



5 STEPS TO CREATING YOUR FEDERAL RESUME

The Federal resume is one of the most pivotal documents you will use during the Federal application process and should be crafted with great care. The below steps, followed in order, provide a simplified and organized approach to writing a Federal resume, one which will hopefully help alleviate the stress of writing a Federal resume.

UNDERSTANDING THE FEDERAL FORMAT

In terms of format, a Federal resume incorporates elements from Chronological, Functional and Combination resumes (for information on each style, [review the descriptions and samples from the Career Services website](#)); as such, Federal resumes contain a significant amount of information, and can be quite long. It is not advisable to try to create a combination resume, which can be used to apply for both Federal and private sector positions. Due to the length and detail, it is helpful to think of the Federal resume as an interview on paper.

While building your Federal resume it is highly suggested that you use a word processor in order to better organize sections and check spelling and grammar. It is also advantageous to create your Federal resume using a word processor because doing so allows you to save and reference when updating or creating a new resume on USAJobs. Once you create your document in Word, you can copy and paste its contents into the USAJobs resume builder. It is advised that you utilize the Federal resume builder located on USAJobs when applying to positions, rather than the upload feature, as formatting, e.g. bold, italics, etc., from word processing software is not always compatible with the tools Federal recruiters use. Additionally, your resume has a higher chance of being scanned and viewed when using the Federal Resume builder opposed to the USAJobs resume upload feature.

Within the resume builder, you can have up to 5,000 characters per employment entry. This allows you to incorporate more details and accomplishments within your employment descriptions. Federal resumes are usually 3-5 pages in length and include information not traditionally seen on a standard resume, such as supervisor name and contact information and the hours per week and salary level for each position held. Some Federal resumes may be 5-7 pages in length depending on the agency the open position is with. Check the specific agency's career web page for additional resume guidelines.

1: CREATE YOUR FIRST DRAFT

The first step to creating a Federal resume is to compile all information for each section. Do not worry about formatting at this point as focus needs to be on the quality of information. Some sections will take a considerable amount of time to compose, so save often, and give yourself the time needed.

Create the following titles and then begin listing the information needed for each section under each. The following **bolded** section titles should be used as headers in your resume.

Personal Information

Place your full name (including middle initial, if applicable) your address, e-mail address and telephone number at the top of the page. You will also be required to add your Federal Employment Status, Veterans Preference (if you are unsure, reach out to your local Veterans Affairs Administration Office for more information.) and Country of Citizenship. The following are examples that may help you when formulating your personal information section. You may also add your availability (Permanent, Temporary, Full-Time, Part-

5 STEPS TO CREATING YOUR FEDERAL RESUME

Time. If more than one, separate by using a comma), and your desired locations (for example: Washington, DC., Riverside, CA., Seattle, WA., Dallas, TX.) to this section.

Example 1 (All centered):

Joe L. Student
6517 School Street
City, Virginia
555-555-5555
email@e-mail.com
Federal Employment Status: Program Analyst, GS-343-09
Veterans Preference Status: None
Citizenship: United States
Availability: Full-Time, Permanent, Term, Recent Graduate
Desired Locations: United States: Washington, DC, Cleveland, OH, Boston, MA

Example 2 (Contact information centered, details left aligned):

Joe L. Student
6517 School Street
City, Virginia
555-555-5555
email@e-mail.com

Veterans Preference Status: 10-Point Compensable Disability Preference
Availability: Full-Time, Permanent, Term, Recent Graduate
Citizenship: United States

Objective

Your objective for the Federal Resume will be derived using information from the vacancy announcement. List the title of the position, grade, series and vacancy announcement number.

Example:

Auditor/Audit Evaluator - Marketing and Service, GG-0501/0511-00, 2012-16-591075-KC

Education

Now take your educational background and place it in order of degree, institution, location, and anticipated graduation date (if you graduated, change *Expected Graduation* to simply reflect the Month and Year of your conferral). If you graduated with academic honors, include "Graduated with honors" or the Latin equivalent after the awarded degree (Academic honor societies are included in the Honors/Awards section.) Always list the most recent degree first and then any previous degrees after. Traditionally, you can omit high school information as you are now pursuing a higher education degree; however, some announcements ask for secondary education, so be sure to include it in those situations. You must also list the number of credits earned and your cumulative GPA. You may also wish to add relevant coursework; licenses and certifications (unless you will have a certifications section, then list it there).

