

# FEDERAL RESUME WRITING



## CONTENT

1. Federal vs. Standard Resume
2. Length of Resume
3. Required Information
4. Format
5. Job Opportunity Announcement
6. Minimum Qualifications



**THE FEDERAL RESUME IS THE MOST IMPORTANT DOCUMENT YOU CAN WRITE TO SUPPORT YOUR ENTRANCE INTO FEDERAL SERVICE, OR TO OBTAIN A PROMOTION TO A NEW POSITION.**

— Kathryn Troutman, 2016



## FEDERAL VS. STANDARD RESUMES

Federal resumes are different from traditional standard personal resumes. This difference is very important in understanding how to successfully apply for a position at AFCS.

First difference: personal photos or head shots are not allowed. Federal employment standards prohibit considering any application that includes a photo.

Second difference: the length. Typically, the federal resume is much longer (4-5 pages) than the standard resume (1-2 pages), due to the detailed information required.

Resumes for a federal job are generally prepared using the USAJOBS resume template that provides guidance on the information needed to complete a compelling document and will explain One Year Specialized Experience and KSAs (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities), which are key to making an attractive resume. More on this subject later.

If you are using your standard resume to apply for federal positions, you may be missing out on your dream job. If you are not getting the expected response in your job search, you may not be providing the kind of resume that Human Resource (HR) Specialists want to see.

Federal resumes are often the most difficult resumes to write – and to write well. Applying for a federal position can be intimidating, but with the right information on your resume, you will have a better chance of being selected for final consideration and hopefully among the “Best Qualified.”

*Read further for additional guidance in federal resume writing.*

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## LENGTH OF THE FEDERAL RESUME

Although the length of the federal resume is ultimately the personal preference of the writer, the general rule is one to three pages if you can include all information to support One Year of Specialized Experience and KSAs without deviation. However, the USAJOBS resume builder will allow four to five pages of resume text. Never leave out any information referencing specialized experience; as far as federal HR Specialists are concerned, if any experience is not on your resume, you did not do it. Federal HR reviewers cannot make any assumptions or draw conclusions about what you did or did not do. Precisely spell out your experience so that it is very clear.

A good federal resume is usually four to five pages. Every generalized and specialized skill that you have developed in your career has to be written into the documents to support your specialized experience and to set you above other qualified candidates.

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**ALL RESUMES SHOULD BE CUSTOMIZED FOR AN INDIVIDUAL JOB OPPORTUNITY, MEANING IT INCLUDES ALL THE JOB OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT'S KEY WORDS.**

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For help with key words in a document, use “word cloud” — [www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)

## REQUIRED INFORMATION FOR FEDERAL RESUMES IN ADDITION TO WORK EXPERIENCE & OTHER QUALIFICATIONS

1. Personal Information: Full name (with middle initial if applicable), address, phone number, and email address
2. Street addresses, city, state, and zip code of employers within the past ten years
3. Month and year of each job held within the past ten years – included hours per week worked
4. Supervisors' name and phone number (and whether they can be contacted)
5. Education: Majors and colleges with city, state, and zip code and number of semester hours
6. List and detail all volunteer work, including a description of the type of work, the role you played, and frequency
7. Security clearance level and citizenship

The FedshireVets.gov website has a Resume Writing guide posted at:  
<http://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/links/Resume%20Writing%20Participant%20Handout.pdf>



# FEDERAL RESUME WRITING



## FEDERAL RESUME FORMAT

Federal resumes do not have to be attractive. Federal resumes are not heavily formatted, and the USAJOBS resume builder does not accept formatting such as bold, underlining, small caps, italics, etc. The proper formatting for federal resumes should include short paragraphs using capital letters to highlight key words. Always avoid bullets since they limit and abbreviate pertinent information. The Outline Format is preferred by staffing specialists because it is easy to read and features key words and accomplishments. Each paragraph represents a skill set that the JOA requires. The KSAs that are required to get “Best Qualified” for the position are clearly demonstrated in the resume. Every word in the Outline Format is carefully selected to match the JOA and highlight the person’s employment experience and competencies. The block style format was acceptable when machines read the resumes. The bulleted format is not recommended, KSAs are too difficult to find in the list of bullets, and the functional style format will not suffice for the federal resume because the duties and responsibilities are not anchored with dates, locations, and job titles. You must show that you have One Year Specialized Experience in a certain field of work. Also, if the duties are separated from the dates, you will be rated as ineligible. You can’t go wrong using the Outline Format resume!



**THIS IS NOT YOUR PRIVATE SECTOR JOB SEARCH. CAREFULLY FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS PROVIDED. MAKE SURE YOUR RESUME MATCHES THE JOB OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE TARGET POSITION TO OPTIMIZE BEING CONSIDERED.**



Ensure that your format is correct

## JOB OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT (JOA)

“You can transform your life and business in just seven minutes a day.” If that statement makes you want to read on, your resume should include the same type of “hook” in describing your experience and competencies. Hiring agencies state the qualification requirements that you must meet in the JOA. These qualifications include education, training, level of experience, and amount of experience. Once you have applied, the hiring agency uses the information in your resume to verify if you have the required qualifications stated in the JOA, such as years of experience, level of education, major field of study,

semester hours completed, and training. Once they have determined who the “Best Qualified” are, some agencies may use the information in your resume for the second step. Federal jobs often require that you have done a particular type of work for a certain period of time. Be sure to include the month and year that you began and ended each job. Also, include the number of hours you worked per week. Be sure to provide information on the level of experience that demonstrates you meet the qualifications; use examples and be specific (i.e., project manager or a team manager).

### USAJOBS.GOV HELP CENTER

<https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/how-to/account/documents/resume/>

# FEDERAL RESUME WRITING



## YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS DOES MATTER

If you are still using aol.com or bellsouth.net, that shows that you have not updated that part of your life, and begs the question whether you have updated other parts of your work life. The smartest approach is to use a professional email address, preferably one with your name (without the year of your birth). Also, verify that the display name is appropriate (avoid nicknames). Your email is the first impression most resume reviewers will have of you — make it count!

If you ever receive the message below in response to an application, it is time to fix your federal resume!

“Your resume did not document either the number of hours worked per week for all jobs listed, a detailed description of your duties performed, or the mo/yr to mo/yr (present) worked for all jobs listed, as required by the vacancy announcement. Please be sure to read each announcement for complete qualification requirements and instructions on ‘How to Apply’.”

## MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Minimum qualifications are standards set by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to help ensure that federal employees are, indeed, qualified for employment. You must meet these minimum qualifications to be considered for employment. Minimum qualifications are stated in terms of general or specialized experience.

- General experience is progressively responsible clerical, office, or other types of experience that show you have the ability to perform the duties of the job being filled.
- Specialized experience is usually obtained from having worked in a position similar to the job being filled.

For some jobs, you can qualify based solely on education instead of experience. For other jobs, both education and experience are required to qualify; and for yet other jobs, you can qualify based on a combination of your experience and education. These requirements will be described in the JOA.

