



# THE RÉSUMÉ BLUEPRINT

# YOUR RÉSUMÉ'S JOB: TELLING YOUR CAREER STORY...QUICKLY

To craft a perfect résumé, it's essential to understand what role the résumé plays—and how it relates to the other documents in your application.

By itself, the résumé won't make or break your candidacy. In fact, most reviewers won't even fully read your résumé unless they're searching for the answer to a specific question as they decide whether to put you in the "yes" or "no" pile.

Of course, the facts in your résumé are extremely important. In some situations, screeners will rule out nearly everyone who lacks a certain type or level of experience. It's your job to make the most of the experience you have, and it's your résumé's job to tell the story of your career trajectory...hopefully an upward one!

Clarity, then, is essential—if the reader can't tell whether you're on the right trajectory, they'll assume you're not—above all else, your résumé must provide the reader with easy access to the information they're looking for. This information can include:

- Whether you have the necessary degrees and certifications
- Whether you have previous experience in the type of position they're hiring for
- How much experience you have, and the settings where you've worked
- Most importantly, what you've gained from your experience

Organize your résumé so it's easy for the reader to find this information.

# SECTIONS TO INCLUDE TO HELP YOUR RÉSUMÉ DO ITS JOB

Because it needs to be easy for the reader to visually “scan,” your résumé should have the following sections:

- **Name and contact information**—depending on your résumé’s design, you may want to repeat this information at the top of each page
- **Objective**—a written statement that describes the type of position you’re looking for and the kinds of contributions you intend to make
- **Professional Experience**—your most recent and relevant work history, including both paid positions and relevant internships and other leadership roles, in reverse chronological order (most recent experience first.)
- **Education & Certifications**—your degrees and licenses, and the institutions from which you earned them
- **Professional Development**—key trainings you’ve attended or led, especially in high-demand areas.
- **Awards & Professional Memberships**—do not list these unless they are truly outstanding, demonstrate leadership, or otherwise signify a career trajectory that strengthens your application
- **References**—be sure to include at least three references, including your current supervisor (and mentor, if you are an intern)

If you’re concerned about the length of your résumé, simply move later sections—such as references—to separate pages, so the main résumé can remain concise.

Don’t worry about fitting your résumé on one page—as long as you organize it this way, the most important information will be on the first page.

# CONTACT INFORMATION

## BASIC BUT ESSENTIAL

- If you're applying for a new position with your current employer, simply use your organizational email.
- Be sure to include a non-work email address if you're applying for jobs with other employers.
- Choose a professional-looking email service provider for your personal email account. Gmail.com, Yahoo.com, Outlook.com, and custom domains such as yourname.org are good choices.
- Avoid hotmail.com, aol.com, NetZero.com and junos.com, which are extremely dated and convey an unprofessional image.
- Make sure your email address is reasonably close to your name, and not a subtle brag or an address related to a consulting practice. For example, avoid "InspiredEducator66@gmail.com" or "Steve@StudentsComeFirstLLC.com"
- If you're applying for jobs far from where you currently live, or happen to have a cell phone from another area code, consider getting a Google Voice number with a local area code, and forwarding it to your cell phone. It's free at [google.com/voice](https://google.com/voice)
- Consider omitting your mailing address from your résumé and cover letter if you live far away. If anyone needs it (which they're unlikely to at the screening stage), your address will be on your application, where it won't influence the screening process as heavily.

# MAKING LISTS SCANNABLE

## BE KIND TO YOUR READER

Depending on your experience and the level of detail you provide, you may find that some sections of your résumé become rather long. It's essential to make the reader's job easy, because application reviewers are typically screening large batches of documents very quickly.

The more you can reduce the cognitive load of merely processing your résumé, the more your reader can notice your qualifications.

To make your résumé easy to scan visually:

- Use headings to clearly delineate each section
- Strive for parallelism—make each item in a list read the same way
- Don't have some bullets that are accomplishments, others that are adjectives, and others that are names of trainings in the same list
- Group related items together—and explain what they say about you—rather than listing them in separate bullets. For example...
  - “Trained in numerous behavior de-escalation techniques, including SafePlus, SRS, PBISStar, and Novigen.”
- Keep sentences short and direct, without complex phrasing
- Use a reasonable font size (ideally 12pt) and ample margins (preferably 3/4" or 1")
- Avoid unusual or hard-to-read fonts; stick with traditional fonts like Times New Roman.
- Keep lists relatively short—no more than 6 bullet points per list. Notice how this list has too many bullets?

# WORK EXPERIENCE

## TELL THE STORY OF YOUR LEADERSHIP

The most important section—and the easiest to get wrong—is the “Professional Experience” section of your résumé. This section tells the story of your career trajectory. Even if your career has been brief up to this point, or if you’ve spent many years in the same role, it’s essential to paint a picture for the reader.

What kind of picture? You want the reader to see you as a leader on the move—as a rising star who will end up making a difference at every stage of your professional journey.

