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# Resumé Writing Toolkit



**JobJunction**

**A COMMUNITY RESOURCE FOR EMPLOYMENT  
AND CAREER INFORMATION.**

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## RÉSUMÉ WRITING TOOLKIT

*This Toolkit is for clients who have a clear job objective and are comfortable using a computer. You can give us a call 455-9675 or e-mail contact@jobjunction.ca if you wish to set up an appointment to have your completed resume reviewed. Please read through the information before you get started. Once you have chosen the best format of resume to suit your background, blank worksheets are available for your use if necessary. Additional resume samples are available upon request.*

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## THE RÉSUMÉ

### What is a résumé and why do you need one?

A résumé is a brief summary of your qualifications. It should include skills, abilities, accomplishments, work history, education, training and any other relevant information. A résumé is a necessity for almost every job in the country – from accountant to zookeeper.

Your résumé is a powerful marketing tool and the product you are marketing is you! Through your résumé, you must create enough interest in the product (you) that the buyer (employer) will want to see you in person (interview).

The only goal of a good résumé is to get you an interview. If you are not getting interviews you need to take another look at your résumé and how you are using it.

### What résumé style is best for you?

Selecting your résumé format is a major strategic decision. No universally “right” format is appropriate for all people. You must review your own circumstances and background as a worker and select the best format for you. You should be aware of the merits and drawbacks of each style.

### How can you create the most effective résumé?

Having a clear, realistic job/employment objective and the skills and qualifications to do that job is the best way to start. Design your résumé so that all the information in it is relevant to the job objective. Use industry key words and make a connection between what the employer is looking for and what you have to offer.

### Who will read your résumé

Résumés are written for the employer and are generally “screened” by a person in the company (possibly Human Resources personnel). Often only 15-30 seconds is allotted to the initial screening of your résumé. Be brief – no more than 1 or 2 pages. To ensure that your résumé makes it to the “small pile”, you must quickly catch the reader’s interest with an overview of your qualifications for the job.

## SOME FACTS ABOUT RÉSUMÉS YOU MAY WANT TO NOTE

1. A résumé is a summary of your skills, abilities and accomplishments supported by appropriate information about your work history, education and training.
2. Remember that your résumé is your marketing tool and must be in impeccable condition – **presentation is everything!**
3. There is **no such thing** as a perfect résumé. If your résumé is getting you interviews, it is working!
4. Think of your résumé as your personal “advertisement” of your skills and qualifications. Use descriptive language and action verbs to describe your skills and qualifications.
5. Choose a résumé style from one of the three main types (Chronological, Functional or Combination) to suit your background and work history. Not all styles suit each job seeker.
6. **Keep it brief** - no more than two pages.
7. Regardless of what style of résumé format you choose, list your skills or job experiences in point form for speed and ease of reading for the résumé screener. **OFTEN, AS LITTLE AS 15 SECONDS IS GIVEN TO THE INITIAL SCREENING OF YOUR RÉSUMÉ.**
8. Choose a font or print that is easy to read. (Times Roman 12, Garamond 12, Arial 11, Verdana 11, Calibri 11 or 12, Sylfaen 11 or 12)
9. Be conservative in your résumé presentation unless you are seeking employment in a unique or creative field. Avoid extremes in paper colour, fonts, and graphic design.
10. Use industry key words throughout your résumé.
11. Have a clear job objective. **Don’t** start your résumé with an objective that is too flowery or general such as “A challenging position that will enable me to fully utilize my skills and abilities.”
12. Every word on your résumé should be designed to “sell” you.
13. **Don’t** list personal or irrelevant information. Include interests or hobbies only if they can somehow be related to the job for which you are applying.
14. Make sure you read your résumé as a prospective employer would. Is it giving him/her the information they need about you?
15. **Always submit a cover letter with every résumé.**
16. Ensure that you can support, with specific examples, any information presented in your résumé.
17. Use dates only when they work FOR you, not AGAINST you; i.e., dates can show age, gaps in work history, etc.
18. **Do not** include your references in the résumé, unless requested. Prepare a separate sheet with references for presentation at the interview.
19. **PROOFREAD CAREFULLY!** There is no excuse for grammar and spelling errors in your résumé. Do not just rely on spell cheque!





## SEVEN TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE RESUME WRITING

1. Pay attention to detail - Don't cut corners by, for instance, not proofreading the cover letter, failing to include information the hiring manager asked for, or beginning the cover letter "Dear Sir or Madam" when the hiring manager's name is on the company web site. Take the time to make sure the correspondence and information sent is correct and error free.
2. Do the basics - Proofread for spelling, grammar, and tone, and make sure you have followed the instructions of the employer. Firing off an e-mail is a convenient method of communication. However, don't let the sloppy nature and informality of e-mail correspondence seep into your communications—whether it's e-mailed or written—with potential employers.
3. Construct an effective resume - Organize your information in a logical fashion and keep descriptions clear and to the point. Include as much relevant work experience as possible. Also, use a simple, easy-to-read font.
4. Customize your response when applying for a position - Address the hiring manager directly if you know the name, and include the name of the company and the position for which it is hiring in your cover letter/e-mail response.
5. Make it easy for the hiring manager - If you are applying by e-mail, use your name and the word "resume" in your email subject line so it's easy to identify. If the employer asks for information—such as references or writing samples—provide it.
6. Focus on what you bring to the employer, not what you want from the job - This is an opportunity for you to market yourself and stand out from the other candidates. What can you do to make the hiring manager's life easier? What can you do to help the company?
7. Be professional - It's a good idea to ditch the "cute" e-mail address or voice mail/answering machine messages in favor of something that sounds professional. If you don't have e-mail, you can set up a free account through Yahoo, Hotmail, G-mail. Provide a cell phone number if you have one.



