How to Put the Right Skills on a Resume

Vault Guide

You're not going to impress recruiters by throwing a long list of skills at them. Like most things, adding skills to your resume is about quality, not quantity. And it's not easy to choose the right skills.

In today's fast-paced economy, skills that were essential a few years ago might already be obsolete. For example, does it still make sense to write a resume in 2017 that says you know how to use email or basic text editing software? That's why adding skills is tricky. But once you learn how to use them to your advantage, your resume will instantly attract the attention of recruiters.

This article will tell you how to choose the right skills for a winning resume that lands you more job interviews than ever.

1. What Skills Should You Put on Your Resume?
You can divide work-related skills into two basic types: hard skills and soft skills.
Hard skills are the skills and qualifications required to do a particular job. For example, if you're applying for the position of a Java developer, you need to know Java. Hard skills are critical if you're applying for a position in IT, engineering, or medicine. They can include anything from accounting and data analysis to copywriting and knowledge of computer languages. Remember that hard and technical skills aren't one and the same thing. The global economy relies on access to technologies and promotes innovation across many different sectors. That's why skills related to math, science, engineering, and IT are in demand right now.

Now that we've got the hard and technical skills covered, it's time to take a closer look at soft skills. Often described as "people skills," soft skills are related to a professional's personality and emotional intelligence. Examples of soft skills include creativity, communication, or relationship building. The problem with these skills is that they're hard to define and demonstrate. No certificates can prove that you work well under pressure or excel at time management. But recruiters value them. If you prove that you've got great soft skills on your resume, you'll instantly become more attractive than a candidate who has nothing more than the required technical expertise. That's especially true for recent graduates. A recent study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) showed that recruiters are looking for skills like leadership or teamwork over technical skills.

2. Find Skills That Recruiters Want. Here's How.
A great source for finding relevant skills is the job offer itself. That's where hiring managers list all the experience, qualifications, and skills they're after. Recruiters know what they want, and they also know how to communicate desirable candidate traits to ensure that they get resumes from professionals who are qualified to do the job.

Take a closer look at the job offer. Underline all the skills you can find. Now put them on a list. You'll be referring to this list as you tailor your resume to the job description for maximum relevance.

3. Learn Which Skills Are Valued in Your Sector
It's time to do some serious research now. If you're chasing a particular job, you should learn what types of skills are required to enter the profession. Once you know that, you can narrow down your search for a particular company. But first, you need to check out the people who already have your dream job.

Open LinkedIn and type the position into the search bar. Among the suggestions, you'll spot "people with ___ titles." For example, "people with marketing titles." Click on it, and you'll see profiles of professionals who have your job.
Now, you'll need to become a bit of a stalker. Check out a few top profiles. Go straight to their experience and skills sections to learn what type of skills they've listed. Do you spot any skills they have in common? Go back to that list you compiled. If you see similar skills, you can be sure that they're in demand.
If you have these skills, you should add them to your resume.

4. Where to Put Skills on Your Resume

Now that you've got an idea about which skills recruiters want from candidates, you need to place these skills where they can be easily spotted.

- It's not smart to jam all your skills into a list at the bottom of your resume. To tailor your resume to the job description, put these skills in prominent places throughout your resume – especially in the experience section.
- For example, here's what you should do to make sure that recruiters spot your killer Java programming skills:
  - **Skill:** Java Programming Language
  - **Experience Section Bullet Point:** Delivered 10 Java application projects for mid-sized organizations.
- Note the number? That's how you tailor your resume skills to grab the attention of recruiters. Add facts and figures to help the recruiter notice your qualifications. Numbers help recruiters locate your skills while giving them a sense of your expertise. They'll easily imagine you achieving similar results on the job.

5. Add Keyword Skills to Beat the Robots

There's a good chance your resume will have to pass a scan by an Applicant Tracking System (ATS). The software scans your resume before a human recruiter ever gets their hands on it. What's the primary job of these robots? To check whether your resume matches the position. That's why you should tailor your resume to the job description every time you apply for a job. Otherwise, your resume might never make it past ATS software.

One way to do that is by adding keyword skills. These are the skills listed in the job description. But don't pack your resume with keywords just for the sake of the ATS robots. You need meaningful content, not just a collection of relevant skills. Remember that a human recruiter will be reading your resume as well. Add your keyword skills in a smart and natural way to make sure your resume is a smooth read.

6. Add Value to Your Resume with Extra Skills

How can you find skills that add extra value to your resume?

- Look for transferable skills first. These are the skills that translate across different jobs. For example: Fluent oral and written communication in French.
- Have you got a work-related skill that's useful for every type of job? That's your transferable skill. Add it to your resume. Apart from transferable skills, there are also skills that recruiters find desirable no matter what position they're trying to fill.

Here are some examples of universal skills that should land on your resume if you've got them:

- Leadership
- Communication (Written and Verbal)
- Analytical Thinking
- Planning and Strategic Thinking
- Teamwork

Almost all employers desire these skills. Have a look on the web to find out what skills are universal for your profession or industry. If you've got them, be sure to include them on your resume. You're bound to become more attractive in the eyes of the recruiters.

Key Takeaway

Only 2% of candidates who applied for a job are invited to an interview. Were the remaining 98% utterly unqualified for the job? That simply can't be true. These candidates probably failed to demonstrate that they've got the skills required by the employer.

On average, recruiters spend 6 seconds scanning a resume. That's when hiring managers decide whether your resume is worth their attention. And this decision is primarily based on whether they spot relevant skills. Learn which skills employers want. Match your resume to the job description by adding skills throughout your resume. By doing that, you'll ensure that the recruiter who looks at your resume will instantly see these skills and know that the application is worth their time.

What are you waiting for? Find the top skills for your dream position and show recruiters that you're the right match for the job.

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