



Showing Your Skills

A Resume Writing Guide for Job Seekers with Disabilities



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Introduction

CCRW is a national non-profit organization committed to supporting and promoting the meaningful and equitable employment of persons with disabilities. We recognize the capability of persons with disabilities and support their choices for equitable and meaningful participation in society.

CCRW is a full-service employment organization that uses an intersectional approach to offer support and training for job seekers and workers with disabilities. Our services include...

- 1-on-1 employment goal planning and coaching
- Resume and cover letter support
- Interview skills practice
- Requesting accommodation and disclosing a disability
- Supportive job search
- Access to CCRW's robust Career Management Portal
- Ongoing follow-up after your services with CCRW
- Enhanced training including workshops, eLearning, and certifications
- Access to job opportunities from partnered employers
- Transitional support to a new job
- Pre-employment and workplace assessments

The Importance of a Strong Resume

In the competitive landscape of the job market, a well-crafted resume is your initial introduction to potential employers. It serves as your professional identity, showcasing your unique strengths, experiences, and skills.

For job seekers with disabilities, a strong resume holds even greater significance, as it allows you to highlight your capabilities and present yourself as a valuable asset to any organization.

A strong resume not only outlines your work history and educational background but also communicates your dedication, adaptability, and determination. It's your chance to make a memorable first impression, demonstrating your commitment to contributing meaningfully to the workforce.

By putting together a comprehensive and well-organized resume, you're presenting a clear snapshot of your qualifications and potential, setting the stage for the rest of the hiring process.



In the following sections of this eBook, we will guide you through the process of crafting an effective resume that resonates with employers.

We will help you identify your unique strengths and translate them into compelling content that showcases your skills. Moreover, we will provide insights into tailoring your resume for specific job opportunities, navigating applicant tracking systems, and highlighting the accommodations and support that make your journey unique.

Remember, your resume is not just a piece of paper; it's a representation of your capabilities and the impact you can bring to an organization.

As you embark on the journey of creating your resume, keep in mind that you are a valuable candidate with a wealth of potential to offer. Let's dive in and explore how you can create a resume that stands out and opens doors to new opportunities.



Crafting Your Resume Content

Your resume is a powerful tool that communicates your qualifications, experiences, and potential to prospective employers. Crafting its content requires careful consideration to effectively showcase your strengths and make a compelling case for your candidacy.

In this section, we'll guide you through the essential elements of creating impactful resume content that captures attention and sets you on the path to success.



Showcasing Relevant Work Experience and Achievements

Your work experience section should detail your previous roles, responsibilities, and accomplishments. Focus on quantifiable achievements and emphasize the outcomes of your efforts.

If you have relevant work experience, highlight how your skills and contributions made a positive impact on your previous employers. Use action verbs to convey your responsibilities and achievements clearly.



Highlighting Volunteer Work, Internships, and Freelance Projects

In addition to formal employment, consider including any relevant volunteer work, internships, or freelance projects. These experiences can showcase your dedication, skills, and willingness to take initiative.

Describe how these experiences have contributed to your growth and proficiency, demonstrating your commitment to personal and professional development.

Writing a Compelling Objective or Summary

The objective or summary section of your resume is your chance to make a strong first impression. This section is located at the top of your resume after your contact information.

Craft a concise statement that encapsulates your career goals, skills, and what you bring to the table. Tailor this section to the specific job you're applying for, highlighting the aspects of your background that align with the role's requirements.



Reasons Why You Should Include a Resume Summary

- 1. Easier recognition:** A strong summary section may help you stand out to a hiring manager. Hiring managers often have to comb through a lot of resumes. A strong summary paragraph may make them stop and read more.
- 2. Hitting the right keywords:** We'll talk about this more later but it is important to use keywords from the job posting in your resume. This summary paragraph is a good opportunity to integrate those keywords.
- 3. Highlights key relevant experience:** Your resume will include your experience and education - some of your background may be more applicable to the job you are applying to than others. You can draw special attention to that experience in this paragraph so the hiring manager pays closer attention to it when reviewing your resume.