Please note: Accreditation is under American Public University System, to avoid confusion among recruiters, American Public University System should be listed on your resume. In addition APUS does not use the Latin honors designations; rather "with honors" is noted on the diploma and transcript.

Example 1:

Bachelor of Arts in International Relations, American Public University System

5 STEPS TO CREATING YOUR FEDERAL RESUME

Charles Town, WV Expected Graduation: Month 20XX

GPA: 3.7/4.0

Credits Earned: 112 semester hours

Relevant Coursework: Threat Analysis, International Conflict Resolution, Global Terrorism

Example 2:

Master of Business Administration, with Honors, June 20XX

American Public University System, Charles Town, WV

GPA: 4.0/4.0

Credits Earned: 36 semester hours

Relevant Coursework: Strategic Management, Corporate Finance, Advanced Accounting

Experience

Your experience section needs to be ordered such that your most recent experience is listed first, followed by additional experience in reverse chronological order. Review your employment history and gather the vital information regarding each position held. Write down your job title, the company name, company location, dates of employment, and make a list of accomplishments completed or achieved while in that position. For this Federal resume you will also need to include the average number of hours worked per week along with your salary information. Furthermore, you will need to include your immediate supervisor's name, contact phone number and if they can be contacted. (Please note: if you worked in two or more different positions at the same company, list them separately.)

Create at least three short paragraphs for each position listed and arrange your major accomplishments around skill sets in order to illustrate your proficiency for each skill set listed. Bullets and any formatting items will not translate into the USAJobs resume builder. If you need to emphasize something capital letters can be used.

Example:

1,2,3 Position

ABC Company

\$27,000/Year, 40 Hours/week

Supervisor Name (phone number)

Okay to Contact this Supervisor: Yes

June 20XX- Present

Charles Town, WV

Supervise 10 program analysts, coordinate schedules, lead team projects, meet deadlines and manage over 600 confidential files. Oversee office supply and equipment budget of \$15,000, perform office inventory, investigate and correct inventory discrepancies.

Community Involvement

Do not forget that your work as a volunteer or community leader can be valuable during your employment search. Through various volunteer opportunities, you may have been exposed to experiences not available in the work place, thus making you a well-rounded candidate. Include your community involvement in your experience section, you may omit salary information.

Example:

Assistant Program Coordinator- Festival of Lights

ABC Organization

August 20XX- Present

Charles Town, WV

Planned and implemented community event with over 1,000 attendees. Managed \$20,000 fiscal budget, ordered food and beverages, created event schedule and hired entertainment professionals.

5 STEPS TO CREATING YOUR FEDERAL RESUME

While this event may not initially seem like something that can help you increase your chances at being selected to continue the hiring process, the transferrable skills you used while organizing the event demonstrates that you are able to plan and organize large-scale events.

Professional Membership

If you have any professional affiliations, list them in reverse chronological order, with the dates of membership as well as leadership positions held, if any.

Example:

Professional Student Association, member, 20XX- Present

Honors and Awards

List the formal award title and date received. Place your list of honors and awards in reverse chronological order by date received/inducted. You may also choose to include your honor and awards under the corresponding position or school if you would like to link them that way. Either way is fine, however, on USAJobs' resume builder you may have to include this information in the "Additional Information" section if you do not include it within your employment section.

Job Related Trainings

List job related trainings in reverse chronological order separately from your education section so they are easy to read and find. You will want to highlight specific trainings that are relevant to the positions you are interested in. Add the name of the training, sponsoring group, and date.

Example:

Emergency Management Foundations, Emergency Management Institute, FEMA, April 20XX

Special Skills and Certifications

This section will oftentimes be included in the additional information section of the USAJobs resume builder; however, for a printed version for job fairs, interviews or when meeting with recruiters in person, you can list it at the end of your resume. This section can include special skills such as languages, computer programming software, certificates or certifications. Special skills can be listed in their own category, and certifications are generally placed in sequential order, with the most recent first.

Publications

If you have written an article that has been published, or is scheduled to be published, list the title, journal/book/web site the information has been or will be published through, and the date it was or will be published.

