

Professional Resumes

The Purpose and Importance of a Good Resume

The purpose of a professional resume is to give a prospective employer enough information to make the decision about whether to call you in for an interview or not. It is unlikely that any employer would ever hire a therapist based solely on the job candidate's resume, but the professional resume is the entry into a potential interview.

Drafting a Resume

Drafting your first professional resume as a recently graduated therapist that adequately and accurately represents your experience and skills can be a difficult task.

When writing your first resume, it is not enough to think simply in terms of your professional duties as a therapist, but you should also consider all other related achievements and successes that you have personally accomplished.

Start by composing a comprehensive list including your:

- achievements
- skills
- attributes
- experiences
- personal characteristics
- strengths
- qualifications
- professional affiliations

Some of these you will find easier than others, qualification and membership of professional affiliations speak for themselves, so simply provide the relevant information.

Detailing your work experience takes a little more time and effort, particularly for your first resume since your professional experiences are only just beginning. Spend the time on this and do not avoid because it is difficult. You have just concluded many years of education to get to where you are now and doing this will pay off once you have produced an effective resume.

Achievements can be more difficult to detail since more often than not modesty prevents most of us from boasting about our successes and talents. It is probably not wise to enhance your achievements through creative writing but take note that you can do just as much damage through excessive modesty.

Your Resume is a Marketing Tool that Sells You to an Employer

Putting together a resume is serious business. Often it is the first impression you will make on a prospective employer. After looking over your resume, the employer will grant you the opportunity to make a second impression. Whether you are reviewing or writing a resume, the main objectives of a resume should include education, professional and related work experiences, and associated skills and accomplishments. It should ultimately act as an introduction to the employer.

Components of Your Professional Resume

- Identifying Information
- Job Objective/Career Goals
- Education (in reverse chronological order)
- Experience
 - Also include special projects, research, independent studies related to therapy.
- Skills, certifications, professional memberships
- Community Activities
- Honors and Awards
- References upon request

Components of Your Professional Resume

The components are fairly straight-forward.

1. Provide identifying information: Who you are and how your prospective employer can reach you.
2. Describe YOUR job objective: Briefly summarize the type of position you are seeking and/or career goals. This gives the employer an idea of your future goals.
3. Describe your educational background and accomplishments: **For a new graduate therapist this is one of the most important qualifications you have to offer.** List the most recent first. List the names and dates of degrees conferred in reverse chronological order along with the names of the degree granting institutions.
 - a. Special achievements or honors can be included in this section or in a separate section usually titled, Honors and Awards.
 - b. If you have strong GPA, list it!
4. Under Experience, list each of your clinical experiences in reverse chronological order, the name of the organization where you completed the experiences, the dates you were there. List them with positive action wording. For example, “successfully manages a

daily case load of 12 orthopaedic clients under the supervision of a highly certified manual therapist.”

5. List any special certification or skills you have that could be related to the profession.
6. In a separate heading, list your professional memberships. While it may not seem important to you, the employer may be one that only hires therapists belonging to the professional association such as APTA or AOTA.
7. List your community activities. Your goal is to show your involvement within the community. Again, often employers are looking for individuals who are connected to their community.
8. You can add a separate heading that includes any special awards or honors. These can include academic or other awards.

Describing Your Fieldwork or Clinical Experiences

- Write in a concise, powerful, action-oriented manner.
- Formula: verb + object + outcome
 - Example: Assisted in the successful treatment of outpatient neurological patients with a NDT certified therapist.

Key: The more that your past experiences relate to therapy, the more space you should allot to its description.

When you describe your clinical experiences, write them so that they sound powerful and positive but concise. What about your experiences prior to coming to the University of St. Augustine? If you were an aide, assistant, trainer or in another related field briefly describe in action-oriented wording what your duties were that went above and beyond what the duties of an aide or assistant typically does. Tie these tasks into your role now as a therapist. If you are applying for a position involving neurological patients and you had experience working with neurological patients, describe very briefly what you did. Employers are looking for a snapshot of your skills and experiences.

Skills

- Summarize your academic skills along with any clinical skills that are related to the position for which you are applying.
- **Examples:**
 - Research Skills: Entered and analyzed data in SPSS for terminal research project on prevention of diabetic foot ulcerations.
 - Foreign Language: Fluent in both oral and written English and Spanish.
 - Clinical Skills: Completed advanced courses in treatment of musculoskeletal dysfunction (Paris E1, S1, S2, S3)

Under Skills, give examples of all related professional skills. Here you see some direct examples. Again, you do not want to oversell yourself by listing generic therapy skills but list skills that perhaps the average new graduate therapist may not possess.

Sample Resume:

Emily A. Smith, DPT, MOT
100 Apple Street
San Diego, CA 95444
888-123-4567

Objective: To obtain a position that will allow me to utilize my skills and work with diverse patient populations while continuing to develop my clinical expertise.