Writing a Resume Summary

As a job seeker with disabilities, your resume summary is an opportunity to present a comprehensive picture of your capabilities. Highlight your unique journey, accomplishments, and the strengths you've cultivated along the way.

Step One

Review the job description

- Take note of essential requirements
- Write down the key tasks

Step Two

Review your skills and experience (we're going to break these down in the next section)

- Identify qualifications you have that match the requirements
- Make note of past experiences doing the key tasks in the job description (this is where you can also use transferrable abilities, which we'll cover soon)

Step Three

Write the summary

- Use a key adjective at the beginning for yourself
- Write in an active voice
- Connect your notes from step two to the details of the job description you noted in step one

EXAMPLE: Experienced customer service worker adept at delivering top-notch support in retail environments. Skilled in problem-solving, active listening, and using assistive technologies from my previous work experience at the supermarket. Seeking to contribute my customer-centric approach and adaptable skills to a dynamic team.



Every individual has a set of skills and experiences that make them stand out.

Understanding Your Strengths

In your pursuit of meaningful employment, it's crucial to recognize and embrace the unique strengths that you possess.

Your journey as a job seeker with disabilities is enriched by the diverse experiences and skills you bring to the table.

Understanding and articulating these strengths will not only empower you but will also enable potential employers to recognize the value you can add to their teams.

Identifying Unique Skills and Experiences

Every individual has a set of skills and experiences that make them stand out. For job seekers with disabilities, these strengths may encompass a range of qualities, from adaptability and problem-solving to resilience and creativity. Your journey has likely cultivated abilities that extend beyond traditional workplace skills, such as effective communication, empathy, and a determination to overcome challenges.

If you're able, take a sheet of paper or open a document on your computer and create a table similar to the one on the next page. Alternatively, you can use speech-to-text to write out the information or get support from an organization like CCRW.

Under column 1: Write out your history (work, volunteer, or education) that you can include in your resume in the first column.

Under column 2: Write out the skills and experience gained from your previous work, volunteer opportunities, and education. We've only included a few in our sample, your list can be much longer.

Continue to learn more about **column 3 - transferable skills**.

Highlighting Transferable Skills

Transferable skills are those that can be applied across different roles and industries. These skills form a bridge between your experiences and the requirements of various job positions. As a job seeker with disabilities, you may have developed exceptional adaptability, time management, teamwork, and organizational skills. Recognizing these transferable abilities will enable you to showcase your suitability for a wide array of roles.

For the next part of the exercise that you started on the previous page, begin to write out transferable abilities from your previous skills and experiences. These should be abilities that can be used in a variety of workplaces.

For instance, as a cashier you would have learned how to use a POS system, however, not all jobs require this skill. But most jobs do require you to have the ability to navigate new software for completing business process.

If you have trouble with this section, connect with CCRW for support.

Work, Education, and Volunteering History

Gained Skills and Experiences

Transferable Skills

Cashier at a local supermarket

- Cash handling, operating a POS system
- Restocking shelves, organizing storefront
- Assisting customers with items they could not find

- Interacting with a diverse range of customers
- Handling cash transactions
- Attention to detail to prevent errors and ensure customer satisfaction

Food hamper delivery for a food security organization

- Planning and executing delivery routes
- Interacting with recipients and sharing organizational materials
- Addressing recipient needs and overcoming delivery challenges

- Ensuring order accuracy and on-time delivery
- Communicating and problem solving with a team when there's challenges
- Adapting to unexpected changes

Certificate from an online time management course

- Strategies for prioritizing tasks
- Skills to breakdown larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps
- Self-discipline in avoiding distractions

- Time blocking for different tasks
- Minimize and manage interruptions
- Setting realistic tasks based on timelines

Recognizing the Value of Diversity in the Workforce

Diversity in the workforce is a powerful asset that drives innovation, problem-solving, and creativity. Your unique perspective as a job seeker with disabilities contributes to the rich tapestry of experiences within organizations.