## TYPES OF RÉSUMÉS

The most basic tool for a successful job search is an effective résumé, one that will get you the interview. There are several styles you can choose from, but the most suitable style for one person may not be the best for someone else. Each of the three major résumé formats has both merits and drawbacks. In developing your job search strategy, you must begin by deciding on the best résumé style for your particular circumstances and your job objective.

### CHRONOLOGICAL FORMAT

This type of résumé is the most traditional and commonly known. It is a history of the jobs you have held, beginning with the most recent. It includes the duties you performed while in these positions and employment dates are required.



#### Merits

- Accentuates your formal qualifications for the work you are seeking
- Appropriate format for candidates with linear progression *career paths*
- Shows track record of pertinent and increasingly responsible experiences
- Recruiters and Human Resource personnel often prefer this format, because it is familiar and straightforward for making preliminary screening decisions



#### Drawbacks

- For people who are starting a new career (such as recent graduates) or changing careers, this format emphasizes the candidate's lack of related work experience
- It highlights past activity rather than future potential
- Because dates are required, it can show gaps in employment or numerous short-term jobs, or too long in one job with no career advancement
- Does not allow for the insertion of skills and accomplishments from areas other than employment
- Can be a dry, repetitive recitation of job responsibilities
- No emphasis on those all-important "soft skills"



#### Who Should Use It?

- Effective for people with clear-cut qualifications and related experience
- Good for those who are continuing or advancing in a particular career path



## SAMPLE CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ

# Jitney J. Junction, B.Ed.

1111 Dingleview Drive, Halifax, NS B2B 1X1  
Tel: (902) 555-1111

ca.linkedin.com/in/jitneyjunction  
e-mail: jjunction@email.com

**JOB OBJECTIVE:** To obtain employment coordinating and facilitating instructional programming. Special interest in literacy, teaching English as a Second Language, and working with at-risk students.

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

#### English Immersion Teacher

The American School of Quito, Quito, Ecuador (Aug. 2005 - June 2006)

- Designed and taught classes in English Second Language instruction
- Trained teaching colleagues in use of literacy teaching strategies

#### Classroom Teacher

School District #5, Moncton, NB (Sept. 2002 - June 2005)

- Planned, organized and taught curriculum for Kindergarten and Grade One

#### First Steps Literacy Consultant

School District #5, Moncton, NB (Oct. 2001 - June 2005)

- Implemented CanRead Literacy Resource throughout district
- Trained teachers in CanRead teaching strategies
- Provided in-class support to teachers

#### Early Literacy Summer Program Coordinator

School District #5, Moncton, NB (June/July 2003)

- Planned, organized and budgeted for a literacy program for at-risk students
- Hired, trained and managed a staff of eight people
- Prepared and presented an evaluation report

#### Reading Recovery Teacher

School District #5, Moncton, NB (Sept. 2002 - June 2004)

- Taught an intensive reading and writing program for at-risk students
- Participated in ongoing training seminars

#### Recreation Specialist

Department of Parks & Recreation, Fredericton, NB (June 1994 - Sept. 1997)

- Planned and implemented youth programming
- Coordinated training of summer staff



## Jitney J. Junction

PAGE 2

(902) 555-1111

### EDUCATION

- Bachelor of Education (Distinction)** – Mount Allison University, Sackville, NB (2000)
- Intermediate French Certificate** - University of Sainte Anne, Quebec, PQ (2000)
- Special Event Coordinator Certificate** – NBCC, Moncton New Brunswick (2005)

### PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

- Reading Recovery Teaching** - Reading Recovery Canada (2000)
- CanRead Literacy Tutor** - Johnson Professional Resources (2002)
- Beginner / Intermediate Spanish** - Forum Language Services, Quito, Ecuador (2006)

### AWARDS

- Rotary Youth Merit Award
- Theatre New Brunswick Outstanding Student in Theatre Arts and English
- St. Cecilia's Alumnae Scholarship
- Kiwanis Student Bursary
- Mount Allison University Special Entrance Scholarship
- Mount Allison University Continuing Scholarship
- University Special Undergraduate Scholarship

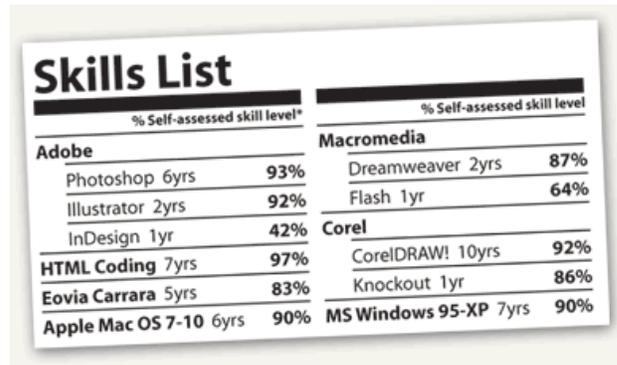
### VOLUNTEER / COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Elementary School Representative** – School District #5 Professional Development Committee
- Stage Manager** – Fredericton Theatre Company
- School Wellness Representative** – School District #5 Teacher Wellness Committee

**REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

## FUNCTIONAL FORMAT

The functional résumé highlights key skills, knowledge and related accomplishments. Be prepared to offer relevant and specific examples of skill effectiveness to prove your ability to contribute to the organization. The emphasis with this résumé format is on what you *can do* for this prospective employer, rather than what you *have done* for another.



