

Resume writing tips tailored for teachers

Today's market for teachers demands a variety of job search skills: networking, interviewing, attending appropriate events, assembling a portfolio, searching for the right job situation and best fit, even making sure you have the proper attire when you attend events or interviews.

But there is no substitute for having the right resume. Without it, your search likely won't get very far.

Getting your resume just right



Resumes should be no more than one page for applicants straight out of college. Two-page resumes are for career veterans.

A resume should tell what you have done in clear language. Saying that you're hard-working or team-oriented won't get you very far these days. Those characteristics should be a given. If you have been a student intern and the students you worked with improved from getting Cs and Ds in your subject to As and Bs, say that and back it up. If a principal complimented something specific about how you put together your lesson plans, spell it out.

Contact information is your starting point

Start with your contact information: Name, phone number, email address and LinkedIn address if applicable.

Then you need a professional summary. This is one paragraph summing up your best skills and attributes. This part substitutes for the "objectives" section, which some employers see as outmoded.

Then comes a list of proficiencies. There are general action words for any resume in any profession, but certain ones are most effective for teachers. That list includes: coached, communicated, counseled, edited, educated, encouraged, evaluated, facilitated, fostered, guided, helped, illustrated, influenced, led, motivated, organized, participated, performed, produced, read, represented, researched, shaped, stimulated, studied, supervised, taught, tested, trained, tutored, volunteered, wrote.

List your professional and education experience in detail

Next is a section on professional experience. List all of your jobs beginning with the most recent job, including school/company name and city, start and end dates, and your position. Describe each job and be specific. Again, hard facts and accomplishments trump meaningless adjectives. Applicants just out of college should use any experience as an intern, substitute or any other venue where they gained real classroom experience.

Then comes education and technology, where younger applicants might gain an edge by explaining their tech savvy. List all programs and apps you are familiar with first-hand.

Volunteer experience is important

Finally, list your volunteer work. Feel free to list anything but if you have to pick and choose for space considerations, give priority to any experience you have working with children. If you were a camp counselor to little children when you were in high school, for instance, this is the place to point that out.

Making sure it is seen



Be watchful for applicant tracking systems (ATS). Schools and corporations use these programs to qualify resumes. An ATS can affect whether a human being actually sees it.

The best way to beat the ATS is to make sure that your resume is formatted correctly. Do not use headers or footers – using those is a near-certain way to get your resume tossed out of an ATS. The same applies to borders and tables. Save all of that fancy stuff for a job fair or other event where you will be handing out a paper resume to an actual human being.

Check the key words of the job description

Next, match the keywords exactly to the job description. The ATS is programmed to look for those specific words. Mimic those keywords precisely rather than trying to come up with a creative way to reword what the school is looking for. Those words were chosen for a reason. This also applies to any acronyms. Use them exactly as you see the employer use them in the job description – or to play it safe, use both forms: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM).

Printed resumes are important for in-person interviews

You will also still want a printed resume on good quality paper, at least 26 weight and preferably 32, on either white or off white cotton paper. On your printed version you can go for borders, tables, or any other visual flourishes which make your resume stand out. That printed version, will all the eye-catching elements which an applicant tracking system would reject, is the one you hand to an actual person at a job fair, interview and so on.

Proofread, proofread, proofread



Once you have finished your resume, edit it so it is as polished as it can be. Read it closely. Read it closely again. Then read it closely yet again.

Did you catch the intentional mistake in that last paragraph? The end of the first sentence should read "edit it so it is as polished as it can be." If you missed it, there's good reason. Sometimes our brains process the words we know should be there rather than the words as they actually are. It's easy to miss a spelling error, or a mistake in word order, or any number of goofs.

A second opinion is always important

Ask somebody who is good with words to look over your resume. And it helps to read it backward. Really, it's true. When you read a page from the bottom up, last word to first, you focus on how every word is spelled rather than anticipating what the next word is supposed to be.

This is your resume. It's your best chance to make a good first impression. It must be perfect.

Good luck!