Tips:

- Tell the reader how to interpret each aspect of your experience by listing key accomplishments. For example, if you have 15 years of classroom experience, describe exemplary results and leadership actions you’ve taken. Don’t expect anything to speak for itself.
- Use date ranges and summaries. For example, if you took 2007-2011 off for family reasons but otherwise spent 2004-2015 working for the same employer, include the overall range and the positions you held (detailed separately), but without exact dates. Too many dates will increase the cognitive load on the reader.
- If you have unusual circumstances—such as a 1-year grant-funded position that came to an end—be sure to explain it briefly so the reader doesn’t wonder whether you were terminated.
- Include the most recent position first, so you can highlight your most relevant accomplishments for the reader.
- Always describe accomplishments for each position, not duties or responsibilities. The reader will assume you did the basics; this is your chance to explain how you made a difference by going above and beyond.

# REFERENCES

## OPTIONAL...BUT ESSENTIAL

It may be officially optional to include references with your résumé, but don't be fooled—they're essential.

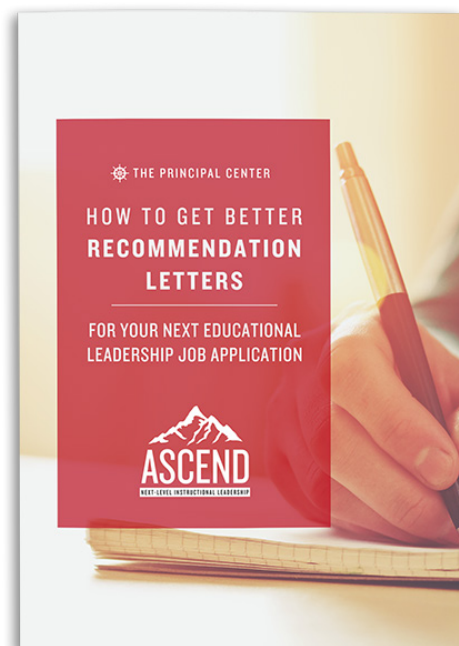
References may seem less important at the screening stage, because it's unlikely that they'll be checked until after your interview. But they play an important role in establishing your credibility as a candidate.

Typically, you'll want to include the following references:

- Your current supervisor in your paid role
- Your administrative internship supervisor (this person is likely well-known and respected within the organization)
- Another senior leader in your organization who knows your work from special projects (such as leading a summer program or working on a curriculum committee)
- A peer who can speak eloquently about your leadership qualifications

To get better recommendation letters from your references, see our PDF guide:

*How To Get Better Recommendation Letters For Your Next Educational Leadership Job Application.*



# EXPERIENCE SECTION

## SAMPLE FOR VISUAL REFERENCE

### Professional Experience

#### Assistant Principal

*Needlesville High School*

*2013-Present*

- Worked closely with principal on staff evaluations, professional development agenda, and school improvement goal-setting
- Led transition to accelerated block schedule, increasing instructional time by 22% for core subjects
- Created RtI handbook and trained all teachers on Tier I & Tier II interventions, resulting in a 33% reduction in referrals to special education evaluation team
- Secured \$72,000 grant for after-school tutoring for students at risk of academic failure, increasing 9th grade course completion rate by 37%

*Pinsburg Middle School*

*2011-2013*

- Led the transition to “houses” to provide more personalized support for students, including literacy and math/science blocks
- As assistant principal responsible for discipline, worked with parents and teachers to reduce classroom referrals from an average of 4.9 per day in 2011-2012 to 2.1 per day in 2012-2013
- Implemented professional growth plan system for teacher evaluations

#### 8th Grade Social Studies Teacher

*Pinsburg Middle School*

*2006-2011*

- Worked closely with department and grade-level team to develop common assessments and positive behavioral supports
- Served as department head, representing school on district social studies curriculum adoption committee



# WANT MORE? IN-DEPTH TRAINING

If your résumé does its job, you'll stand a much stronger chance of landing an interview. But understand this: the ed leadership job search is a competition. If you don't prepare—if you don't put in the work to get the job you want—your competitors will.

I wouldn't have done my job in this document if I left you with the impression that this is a cakewalk. It's not. But it's worth it.

If you're committed to taking your leadership to the next level, and multiplying your impact on student learning, don't miss my webinar, *Ascend: Prepare, Apply, Interview and Win Your Next Ed Leadership Role*.



<http://www.principalcenter.com/ascend-webinar>

## ABOUT JUSTIN BAEDER, PhD



Justin Baeder, is creator of the Instructional Leadership Challenge, and author of *Now We're Talking! 21 Days to High-Performance Instructional Leadership*.

A former Seattle Public Schools principal and teacher, Justin's professional mission is to help school leadership teams transform their productivity, build their capacity, and multiply their impact on learning. He holds a PhD in Educational Leadership & Policy from the University of Washington.