Education:

Doctor of Physical Therapy, 2010, University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences
Master of Occupational Therapy, 2008, University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences

Experience:

2010 First Coast Physical Therapy, St. Augustine, FL

Physical Therapy clinical internship

- Successfully managed a daily case load of 12 orthopaedic clients under the supervision of a certified manual physical therapist
- List additional clinical experiences [verb + action + outcome]
- List additional clinical experiences [verb + action + outcome]

2009 Children's Hospital, San Diego, CA

Occupational Therapy clinical fieldwork

- Utilized adaptive equipment, splints and braces to help clients achieve occupational goals
- List additional clinical experiences [verb + action + outcome]
- List additional clinical experiences [verb + action + outcome]

2008 Rehabilitation Clinic, Anytown, CA

Rehabilitation technician,

- Assisted therapists with patient care including transfers, exercise, modalities.

2005 Peace Corps, Nicaragua

Peace Corps Volunteer

- Promoted awareness of basic health concerns such as clean water and malnutrition

Skills

- Foreign Language: Fluent in oral and written English and Spanish.
- Clinical Skills: Completed advanced courses in treatment of musculoskeletal dysfunction (Paris E1, S1, S2, S3)

Memberships:

American Physical Therapy Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
California Physical Therapy Association
California Occupational Therapy Association

References Available Upon Request

When you are ready to format and write your resume, check out the information on resume writing provided on the APTA and AOTA websites. These have free and open access so you do not have to be a member to link to the resume writing pages. Additionally, there are numerous resume writing templates within word processing software.

Resume Wizards and Software

Microsoft Word has a number of generic templates as well as some specifically formatted one that are free. Macintosh provides resume templates within its Pages software. There are also many commercial software programs that offer templates for creating professional resumes.

Writing the Resume

A. Preparation and Style

- a. Organize yourself – prepare an inventory sheet.
- b. Be ***consistent and simple*** with your style, fonts, spacing, etc.

B. Writing Style

- a. Use short phrases.
- b. Do NOT use personal pronouns (I, me, you, your, etc.).
- c. Use action words that focus on your accomplishments.
- d. Use appropriate grammar and correct spelling.

C. Printing

- a. Print your resume on quality bonded paper. Use lighter shades of white, ivory, off-white or cream.

D. Length of resume – 1 to 2 pages MAX

E. Resume format – Chronological *recommended*.

Some other important tips to follow: Your resume should be no longer than two (2) pages for a new graduate therapist. While some advise that a resume should only be one page, you should allow yourself up to two pages. This allows you to include all of the pertinent information and leave appropriate white space between subject areas so that your resume is reader friendly.

A strong word of advice: Your resume should be pristine; there should not be a single typo or grammatical error within it. As an employer, nothing produces a negative first impression than a resume or cover letter with typos, grammatical errors, or poor writing. Resumes with errors go to the bottom of the pile.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

1. Resume that is too long
2. Too much solid text (be concise)
3. Poor layout (ineffective use of white space, resume is too “crowded”)
4. Poor quality of writing
5. Excessively wordy, vague, boastful
6. Too many typefaces (fonts)
7. Inadequate information provided
8. Listing hobbies, religious affiliations, race

When you write and edit your resume go through this checklist thoroughly. The bottom line is to make sure your resume is error free, easy to read, and represents who you are, what your skills and experiences are, and gives the employer a great first impression of you.

The Professional Cover Letter

Sending a professional resume without a cover letter is analogous to setting out on a hike in the forest without any trails. There is no clear way forward. Often an employer will review your resume to see if you are at least qualified and then proceed to read your cover letter.

The owner of a clinic or manager of a department has to make assumptions about the purpose of the resume and if the objective does not clearly state your intentions, the resume will quickly get lost or end up on the bottom of the stack.

Sending a resume without a cover letter is a mistake. It automatically ensures that your application goes no further than an acknowledgement of receipt.

A well-written cover letter is a most effective tool in your job hunt. Your cover letter begins the job that your resume is going to finish, securing the interview you are seeking.

Cover Letter

- Error free
- Grammatically correct
- Professionally written
- Concise not personal
- Complements but does NOT duplicate your resume.
- Avoid the use of too many “I”s in the body of the cover letter.

Your cover letter, like your resume, should be pristine and error free. It should complement your resume but certainly NOT duplicate it. The cover letter summarizes your resume, your interest in the position, and adds a personal touch to this first contact with this employer.

Take time to write this well. Avoid using “I” so much within the letter. It takes of skillful writing to avoid using “I” in every other sentence.

Professional Cover Letter Template

Your Name
Your Street Address
Your City, ST, zip

Month Day, Year

Re: Subject

Recipient Name
Recipient Title
Company Name
Street Address
City, ST, zip

Dear Recipient Name:

Paragraph 1: [Explain to the reader why you are writing to him/her. This should grab the reader and make him/her want to read on. Why you’re interested in this particular therapy job and why this facility? What about this clinic/company interests you?]

Paragraph 2: [Specify your qualifications. You can use bullet points to highlight your skills and accomplishments.]

Paragraph 3: [Direct the reader to your enclosed resume but refrain from overused phrases, “my resume is enclosed here within.” Follow with your availability for an interview. Next explain when YOU will be contacting them to discuss a potential interview. Thank the reader for his/her time and provide email and phone contact information.]

Sincerely,

Signature
Your name