oldest and least important experiences; it’s more important to reserve space for your most relevant and significant previous experiences!

What NOT to include:

- Objective statement (include a qualifications summary instead)
- Personal information irrelevant to the target position (e.g., hobbies, interests)
- Irrelevant experience
- References / a “References available upon request” statement (this is not an effective use of your precious resume space!)

Format your resume.

Length. You are NOT limited to one page, especially at the executive-level! However, do not exceed two to three pages. Restricting yourself to two to three pages will help ensure that you are only including the most relevant information.

Layout. Use a simple layout with one-inch margins to help readers identify key text quickly. Employers prefer conventional resumes over “creative” ones. Two-column designs, substantial color, and the incorporation of infographics run the risk of applicant tracking systems having trouble processing your resume. Moreover, you don’t want the design to detract from your credibility.

Font. Bullet points and body content should use size 11- or 12-point classic fonts (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial) to enhance readability. Headers should use between size 14- and 18-point bold-faced classic fonts. Avoid using ALL CAPS as all-caps text actually de-emphasizes text because every letter is the same size. Throughout your resume, consider using bold and italics to emphasize keywords and details. If you’re set on using color, use it sparingly (**e.g.**, only on headings, only on your full name).

Bullet points. Every word costs the reader time and energy. Thus, each bullet point should be comprised of phrases rather than complete sentences, and each phrase should begin with an action verb instead of a pronoun (e.g., “I”). By beginning each bullet point with an action verb, you’re ensuring parallel construction (i.e., phrases written in the same form), which will enhance readability. Additionally, ensure your bullet points are all the same size and there is the same amount of space between hyphens.

Finally, get ready to send!

Prior to sending your resume, double-check that your formatting is consistent, there are no typos, each bullet point begins with a persuasive and forceful action verb, and your hyperlinks are working correctly. When emailing or uploading your resume, do so in a PDF format to retain formatting. Be sure to save your resume with an easy name (e.g., FirstnameLastnameResume.pdf).