



How to Write the Work History Section of Your Résumé

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Your work history tells employers where you have worked, what responsibilities you have held, and what you have contributed. Usually labeled “Work Experience” or “Professional Experience,” this section helps readers assess how your background prepares you for the position.

Job titles and duties provide context. Accomplishments show how you applied your skills and made a difference. A strong work history includes both.

Step 1: Emphasize Recent, Relevant Experience

Begin with your current or most recent position and work backward.

For an established career, the past 10 to 15 years is a useful starting point, not a strict limit. Include older experience when it demonstrates an important qualification. Give less space to positions that have little connection to the job you want.

If you are early in your career, relevant internships, part-time employment, and freelance assignments can help demonstrate your abilities. Clearly labeled volunteer work and projects can supplement limited paid experience.

Step 2: Identify Each Employer and Position Clearly

For each job, include:

- Your job title.
- The employer's name and location.
- Your employment dates, generally using month and year.
- A brief description of the organization, if needed.

Use “Present” for a current position, and follow any application instructions requiring more precise dates. Avoid using years alone to conceal short tenures or gaps.

If an employer is unfamiliar, one line describing its business can provide useful context—for example, “Regional supplier of medical equipment to hospitals and clinics.” Include company revenue or other figures only when they are accurate, relevant, and appropriate to share.

If you held several positions with one employer, list the titles and dates clearly so readers can recognize promotions and changes in responsibility.

Step 3: Describe Your Role Briefly

Explain the scope of your work without reproducing a full job description. A short introductory sentence or a few focused bullets will usually suffice.

Begin with direct verbs such as “managed,” “coordinated,” “maintained,” or “developed.” Replace “was responsible for scheduling” with “coordinated weekly schedules.”

There is no fixed six-line rule. Give readers enough context to understand your role, then use the remaining space for relevant contributions. CareerOneStop's [work experience guide](#) recommends connecting your descriptions to the job posting and explaining unfamiliar employers when necessary.

Step 4: Show What You Accomplished

Choose examples that demonstrate the skills the prospective employer needs. Explain what you did and, where possible, what improved as a result.

Instead of:

Responsible for maintaining inventory records.

Write:

Introduced a weekly inventory check that helped staff identify shortages before customer orders were delayed.

Your contributions may include improving service, reducing errors, completing projects, training colleagues, or making information easier to use. Value is not limited to revenue or profit.

Use wording that accurately reflects your role. “Led,” “supported,” and “contributed to” describe different levels of involvement.

Step 5: Use Numbers When They Add Meaning

Reliable figures can make an accomplishment more concrete. Useful measures include time saved, customers served, costs reduced, or improvements in quality.

For example:

Streamlined monthly reporting, reducing preparation time from eight hours to five.

This illustrates the approach; use your own verified results. Include a timeframe or comparison when it helps readers understand the achievement.

Do not force every contribution into a dollar amount. Time savings are meaningful on their own, and they do not necessarily represent an actual reduction in spending. Avoid invented figures or estimates you cannot explain.

When measurements are unavailable, describe the result plainly:

Created a shared reference guide that gave staff consistent answers to common customer questions.

Step 6: Use Recognition Selectively

Positive feedback from supervisors or clients can help you identify accomplishments worth including. Review performance evaluations, thank-you messages, and awards for specific evidence of your contribution.

Testimonials are optional and usually less useful than direct accomplishment statements. Margin quotes also consume space and complicate the layout.

A concise recognition statement may be appropriate:

Received the department’s annual service award for resolving complex customer concerns.

Use such statements only when accurate. If you include a quotation, obtain permission where appropriate and identify its source clearly. Longer recommendations are often better suited to a professional profile or portfolio.

Review for Relevance and Accuracy

Before submitting, check titles, dates, figures, and employer names. Use present tense for ongoing responsibilities and past tense for completed work. Keep formatting consistent, and place the strongest relevant accomplishments near the beginning of each job entry.

Your work history should give employers a clear account of your experience and credible evidence of what you can contribute next.