

How to Write a Professional Summary

What is a Professional Summary?

A professional summary, sometimes referred to as a summary of qualifications, is a short overview of your top skills and accomplishments as they relate to the job for which you are applying. Like an elevator pitch, the professional summary should be *customized for each job* you apply for to ensure that the qualifications highlighted match the needs of each employer.

Professional Summary vs. Objective Statement

Professional summaries are not the same as objective statements. Not only are objective statements very 20th century, they focus more on what *you* are seeking or what *your* career goals and ambitions are. In contrast, the professional summary focuses on career highlights that are most relevant to the employer and demonstrates how well you will fit with the position for which you are applying.

When to use a professional summary

Professional summaries are most often used by those who have a few years of experience in their career field. Recent grads and those with little professional experience may still choose to use a professional summary to highlight relevant portions of their resume, but it is often difficult to do well. Bottom line: All candidates choosing to use a professional summary should ensure that *the information shared is relevant to the potential employer and that it adds value to the resume.*

Steps to Writing an Effective Professional Summary

1. Make a list of your top accomplishments
2. Make a list of your top skills (do not focus on skills that you do not like using, even if you are good at them, as highlighting them could likely result in you having to use those skills in your next job)
3. Make a list of keywords (skills and areas of expertise) from the job posting
4. Compare the list of your skills and accomplishments with the list of keywords from the job posting
5. Using the keywords and skills that are on both lists, write a short statement (3-6 sentences) that will quickly convey this information to the potential employer

Examples

Proficient in managing multiple tasks to meet short- and long-term deadlines. Work experience includes both administrative and supervisory roles. Able to clearly explain and teach complex technical information to colleagues

Multilingual professional with over five years' experience in research, project management, budget development, and grant writing in domestic and resource-challenged, international settings

Nonprofit administrator with a focus in fundraising and social media campaigns. Past success in grant writing, winning a \$50,000 grant as an intern. Undergraduate studies focused on academic coursework in areas such as public policy, campaigns and strategy, and social action. 2+ years' experience using various CRM and donor software programs.