3: FORMATTING

Now that you have entered all of your information into your resume, you will want to focus on formatting. Federal application websites do not recognize formatting features such as bold, italics, underline or bullets. You must make sure your resume is free of any formatting or you will see a "?" in the text box. When you format the resume for a career fair or to email, you may then use minor formatting, such as bold and bullet points. For Federal resumes that you will hand to recruiters, bring to a career fair or interview:

- Bold, center, and make your name 1-2 font sizes larger than the rest of the document. The Sans Serif fonts are the best choice as they are the easiest to read.
- Overall, information should not be smaller than font size 10, as smaller fonts make it difficult for the reviewer to read.
- Create appropriate headers above each section such as **Education**, **Professional Experience**, etc., and make the header stand out by increasing the font 1 size larger than the general text, then make it **bold**.

5 STEPS TO CREATING YOUR FEDERAL RESUME

- For information within Professional Affiliations, Honors/Awards or Community Involvement be sure to stick with a similar format throughout.

Example:

Professional Affiliations

Professional Student Association, member 20XX- Present

Workers Alliance, member 20XX- Present

Honors and Awards

Epsilon Pi Psi, member 20XX- Present

President's List, Fall 20XX

Golden Key Honor Society, member 20XX- Present

Dean's List, Spring 20XX, Fall 20XX, Spring 20XX

4: REVIEW, REVIEW, REVIEW

This step is essential to ensuring that the Federal resume is accurate, neat and ready for distribution. After carefully reviewing the resume, ask a friend or family member to also review the resume. You can never have too many people review your resume. Different people will provide a unique perspective and improve your resume.

Check your contact information:

- Does it look neat?
- Is everything included?
- Is the email address professional?
- Is your name in a clear and easy to read font?
- Ensure that spacing is the same between each section.
- Check that each section is formatted similarly if not the same.
- Make sure content is in the correct section.
- Review each job description to ensure the focus is on skills, results, and achievements rather than duties.
- Make sure there is limited use of bold font and bullet points as they will not translate to Federal resume builders.
- Avoid abbreviations and/or acronyms (abbreviating a state is okay, as long as it is the same throughout the resume).
- Add name and page number to any page after the first one.
- Check spelling (auto-spell check will NOT be able to catch everything. TIP: Read each line backwards so you are focusing on the word and not the sentence, it really works!)

5: CUSTOMIZING FOR SPECIFIC POSITIONS

Also see our handout on dissecting the federal vacancy announcement for further examples!

It is critical to customize your Federal resume to the position for which you are applying. The best way to do this is to look in the job announcement for keywords. What are keywords? Keywords are any specific skill, technology or words the agency includes multiple times in an announcement. There are a few places that keywords are usually found, in the Qualifications Summary, Duties, Specialized Experience, Agency Mission Statement, Knowledge Skills and Abilities and Questionnaire sections of the announcement.

Helpful tools to visualize these keywords are word frequency generators, like Tag Crowd (www.tagcrowd.com), allow you to copy these sections from the announcement and enter it into their generator. This site takes the information you paste into its text box (the duties, qualifications and so on) and organizes the words that are mentioned the most in large font and the ones that are not mentioned

5 STEPS TO CREATING YOUR FEDERAL RESUME

as much in smaller font. The sample below was done from an analyst position's Duties section. In addition to repeated words, look for any specific software or program names.

analysis analyst analytical analyze background bank data databases
department develop distinguished documents econometric economic ensures examination
expertise financial graphs including maintain market material memoranda
national OCC papers perform position prepare presentations projects
provide reports research responsibility retrieval source staff
statistical support system tables technical topics treasury

BONUS INFORMATION!

USING USAJobs

It's important to input your resume into USAJobs and not upload it using their uploading tool. Sometimes, formats do not translate into the uploading tool and uploaded resumes are not always searched by agencies. Since you have already created your resume, you may simply cut and paste each section into the USAJobs resume builder. The builder can be found on the left hand side of the account page once you login. (Note: To apply to positions on USAJobs you must create an account.)

Once you create an account and click create resume, you can begin to enter your information in to the builder. Begin by naming your resume; a helpful hint would be to name it with the series number or job title name for easy reference. Once you complete each section you will want to press save and continue to ensure your data is being saved. Remember that formatting will not translate into the builder, so be sure to enter plain text. Once you have entered in all the information you will be able to preview and print the resume. Printing the resume is a good idea in case you lock yourself out of your USAJobs account or delete the resume by accident.

You can create and save up to five resumes, which is helpful when applying to different positions, as you can have various customized resumes on hand. Also, it is recommended that you make one of your general federal resumes searchable on USAJobs so agencies can contact you should they have a position your skills match.