% Self-assessed skill level*		% Self-assessed skill level	
<b>Adobe</b>		<b>Macromedia</b>	
Photoshop 6yrs	93%	Dreamweaver 2yrs	87%
Illustrator 2yrs	92%	Flash 1yr	64%
InDesign 1yr	42%	<b>Corel</b>	
<b>HTML Coding</b> 7yrs	97%	CorelDRAW! 10yrs	92%
<b>Eovia Carrara</b> 5yrs	83%	Knockout 1yr	86%
<b>Apple Mac OS 7-10</b> 6yrs	90%	<b>MS Windows 95-XP</b> 7yrs	90%



### Merits

- Focus is on transferable, marketable skills
- Skills are not limited to paid employment
- Widens the scope of informal experiences from every area of your life which can support your career objective (can include special projects, volunteer work, internships, community service, and relevant leisure pursuits)
- Skills are categorized allowing for ease of reading for the screener
- Highlights at a glance the skills you can bring to the job
- Does not highlight career changes, employment gaps, age, etc.
- Dates can be eliminated if they are going to highlight trouble areas
- Most flexible and adaptable format



### Drawbacks

- Some employment professionals prefer a job-by-job description to trace with clarity exactly what you have done, for whom, where, and when
- Some employers assume that this format hides important background information
- The purely functional résumé can omit key dates/gaps, information that employers may want to see and that can be essential to credibility



### Who Should Use It?

- Most effective and *highly recommended* for people without direct experience in their career objective (recent graduates, people making a career change)
- Because it accents skills and achievements, it is also very effective for people who have been well established in a career
- The format has become increasingly popular since a more flexible and adaptable résumé style was needed by job seekers in the 80's and 90's

## SAMPLE FUNCTIONAL RÉSUMÉ

# PETER RABBIT, B.B.A.

2222 Lennox Lane - Halifax, NS B3B 1A1  
(902) 555-2222 prabbit@email.com

**JOB OBJECTIVE** To gain a position as a marketing research analyst where I can utilize my five years' experience in marketing and create profitable relationships with clients.

### **SKILLS / ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

#### **MARKETING RESEARCH:**

- Successfully completed a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Prince Edward Island
- Comprehensive knowledge of Internet-based competitive intelligence to gather detailed market research
- Resourceful in developing marketing materials demonstrated through participating as design team member to develop direct marketing campaign
- Well-versed in generating leads and building strong relationships with clients through comprehensive market research
- Experienced and thoroughly trained in qualitative and quantitative research methods to produce accurate reports
- Skilled in conducting market research interviews to ensure customer's satisfaction and to identify potential target markets

#### **TECHNICAL:**

- Proficient in Microsoft Office software: Word, Outlook, PowerPoint for the development of business correspondence, marketing materials and presentations
- Trained in Lotus Notes and SPSS statistical software for research and analytical purposes
- At ease with e-mail communication and Internet-based research techniques and best practices
- Confident in speaking to large groups of up to 75 and in designing and presenting multi-media presentations

#### **COMMUNICATION/SALES:**

- Successful in promoting company's product lines to increase sales by up to 22% on a monthly basis
- Twice awarded top sales associate of the month by Choice Hotels
- Comfortable delivering lessons in market research and data collection to groups of up to 30 students
- Able to write clear, concise and complete business correspondence
- Creative in layout and design of posters, brochures and brand image to promote company profile

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY****High School Business Teacher**

Dufferin Peel Secondary School Board, Brampton, ON

(01/02 - 07/02)

**Loss Prevention Associate**

Edulinx, Mississauga, ON

(09/01 - 01/02)

**Sales Associate**

Choice Hotels, Toronto, ON

(05/00 - 08/00)

**Sales Associate**

Telus Mobility, Toronto, ON

(06/99 - 09/99)

**EDUCATION****Bachelor of Business Administration – Emphasis in Marketing**

University of Prince Edward Island (PEI), Charlottetown, PEI

(2001)

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT****Assistant Coach – Dalhousie University Women’s Basketball Team**

Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS

(09/02 - Present)

**Marketing Consultant**

Basketball 101, Halifax, NS

(07/02 - Present)

**AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS****Most Improved Player of the Year Award - University of PEI**

(1998)

**Outstanding Rookie of the Year Award - University of PEI**

(1997)

**INTERESTS**

Basketball / Coaching / Reading / Rowing / Camping / Potpourri

**REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

## **COMBINATION FORMAT**

This style of résumé recognizes the drawbacks in both the Chronological and Functional format when they are used in their purest form. For example:

- The pure chronological résumé is too mundane and repetitive, a bland work autobiography. It is descriptive, but tends to not be persuasive about personal qualifications.
- The pure functional résumé can be too free-floating and can read like a set of assertions and claimed abilities, unlinked to verifiable sources of confirmation.



### **Merits**

- Effectively blends the best of both the Chronological and Functional résumés
- Employers can immediately see your relevant skills for a job and continue on to read a detailed description of your work history and job experiences in chronological order



### **Drawbacks**

- Dates should still be included and this makes it less suitable for those with gaps in their work history, recent graduates, people making career changes, etc.



