

Tips for Matching Your Resume to the Job

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Steps to help you match your resume to the job description:

1. Get the job description and put it in front of you.
2. Circle the key skills & experience the company is looking for.
3. Make a list of all the things you've actually done in your career that make you a good fit. (Remember to think about transferable skills too.)
4. Now go get your resume and put that in front of you too.
5. Look to see where your already-listed experiences might match with elements in the job description.
6. Circle those matching experiences so you can go back to them later and decide which ones you'll give more emphasis and/or a higher position in your bullet lists.
7. Now think about things you've done in other jobs or elsewhere (volunteer, special projects, freelance) that are NOT yet on your resume. Add the strongest ones that really show why you would be an asset (match) to the new job.
8. Now go through your resume, editing and adding where needed to give more weight to your strongest matching items (including keywords and key phrases), but also mentioning something even from years back if it might help. (This is also a good time to get rid of items that don't help and may lead you back to things you don't ever want to do again.)

An example of reviving an old skill:

If you used Microsoft Access in 2000, but haven't touched it since then, and IF the job description specifically mentions it, clearly let them know you have the skill both in your resume and cover letter. Just don't lie about how good you are. (Bonus points: Go ahead and brush up your skills ahead of time just in case. This shows initiative and the ability to easily pick up the skill again. Also makes great talking points in an interview or phone screen.)

1. If you use a Summary of Qualifications or similar section to lead off your resume (these are very useful), this is a great place to emphasize your strongest skills that match the job's key requirements. (Also useful for your cover letter.)
2. Read the job description again. Now look at your entire resume. Have you made it easy for the screener to see the match? If not, give it another shot and make sure to focus in on the strongest matching points, giving them extra emphasis.

Once you're happy with what you have, of course now go back and check for typos, grammar, overall appearance, etc. And voila! You have a customized resume that has a better chance of getting you that all-important first interview.

Don't Forget to Keep It Real

While I strongly suggest you take the time to tailor each resume to the job you're applying for, the customization has to be REAL and reasonably IN PROPORTION to the rest of your resume or it will look like you're trying to snow them. So by all means keep it real...while still making sure they get the strongest picture of how well you do fit. That's the whole point.

Of course, if you don't really fit, you can customize until the cows come home and you won't get the job. You're just working to make sure you maximize their understanding of what a great fit for them you could be. Plus, all this effort will help you create a good cover letter and – nice added benefit – help you focus your interview.

If you clearly know all the ways you match, not only will you be able to create a stronger resume and cover letter, you'll have an easier time telling your story to your future employer!