Employers increasingly understand the value of a diverse team and are actively seeking individuals who can bring fresh ideas and varied viewpoints to their projects. By embracing your strengths and acknowledging the value of diversity, you're positioning yourself as an invaluable asset to potential employers.

In the following sections, we will explore the process of translating your strengths into a well-crafted resume that effectively communicates your capabilities. We'll delve deeper into tailoring your resume, optimizing it for applicant tracking systems, and showcasing accommodations that reflect your adaptability and determination.

Tailoring Your Resume

Your resume is like a personalized marketing tool for potential employers. It's important to make sure that it fits the specific job you're applying for. This section will guide you on how to customize your resume to match the requirements of different job opportunities.

By customizing your resume to match the job's requirements, you're showing potential employers that you're a great fit for their team. Tailoring your resume gives you a better chance of standing out and landing the job you want.

Keep reading for three ways you can tailor your resume.



01 Customizing Your Resume for Different Jobs

Every job is unique, and your resume should be too. When applying for a job, look closely at the job description and requirements for the position you're applying for. Identify the skills and experiences they're looking for, and then adjust your resume to emphasize those aspects.

Examples

A job requires strong communication skills and teamwork. To tailor your resume for a job that puts a strong emphasis on these skills you can:

- Rearrange the bulletpoints under your experience to have the points that represent communication and teamwork at the top of the list.
- Reference these skills and where you've demonstrated them in your summary paragraph.
- If you have a "Key Skills" or "Top Skills" section, move these two skills to the top of the list.



02 Emphasizing Skills that Align with Job Requirements

Your resume should showcase the skills that directly relate to the job. If you're applying for a job that needs problem-solving abilities, provide examples of how you've overcome challenges in the past. If attention to detail is important, highlight instances where your careful work made a difference.

Examples

A job requires you to have a forklift certification to work in this position. You can tailor your resume for this by:

- Starting your summary paragraph with, "Experienced forklift driver, certified through Forklift Training Inc. with three years experience at Supermarket Warehouse."
- Moving your forklift certification to the top of the list under education and training.
- Listing any jobs where you have used your forklift certification should have this experience as the first bullet point in its section under your experience.
- Including your forklift training certificate with your resume.



03 Addressing Employment Gaps and Concerns

If you have gaps in your work history or any concerns, don't worry. Be honest about them and explain any reasons for these gaps. For example, if you were pursuing further education or dealing with a health issue, you can mention that briefly.

The key is to focus on how your experiences during that time have made you a better candidate. If you learned new skills or gained valuable insights, highlight those aspects.

Examples

You may not need to address any gaps in employment on your resume, however if you are asked, you should be prepared to answer. Be honest in your response and only share what is necessary:

- I was pursuing further education at that time.
- I had a health issue I was dealing with at that time.
- I took part in a community program that helped me grow in my employment skills.



Navigating Applicant Tracking Systems

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) are a type of computer software used by many companies to manage job applications. These systems help employers sort through resumes and find the most relevant ones.

When your resume goes into an ATS, if your resume is not optimized for an ATS, it may never be seen by a hiring manager.

An ATS resume has a much better chance of making it into the hands of a hiring manager. This will lead to you getting more interviews and job offers.

Let us tell you how you can make sure your resume gets noticed by ATS.

ATS: Incorporate the Job Title

Look at the top of the job description and find what the title of the position is (normally referenced in the headline) and what department it is in.

- Warehouse Worker - Lumberyard
- Cashier - Automotive Department
- Cleaner - Residential Properties

Then, incorporate this information into your resume summary paragraph.

Example 1

The position is Warehouse Worker - Lumberyard.

Start your resume summary paragraph as, "Experienced warehouse worker with a strong attention for detail."

Example 2

The position is Cashier - Automotive Department.

Start your resume summary paragraph as, "Enthusiastic cashier with an automotive background who enjoys delivering exceptional customer service."