### **Who Should Use It?**

- Those who wish to use a more modern and comprehensive résumé style, but who also have a fairly consistent and progressive career path
- Should be used by people who want to retain the structure of key skills and accomplishments, while incorporating a section detailing work experience
- This style still requires a fairly consistent job history as dates are required in the chronological section



## **Diane M. Kerr, B.Ed.**

3333 Main Drive, Halifax, NS B3B 1V1  
(902) 555-3333 dmkerr@email.com

### **SAMPLE COMBINATION RÉSUMÉ**

**JOB OBJECTIVE:** To obtain employment coordinating and facilitating instructional programming. Special interest in literacy, teaching English as a Second Language, and working with at-risk students.

#### **SKILLS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

##### **Facilitation / Instruction:**

- Successfully completed a Bachelor of Education with Distinction from Mount Allison University
- Over 10 years of experience in planning and implementing youth education and recreation programs both nationally and internationally
- Proven effectiveness in designing and facilitating professional development seminars
- Fully certified in various literacy instructional methods
- One year direct practical experience teaching English as a Second Language to students aged 6 – 15 years
- Resourceful in contributing to a team of teachers that implemented new curriculum objectives in public schools in accordance with legislative requirements

##### **Co-ordination / Organization:**

- Certified in Special Event Coordination – New Brunswick Community College
- Proven skills in coordinating and implementing a special program for at-risk students with an ability to adapt delivery to accommodate varied learning needs
- Successful in recruiting, hiring, training and motivating staff to maximize effective teaching practices
- Effective in contributing to the creation and administration of recreation programs for children from diverse cultural and socio-economic groups
- Experience in managing and organizing community theatre productions overseeing between 3 – 8 performances annually

##### **Communication:**

- Highly effective written communication skills with proven abilities in writing reports and lesson plans for delivery to students of diverse populations and ages
- Continuously acknowledged as being able to relate well with individuals and groups, develop rapport and maximize learning experiences
- Confident in delivering presentations to large groups of up to 120 attendees
- Proficient in Microsoft Office Suite, Internet and e-mail software for development of presentations, business correspondence and research purposes

#### **RELATED EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

##### **English Immersion Teacher**

The American School of Quito, Quito, Ecuador

(Aug. 2005 - June 2006)

- Designed and taught classes in English Second Language instruction utilizing a variety of methods, including visual aids, to ensure student understanding
- Trained teaching colleagues in use of literacy teaching strategies enabling them to be implemented in the classroom to maximize student learning
- Increased literacy levels in the 7 – 8 year old group by 12% in a single academic year

##### **Classroom Teacher**

School District #5, Moncton, NB

(Sept. 2002 - June 2005)

- Planned, organized and taught age appropriate curriculum for Kindergarten and Grade One children to equip them with basic skills facilitating future development

**RELATED EMPLOYMENT HISTORY CONT'D**

**First Steps Literacy Consultant**

School District #5, Moncton, NB

(Oct. 2001 - June 2005)

- Implemented CanRead Literacy Resource throughout district utilizing phonics, phonemic awareness and blending of phono-graphemes
- Trained teachers in CanRead teaching strategies for implementation in the classroom and maximal student benefit
- Provided in-class support to teachers to ensure all students received appropriate levels of support

**Early Literacy Summer Program Coordinator**

School District #5, Moncton, NB

(June/July 2003)

- Planned, organized and budgeted for a literacy program for at-risk students to help them overcome personal literacy and learning barriers
- Hired, trained and managed a staff of eight people to deliver a high standard of Early Literacy to students with learning barriers
- Prepared and presented an evaluation report to monitor success of the program

**Reading Recovery Teacher**

School District #5, Moncton, NB

(Sept. 2002 - June 2004)

- Taught an intensive reading and writing program for at-risk students utilizing a range of teaching strategies to maximize learning
- Participated in ongoing training seminars to keep current with new developments and strategies in the teaching field

**Recreation Specialist**

Department of Parks & Recreation, Fredericton, NB

(June 1994 - Sept. 1997)

- Planned and implemented youth programming ensuring a fun and positive learning environment for summer activities
- Coordinated training of summer staff to ensure the program ran smoothly and children received support as required

**EDUCATION**

**Bachelor of Education (Distinction)** – Mount Allison University

(2000)

**Intermediate French Certificate** - University of Sainte Anne

(2000)

**Special Event Coordinator Certificate** - New Brunswick Community College

(2005)

**PROFESSIONAL TRAINING**

**Reading Recovery Teaching** - Reading Recovery Canada

(2003)

**CanRead Literacy Tutor** - Johnson Professional Resources

(2002)

**Beginner / Intermediate Spanish** - Forum Language Services, Quito, Ecuador

(2006)

**AWARDS**

Rotary Youth Merit Award

Theatre New Brunswick Outstanding Student in Theatre Arts and English

St. Cecilia's Alumnae Scholarship

**VOLUNTEER / COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

**Elementary School Representative** – School District #5 Professional Development Committee

**Stage Manager** – Fredericton Theatre Company

**School Wellness Representative** – School District #5 Teacher Wellness Committee

**REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

## THE RESUME OBJECTIVE

### CLARIFY YOUR JOB OBJECTIVE - THE FIRST STEP

A clear, realistic occupational goal will help you find the *best possible job in the shortest time feasible*. This goal will be based on your work experience, transferable skills, training, attributes, interests, values and current needs. It will also be influenced by the labour market situation in your own community.

### MY JOB OBJECTIVE

The most common mistake made by job seekers is to leave out a job objective in the résumé. If you don't show a sense of direction, many employers will not read your résumé.

