

Strategies for Consolidating Your Experience to Fit on Your Resume

One of the most common challenges that job seekers bring into career coaching appointments is how to fit their experience on the one to two pages that are allotted for their resume. What to take out, what to leave in, determining what's relevant - these are all common questions that must be answered in order to create a clear and relevant narrative of your academic and professional qualifications. So how do you do it?

Begin with “Master Resume”

It can be helpful to have a master version of your resume that includes all of your academic and work experiences with bullet point descriptions of each built out. I sometimes jokingly call this a “monster resume” because for some, it can be quite long. This is an internal document that won't be shared with employers, but that you can use to pull from as you customize shorter versions of your resume to make them tailored to different types of roles.

Determine if your resume should be one or two pages

Most hiring managers spend anywhere from 6 - 30 seconds reading a resume during the first round of screening. There is only so much information the human brain can process in that amount of time. This creates the expectation that your resume will be concise, easy to read and understand, and crafted to highlight relevancy to the role you are applying for.

So what length is appropriate for you?

The standard rule here is if you have more than five years of related work experience in the field you are now applying for roles in, you can have a two page resume *if needed*. If this is not the case, your resume should be no more than one page. But what does “related” experience mean? The answer to this is more of an art than a science and is dependent on what you are applying for and what your background is. For example, if you are applying for a program management role overseeing WIC programs, and you have eight years of program management experience in non-community-based settings, one could argue that because the core skill needed to do this role is project management, that you have more than five years of related experience and can go onto two pages if needed. If you're not certain if your existing experience is related, work with Career Services to discuss what makes sense for you.

Conduct an audit of the experiences on your master resume and label them by tier

Tier 1 are experiences you feel are most related (either subject matter, environment, or skills-wise) to what you are now applying for. These experiences will be fully built out with bullet points on the resume and will be included in a section called “Relevant Experience”.

Tier 2 experiences are those that you’d like included on the resume because they demonstrate an interest, skill, or knowledge set you’d like the reader to know you have, but may not be as related to what you are applying for as Tier 1 experiences. For Tier 2 experiences, you can include them in a section called “Additional Experience”. Things listed in this section should only include the organization name, location, your title, and the dates of involvement but **NO BULLET POINTS**. Each experience should therefore take up no more than one line making this section essentially a list.

Tier 3 experiences are those that you don’t feel relate to your current pursuits and can potentially be cut from your resume. Sometimes an experience that you don’t feel relates shows that you were working during a time gap on your resume, or shows that you were balancing school and work at the same time, so you may consider bumping some things in this section up to Tier 2.

What if the above strategy still leaves me over my page max?

Consider titling your Tier 1 section “Selected Relevant Experience” and picking just the top few experiences you want to highlight. The word “selected” implies that you have other relevant experiences, but you are just presenting the reader with a short sampling. The items left over that were originally Tier 1 can become Tier 2 so the reader will still see that you did them.

Feeling overwhelmed with the prospect of taming your “Monster Resume”?

Schedule a 1:1 Career Coaching appointment with the Office of Career Services to work together to consolidate your experience into an effective resume narrative. [Book an appointment online now!](#)