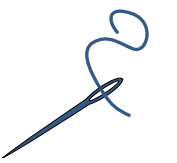
Example 3

The position is Cleaner - Residential Properties.

Start your resume summary paragraph as, "Detail-oriented residential cleaner with experience delivering exceptional cleaning services to residential properties."

ATS: Identify Essential Keywords

When tailoring your resume for an ATS, one of the most effective strategies is to incorporate keywords and phrases from the job description directly into your resume. These keywords are specific words or phrases that the employer has mentioned as essential qualifications or skills for the job. By including these keywords in your resume, you increase the likelihood of your application being recognized by the ATS and presented to the hiring manager.



Scan the job description for keywords; these are points that are at the top of any lists and are words that are often repeated throughout the job description.

Now, let's say for instance you identified the keywords for a position you're applying for that requires someone who is:

- a. "Highly skilled in time management."
- b. "Able to respond to customer complaints."

Then, weave these keywords into your resume in the appropriate sections. When describing your previous work experiences, highlight instances where you had to manage your time closely and respond to customer complaints.

ATS: Identify Essential Keywords

By strategically incorporating these keywords, you're demonstrating that your qualifications align with what the employer is seeking and that you've paid close attention to their job ad.

However, remember to do this in a natural and contextually relevant way, as overly stuffing your resume with keywords can come across as disingenuous.

Here's an example to illustrate:

Job Description

Requirements for this position:

- Able to respond to customer complaints.
- Excellent problem solver who can think on their feet.
- Skilled in time management.

Ideas for Weaving

- Summary Paragraph:

"Experienced customer service representative who is able to handle customer complaints effectively by thinking on my feet. Using time management skills everyday to ensure operational targets are met..."

- Previous Experience:

Cashier

Supermarket - March 2021 - January 2023

- Responding to customer complaints to ensure that they feel their concerns are heard and to de-escalate the situation.
- Solving problems that involved being quick on your feet to keep the flow of customers going throughout the store.
- Managing my time to ensure all shift duties were completed prior to the end of my shift while also serving customers.

ATS: Formatting Your Resume

The final thing you need to do is to make sure the formatting of your resume is ATS-friendly. After all, if the ATS can't read your information properly, it's unlikely a hiring manager will find your resume.

Many job seekers want their resumes to look visually appealing. This might seem like a good idea, but graphic design elements can confuse the ATS.

Your best bet is to stick to a simple design that's easy to read.

Formatting Best Practices

- Use simple, clear language. Using jargon or overly complicated language will just confuse the system.
- Stick to traditional resume section headers like “Education” and “Work Experience”. Avoid more creative headers like “Where I’ve Been”.
- Use a common, easy-to-read font such as Times New Roman, Arial, or Helvetica for optimal readability.
- Make sure your margins are 1 inch on all sides so your resume doesn't look crowded.
- Avoid using unnecessary graphics or embellishments.
- Avoid using special characters or symbols that the system might misinterpret.
- Do NOT use tables and columns to help organize your resume. These can result in critical information getting garbled by the ATS.
- Use a Word document when you are creating your resume. This will ensure that it looks good and is easy for the ATS to read.

This information comes from Jobscan, an online platform that specializes in helping job seekers navigate applying to jobs in a way that gets them through an ATS. Visit their website, [jobscan.co](https://www.jobscan.co) for more resources and information.

Showcasing Accommodations and Support

As a job seeker with disabilities, it's important to highlight how you've successfully navigated any barriers in the workplace and utilized accommodations to excel in your professional journey. This section will guide you on how to effectively showcase your adaptability and the support you've utilized in your resume.

Please note, you don't have to include this information in your resume. It is a personal choice. Some prefer to address it in the interview or once they've gained employment.



If you're working with an employment organization like CCRW or if you have a visible disability, addressing early on how you've navigated similar barriers previously will build trust and confidence with your potential new employer.