Write your job objective. Keep it to the point and avoid poetry. An effective job objective gives context and direction to your résumé.

**Example:** *To obtain a position as an administrative assistant.*

**OR**

*To secure employment in the field of customer service / retail sales.*

**NOT :** *To obtain a position where my skills and experience will be recognized and rewarded in a challenging environment.*

***All the skills and experiences on your résumé should support your job objective.***

### OBJECTIVE VS. PROFILE

An **objective** is clear, concise and specific for the position and job you are applying for. It is shorter than the profile and should not be more than one or two sentences.

*Ex. To obtain the position of Facilitator providing information to assist clients in their career transitions.*

A **profile** is a paragraph description of who you are, describing your skills as they relate to the job you are applying for.

*Ex. Management professional with more than 10 years' experience in recruiting, career transition, and human resources. Self-motivated with prior success building and assisting individuals with their job search needs. Highly collaborative team leader inspiring superior performance by developing, coaching and mentoring clients and potential employees.*

## THE JOB SEARCH – READY, SET, GO!



### EVALUATION – TAKING A PERSONAL INVENTORY

Before you begin your job search, it is important for you to know exactly what you have to offer an employer in your chosen field. You will need this information to prepare an effective résumé and job card, to write a good cover letter, to complete an application form, and to answer interview questions successfully.

You will also need to be able to describe your skills clearly, briefly and confidently when you are networking or speaking with prospective employers. Before they will hire you, employers need to know specifically what you can do now, that will contribute to their business operations, and how your skills will help their “bottom line”. As well, it is important to be able to give examples of where and how you used the skills you claim to have. It takes some thinking and some practice to be able to do this well. The upcoming exercises on evaluating your skills will help you with this process.

Once you have hand-picked the right words to accurately and positively describe yourself, you can put them to work immediately in your:

- |                     |                               |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| ✓ Job Card          | ✓ Telephone Calls             |
| ✓ Networking        | ✓ Cover Letters               |
| ✓ Résumé            | ✓ Interviews                  |
| ✓ Application Forms | ✓ Thank You Letters/Follow-Up |

## SKILLS

### WHAT IS A HARD SKILL?

A hard skill is a specific teachable skill or ability which tends to be specific to a certain task or activity. Some examples of hard skills include:

- |                                      |                        |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| • Typing                             | • Cash handling        |
| • Mathematical ability               | • Accounts payable     |
| • Proficiency with specific software | • Data processing      |
| • Operating specific machinery       | • Document management  |
| • Software development               | • Interpersonal Skills |

### WHAT IS A SOFT SKILL?

Soft skills are essentially more subtle non-technical skills. They tend to be people skills, or personality specific skills that determine your personal strengths. Some examples include:

- |                 |                        |                |
|-----------------|------------------------|----------------|
| • Adaptability  | • Communication        | • Dedication   |
| • Dependability | • Flexibility          | • Teamwork     |
| • Organization  | • Honesty              | • Integrity    |
| • Listening     | • Persuading           | • Multitasking |
| • Motivator     | • Interpersonal Skills | • Analyzing    |

## WHAT IS A TRANSFERABLE SKILL?

In today's working climate it is unlikely that you will find a job that is exactly the same as your previous employment. But you do have skills that can be transferred to a new job. It is essential for the job seeker to know how to sell these transferable skills to a prospective employer.

A skill is a learned ability or knowledge that allows you to perform a task competently. Once you have learned to do something in one job or life situation, it becomes a skill which you can then use in other work or other areas of your life; that is, it becomes a **transferable skill**.

You have acquired hundreds of skills, not only through employment, but also through hobbies, volunteer work, education, training and general life experiences. It does not matter where you learned the skill. The important thing is that once you have it, you can use that skill in any setting, including employment.

## TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Job descriptions are often full of transferable skills such as good communication skills, ability to work in a team environment, analytical skills and problem solving skills. One of the most common mistakes made by job seekers is to simply repeat these skills in interviews, on résumés and in networking, without backing these claims up with evidence.

Everyone will say they have good communication skills. It is important to show how you have demonstrated communication skills and convince the employer of your ability to communicate effectively in the context of the job description.

### For example:

Claim:

- Good communication skills

Evidence:

- Five years' experience in delivering successful sales presentations to stakeholders in the oil and gas industry



## SKILLS LIST

We now need to take an inventory of all the skills that you have to offer an employer. From our earlier discussion, we now know we have to qualify and quantify these skills. As you check your most marketable skills from the transferable skills list, think about your evidence for each of the ones that you check. We are taking an inventory at this stage, so we are not concerned about getting the examples down on paper right now.

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A JOB EXPERIENCE AND A SKILL?

**EXPERIENCES** *belong to the job* and are the responsibilities or functions which make up a job. Experiences are what you did in your past jobs and usually appear on a résumé under job titles. They are usually written in the past tense (words ending in “ed”).

<b>Action Verb</b> (p.26)	+	<b>Detail</b> (what you did)	+	<b>Proof</b> (result – see p.23)
------------------------------	---	---------------------------------	---	-------------------------------------

**SKILLS** *belong to the worker, are transferable and valuable to the employer*, and are what the worker uses to perform the job duties or functions. These are used to describe what you CAN DO or have the ABILITY TO DO, as opposed to stating what you have done. Skills can be self-taught, acquired through training, natural abilities, or picked up from some volunteer, work or life experience. Include these skills as long as you are able to back up or explain why/how you came to possess them, if asked by a potential employer.

<b>Qualifier</b> (p.27)	+	<b>Skill</b>	+	<b>Detail</b> (what you did)	+	<b>Proof</b> (result – see p.23)
----------------------------	---	--------------	---	---------------------------------	---	-------------------------------------

In the case of your résumé, the skills are included in the functional portion (Highlights of Qualifications or Skills Summary) while the duties appear under the work experiences.

## HOW DO I WRITE, DESCRIBE OR EXPLAIN TRANSFERABLE SKILLS?

In order to effectively use transferable skills and to powerfully describe our job duties, we need to ensure the employer has enough details to understand the skill. Through effective description of your skills and duties, the employer can begin to place your experience within the context of the employment opportunity.



**Quantify** — numbers jump out to the employer

1. *Over 10 years’ experience in...*
2. *Successful at increasing monthly sales volume by 30%*
3. *Proven ability to effectively supervise up to 8 staff*

**Qualify the proof** — where did you perform this skill, who were you working with, what industry?

1. *Over 10 years’ experience as an administrative assistant in the insurance financial industry*
2. *Successful at increasing Halifax branch office monthly cellular sales volume by 30% in 4 months*
3. *Proven ability to supervise up to 30 customer service staff in a busy call center*

**Achievements or results** — what were the results and how did you achieve them?

1. *Recognized for superior customer service as an administrative assistant with over 10 years’ experience in the insurance financial industry*
2. *Successful at increasing Halifax branch office monthly cellular sales volume by 30% in 4 months by developing and implementing new marketing strategies*
3. *Proven ability to supervise up to 30 customer service staff in a busy call center and ensure sales quotas were met or exceeded.*

**Use a range** — in cases where you have a lot of experience, try to incorporate ranges

- *Effective at working in groups of 2 to 20 staff members*
- *Knowledgeable in a wide range of tasks from small engine repair to calibration of industrial equipment*

**Combine experiences** — in the case where you don't have a lot of experience, combine experience

- *3 years of combined education and professional experience in Human Resources*

## SKILL CATEGORIES

Functional and combination résumés may use skill categories to clarify to the employer the key strengths you have to offer. The following is a list of commonly used skill categories, but you may think of others that are important in your field of work. Typically two to four skill areas are highlighted.

Account Management	Financial Management	Program Management
Accounting	Financial Planning	Project Management
Administration	Forecasting	Promotion
Advertising	Fundraising	Public Relations
Advocacy	Graphic Design	Public Speaking
Analysis and Evaluation	Human Resources	Publicity
Bookkeeping	Inspection	Publishing
Budgeting	Instruction	Purchasing
Business Management	Interviewing	Quality Assurance
Community Relations	Inventory Control	Quality Improvement
Career Development	Management	Reengineering
Client Services	Investigation/Research	Real Estate
Communications	Labour Relations	Records Management
Community Services	Language Interpretation	Recruiting
Computer Programming	Market Research	Reporting
Computer Skills	Marketing	Research and Development
Coordination	Media	Resource Development
Corporate Administration	Mediation	Restaurant Management
Counselling	Merchandising	Retail
Curriculum Development	Multimedia	Sales
Customer Service	Negotiations	Statistical Analysis
Data Processing	Office Administration	Strategic Planning
Decorating	Office Skills	Supervision
Display	Outreach	Systems Analysis
Drafting	Performing Arts	Teaching
Editing	Photography	Technical Skills
Employee Relations	Policy Making	Technical Writing
Engineering	Presentation	Telecommunications
Environment	Print Coordination	Testing
Equipment	Process Improvement	Training
Event Planning	Product Development	Visual Arts
Field Research	Product Management	Word Processing
Film and Video	Production	Writing
Financial Analysis	Program Design	

## JOB EXPERIENCES - A SHORT LIST OF SUGGESTIONS

*Begin your job experiences with action verbs like these:*

<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>N</b>	
accomplished	decreased	identified	negotiated	reorganized
achieved	delegated	illustrated		repaired
acted	delivered	implemented	<b>O</b>	researched
adapted	demonstrated	improved	obtained	resolved
administered	designed	increased	operated	restored
advised	developed	influenced	ordered	retrieved
aided	devised	informed	organized	revamped
analyzed	diagnosed	initiated	originated	reversed
anticipated	directed	inspected		revised
applied	discovered	inspired	<b>P</b>	revitalized
appointed		installed	packaged	
approved	<b>E</b>	instituted	perfected	<b>S</b>
arbitrated	earned	instructed	performed	saved
arranged	edited	integrated	persuaded	scheduled
assembled	effected	interpreted	pioneered	secured
assigned	eliminated	interviewed	planned	served
assisted	engineered	introduced	prepared	simplified
audited	enhanced	invented	presented	sold
	enlarged	investigated	presided	solved
<b>B</b>	ensured		preserved	standardized
budgeted	established	<b>J</b>	prevented	stimulated
built	estimated	joined	procured	streamlined
	evaluated		produced	strengthened
<b>C</b>	exceeded	<b>L</b>	programmed	summarized
calculated	executed	launched	projected	supervised
certified	expanded	led	promoted	supported
changed	expedited	located	protected	surveyed
coached			provided	
combined	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	published	<b>T</b>
communicated	forecast	managed	purchased	taught
compiled	founded	manufactured		trained
conceived		marketed	<b>R</b>	translated
conducted	<b>G</b>	maximized	received	
consolidated	generated	mediated	recommended	<b>U</b>
constructed	guided	merged	recognized	upgraded
consulted		minimized	recovered	
controlled	<b>H</b>	modernized	recruited	<b>V</b>
convinced	headed	monitored	reduced	verified
corrected	hired	motivated	remedied	
counselled			re-negotiated	<b>W</b>
created				wrote