Things to Consider



Communicating Your Needs and Preferences

In some cases, sharing your needs and preferences upfront can be beneficial. Consider mentioning any specific accommodations that have helped you perform at your best in previous roles.

"Thrived with the assistance of screen reader software, ensuring efficient data analysis."



Sharing Accommodations but Focusing on Your Success

If you've received workplace accommodations in the past, mentioning them can demonstrate your proactive approach to ensuring your success. Describe how these accommodations allowed you to contribute effectively and showcase your skills. Here's an example:

"Utilized adjustable ergonomic equipment to maintain focus and productivity in a fast-paced environment, leading to exceeding targets every shift."



Demonstrating Your Adaptability and Problem-Solving Skills

Your ability to adapt and problem-solve is a valuable asset. Share instances where you've successfully navigated challenges, showcasing your determination and innovative thinking. Highlight how you've used accommodations and support to overcome obstacles. For instance:

"Demonstrated resourcefulness by creating customized accessibility solutions to effectively manage complex data sets."

Putting It Together

Now that you've crafted a resume tailored to your strengths and the job you're applying for, it's time to review, refine, and prepare for the next steps in your job search journey. This section will guide you on how to make sure your resume shines and how to approach the interview process with confidence.

We recommend connecting with CCRW to get a resume template to begin building your resume. CCRW has a Career Management Portal with links to resume templates and generators.

Reviewing and Proofreading Your Resume

Before submitting your resume, take the time to review it for any errors or inconsistencies. Check for spelling, grammar, and formatting issues. Reading your resume aloud can help you catch mistakes you might have missed. Ask a friend, family member, or mentor to review it as well. A fresh set of eyes can provide valuable feedback.

Utilize tools like Grammarly for proofreading or create your resume using programs with built in spelling and grammar checkers like Microsoft Word or Google Docx.

Seeking Feedback from Peers, Mentors, or CCRW

Getting feedback from others can provide you with valuable insights. Share your resume with people you trust, such as peers, mentors, or career counselors. They can offer suggestions on how to make your resume even stronger. Be open to constructive criticism and consider making changes based on their feedback.

Store your resume in the cloud, like with Google Docs or in your OneDrive, so you can have people reviewing make edits or leave comments live in the document for you to review.

Support and Resources

We have a wide-range of employment services that can help you with not only your resume, but the rest of your employment goals too.

Access to Untapped Talent

Find job opportunities from disability confident employers. Gain on demand access to resume templates, cover letter samples, job searching tips, and a virtual interview simulator to refine your skills. Learn about the art of networking and how to expand your professional connections. Unlock your potential with CCRW's Career Management Portal and achieve your employment goals.

1-On-1 Employment Goal Planning and Coaching

At CCRW, we understand that each person's journey is unique, and that's why we offer personalized 1-on-1 employment goal planning and coaching.

Our team of experienced professionals will work closely with you to identify your strengths, interests, and career aspirations, and develop a tailored plan to help you achieve your goals. We believe in your abilities, and we will empower you to overcome any obstacles that come your way.

From a former CCRW participant



Nathan, Winnipeg MB

I want to thank CCRW for the support they provided to me. I took culinary arts and the pandemic made it extremely difficult to find employment in my field. The resume writing and interview preparation were very helpful to me. I always get nervous during interviews. In my job at Dakota House I have met new people and learned new skills. The job is rewarding and challenging. I would definitely recommend CCRW employment services to anyone, they were invaluable in coaching me through the resume and interview process.

Conclusion

We hope this eBook has helped you navigate writing your resume. CCRW, the engine behind Untapped Talent, has a mission is to support job seekers with disabilities in reaching their employment goals and we know completing a resume is a large goal. We do encourage you to reach out to CCRW for support with your employment journey. It can be difficult to navigate employment alone and we can help you overcome any hurdles along the way and set goals to keep you motivated.

If you're looking for more resources, you can always check our website or connect with us on social media. We're always adding new ones and sharing events and information.

Contact

 www.untappedtalent.ca

 employmentservices@ccrw.org