## SKILL QUALIFIERS – A SHORT LIST OF SUGGESTIONS

*Qualifiers used to powerfully and accurately describe your skills:*

Accurate in	Conscientious	Instrumental in
Capable	At ease in	Integral role in
Certified	Knowledgeable in	Solid background in
Conceptually	Keenly	Tenaciously
Consistent record of	Consistently recognized for	Strategically
Dedicated to	Creative in	Highly qualified in
Demonstrated ability in	Competent in	Practised in
Diligent in	Diplomatic with	Determined approach to
Discreet	Resilient	Logical approach to
Efficient	Able to	Adaptive in
Enthusiastically	Open-minded	Tactfully
Excellent at	Resourceful	Well versed in
Extensive experience in	Initiated...	Accomplished in
Involved in	Strong----skills	Aggressively
Productive	In-depth knowledge of	Persuasive in
Proficient in	Confident in	Proven performer in
Reliable in	Committed to	Adept at
Resourcefully	Motivated to	Cooperatively
Successful	Familiar with	Achieves "win-win" solutions
Trusted	Responsive to	Effective, or highly effective

## WORDS TO DESCRIBE YOUR PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

### Interpersonal Skills

-amiable  
-competent  
-congenial  
-cooperative  
-courteous  
-customer-oriented  
-diplomatic  
-gracious  
-helpful  
-likeable  
-observe confidentiality  
-outgoing  
-people-oriented  
-personable  
-respected  
-supportive  
-tactful  
-team player  
-trustworthy

### Attitude

-broad-minded  
-objective  
-open-minded  
-positive  
-professional  
-progressive

-responsible  
-businesslike  
-calm  
-cheerful  
-person of integrity  
-loyal

### Initiative/Drive

-assertive  
-diligent  
-dynamic  
-eager  
-energetic  
-enjoy challenges  
-enterprising  
-enthusiastic  
-goal-oriented  
-leader  
-meet deadlines  
-motivated  
-optimistic  
-profit-oriented  
-proactive

### Flexibility/

### Resourcefulness

-adaptable  
-contemporary

-creative  
-current  
-flexible  
-imaginative  
-open to new ideas  
-original  
-resourceful  
-self-motivated  
-self-reliant  
-self-starter  
-versatile

### Communication

-analytical  
-articulate  
-clear thinker  
-decisive  
-discreet  
-good listener  
-incisive  
-intuitive  
-investigative  
-lateral thinker  
-logical  
-perceptive  
-persuasive  
-problem-solver  
-proven negotiator

-quick learner  
-sound judgment  
-trouble-shooter

### Work Habits

-able to prioritize  
-accurate  
-constructive  
-dedicated  
-efficient  
-focused  
-hardworking  
-methodical  
-meticulous  
-orderly  
-persistent  
-precise  
-productive  
-prompt  
-punctual  
-reliable  
-systematic  
-task oriented  
-thorough  
-well-groomed  
-well-organized

## **SKILLS MOST SOUGHT AFTER BY EMPLOYERS**

So, what are these critical employability skills that employers demand of job-seekers?

**Communications Skills (listening, verbal, written).** By far, the one skill mentioned most often by employers is the ability to listen, write, and speak effectively. Successful communication is critical in business.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Exceptional listener and communicator who effectively conveys information verbally and in writing.

**Analytical/Research Skills.** Deals with your ability to assess a situation, seek multiple perspectives, gather more information if necessary, and identify key issues that need to be addressed.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Highly analytical thinking with demonstrated talent for identifying, scrutinizing, improving, and streamlining complex work processes.

**Computer/Technical Literacy.** Almost all jobs now require some basic understanding of computer hardware and software, especially word processing, spreadsheets, and email.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Computer-literate performer with extensive software proficiency covering wide variety of applications.

**Flexibility/Adaptability/Managing Multiple Priorities.** Deals with your ability to manage multiple assignments and tasks, set priorities, and adapt to changing conditions and work assignments.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Flexible team player who thrives in environments requiring ability to effectively prioritize and juggle multiple concurrent projects.

**Interpersonal Abilities.** The ability to relate to your co-workers, inspire others to participate, and mitigate conflict with co-workers is essential given the amount of time spent at work each day.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Proven relationship-builder with unsurpassed interpersonal skills.

**Leadership/Management Skills.** While there is some debate about whether leadership is something people are born with, these skills deal with your ability to take charge and manage your co-workers.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Goal-driven leader who maintains a productive climate and confidently motivates, mobilizes, and coaches employees to meet high performance standards.

**Multicultural Sensitivity/Awareness.** There is possibly no bigger issue in the workplace than diversity, and job-seekers must demonstrate a sensitivity and awareness to other people and cultures.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Personable professional whose strengths include cultural sensitivity and an ability to build rapport with a diverse workforce in multicultural settings.

**Planning/Organizing.** Deals with your ability to design, plan, organize, and implement projects and tasks within an allotted timeframe. Also involves goal-setting.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Results-driven achiever with exemplary planning and organizational skills, along with a high degree of detail orientation.

**Problem-Solving/Reasoning/Creativity.** Involves the ability to find solutions to problems using your creativity, reasoning, and past experiences along with the available information and resources.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Innovative problem-solver who can generate workable solutions and resolve complaints.

**Teamwork.** Because so many jobs involve working in one or more work-groups, you must have the ability to work with others in a professional manner while attempting to achieve a common goal.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Resourceful team player who excels at building trusting relationships with customers and colleagues.

### **Personal Values Employers Seek in Employees**

Of equal importance to skills are the values, personality traits, and personal characteristics that employers seek. Look for ways to weave examples of these characteristics into your resume, cover letters, and answers to interview questions.

Here is our list of the 10 most important categories of values.

**Honesty/Integrity/Morality.** Employers probably respect personal integrity more than any other value, especially in light of the many recent corporate scandals.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Seasoned professional whose honesty and integrity provide for effective leadership and optimal business relationships.

**Adaptability/Flexibility.** Deals with openness to new ideas and concepts, to working independently or as part of a team, and to carrying out multiple tasks or projects.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Highly adaptable, mobile, positive, resilient, patient risk-taker who is open to new ideas.

**Dedication/Hard-Working/Work Ethic/Tenacity.** Employers seek job-seekers who love what they do and will keep at it until they solve the problem and get the job done.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Productive worker with solid work ethic who exerts optimal effort in successfully completing tasks.



**Dependability/Reliability/Responsibility.** There's no question that all employers desire employees who will arrive to work every day - on time - and ready to work, and who will take responsibility for their actions.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Dependable, responsible contributor with committed to excellence and success.

**Loyalty.** Employers want employees who will have a strong devotion to the company -- even at times when the company is not necessarily loyal to its employees.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Loyal and dedicated manager with an excellent work record.

**Positive Attitude/Motivation/Energy/Passion.** The job-seekers who get hired and the employees who get promoted are the ones with drive and passion -- and who demonstrate this enthusiasm through their words and actions.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Energetic performer consistently cited for unbridled passion for work, sunny disposition, and upbeat, positive attitude.

**Professionalism.** Deals with acting in a responsible and fair manner in all your personal and work activities, which is seen as a sign of maturity and self-confidence; avoid being petty.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Conscientious go-getter who is highly organized, dedicated, and committed to professionalism.

**Self-Confidence.** Look at it this way: if you don't believe in yourself, in your unique mix of skills, education, and abilities, why should a prospective employer? Be confident in yourself and what you can offer employers.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Confident, hard-working employee who is committed to achieving excellence.

**Self-Motivated/Ability to Work With Little or No Supervision.** While teamwork is always mentioned as an important skill, so is the ability to work independently, with minimal supervision.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Highly motivated self-starter who takes initiative with minimal supervision.

**Willingness to Learn.** No matter what your age, no matter how much experience you have, you should always be willing to learn a new skill or technique. Jobs are constantly changing and evolving, and you must show an openness to grow and learn with that change.

*Sample bullet point describing this skill:*

- Enthusiastic, knowledge-hungry learner, eager to meet challenges and quickly assimilate new concepts.

## A WORD ABOUT REFERENCES

Carefully choose people who can attest to your skills and abilities as they relate most closely to the type of work for which you are applying. References may change if you change the focus of your job search!



### Appropriate References:

- Former supervisors
- Former managers
- Supervisors of another unit/section who were familiar with your work
- Customer/supplier of service
- Former teachers, professors, adult education instructors
- Persons with whom you have worked in a volunteer capacity (service organization, PTA, community groups)



### Inappropriate References:

- Ministers, doctors, friends, political fellows
- Relatives (unless you worked directly for them), people with same address

### Preparing Your Reference Sheet

2. List at least five persons who are aware of you as a worker. Choose from that list the three who are most articulate and who would be expansive in their comments about your talents!
3. After you have chosen your three references, you must contact them to:
  - a) Determine if they are willing to have their names on your reference list
  - b) Obtain their present occupation/title, current business address and phone number(s) where they can be easily contacted, preferably during business hours
  - c) Remind them of the dates you worked for/with them and what job you did while there
  - d) Find out what are they going to say about you, if phoned
  - e) As a courtesy, offer to send to your references a copy of your résumé and some job cards
4. Once information is gained and permission given, prepare a reference sheet like the example on the next page.

As a general rule, a reference sheet is not part of your résumé. Instead, the statement “References available on request” appears on your résumé. If called for an interview, or if specifically requested, you send or bring along your reference sheet.

## SAMPLE REFERENCE SHEET

**SUSAN FORBES, P. ENG.**

34 Vista Drive  
Dartmouth, NS B3R 6R4

(902) 555-6040

E-mail: forbes@email.com

---

**Chris Maxwell, Supervisor**

ABC Instant Printing Co.  
Suite 3, Central Plaza  
Bedford, NS B4A 1E8  
**(902) 555-9999**

*Previously: Regional Sales Manager  
Shell Canada Ltd.  
(My former supervisor)*

**Leslie MacIntyre, Manager**

Dynamix Sales Ltd.  
Suite 7, 2222 Barrington Street  
Halifax, NS B3L 4N9  
**(902) 555-8888**

*(My former supervisor)*

**Pat Morrison, Department Head**

Acme Manufacturing Inc.  
111 Lady Hammond Road  
Halifax, NS B2Y 4B6  
**(902) 555-1313**

*Human Resources Division  
(My Current Supervisor)*

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## **BIBLIOGRAPHY – INFORMATION SOURCES**

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JOB CHOICES