

Federal Resume Formatting Tips

If you're interested in working with the United States government, one of the first steps you'll need to take is creating a federal style resume. You'll use this resume to apply for civil service positions through [USAJobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov). If you have questions or aren't sure if you need a federal style resume, contact the SuccessWorks Career and Internship Specialist for Government, Policy, International Affairs, and Law!

Not Your Standard Resume

No fancy formatting or graphics

Federal style resumes follow a very simple format, and do not include any graphics, colors, or images. The easiest way to create a resume in this format is to use the [Resume Builder](#) on USAJobs.gov. In this format, all your relevant experiences, whether they're jobs, internships, coursework, or volunteer activities, will be placed into "job blocks" that describe your experiences and are arranged in reverse chronological order.

Full, descriptive sentences

Bullet points are great for standard resumes because they give a quick, impactful overview of your skills and experience. However, Federal resumes require full, descriptive sentences that go into much more depth about the tasks you completed and demonstrate the results of your work.

Longer and more detailed

This means that, compared to a single-page standard resume, federal resumes are significantly longer (usually 2-5 pages) and much more detailed. You'll include information like how many hours per week you worked in each role, as well as specific examples of the work you accomplished in each of your positions.

Match the Qualifications

Check the requirements!

When you're applying for a government job, the first thing you have to confirm is that you meet ***all*** of the job requirements. If you can't clearly and completely show on your resume that you meet all the qualifications that are listed, you won't be considered for the job. Read the posting on USAJobs, and then read it again. Make sure you also check any embedded links and expand any sections that could have more information.

Mirror the language

To show how you meet the qualifications, the best strategy is to mirror the language of the job posting in your resume. While you're reading the requirements, pick out key words that tell you what knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) you need to demonstrate. Sometimes the key words and KSAs are separated out from the rest of the requirements, and sometimes they are just part of the description. Then, use these same key words and KSAs to describe your experience in your resume!

Consider using outline format

Using an outline format can be a great way to demonstrate how you meet the job requirements. The HR Specialist reading your resume may only have a few seconds to decide whether or not you'll move on to the next stage of hiring. In outline format, you start section of your job block with a fully capitalized 2-5 word description of what you did, ideally using the keywords from the KSA's you picked out from the job posting.

[Frank Federal](#) is an example of a federal resume in outline format.

Experience is experience

Many government jobs require some level of related experience. However, this does NOT mean that they require professional jobs or internships! Any type of related experience, including volunteering, personal projects, course projects, and student org work, can help you meet the experience requirement. This is where the job block format works in your favor, because you can show how all of your various personal, professional, and educational experiences connect to the job you're applying for.

Highlight accomplishments

When describing your experiences, you'll want to make sure that you highlight any accomplishments that are associated with that role. These can be awards you won or recognition you received from your supervisor, but also any notable successes in your professional projects. If you grew an organization's social media following from 50 active followers to 500, or a paper you wrote was published in a journal, that's a big deal! These details demonstrate that you not only did the work, but you did it exceptionally well.=

Submit the Application

Get some feedback

Once you have a draft of your Federal resume, it's important that you get some feedback! This helps to make sure that you haven't missed anything and that you're representing yourself in the best way possible. However, not everyone who works in career services has experience with federal resumes. If you're an L&S student or recent grad, [set up an appointment](#) with the Career and Internship Specialist for Government, Policy, International Affairs, and Law with SuccessWorks!

Complete your profile

Before you can submit your application through USAJobs, you'll need to complete a profile. This can take an hour or more to complete, so it's a good thing to check off your list as early as possible! You'll fill out your basic personal information, but also details about your education and other certifications. Once you have the profile completed, you can move on to the next step of the application process.

Upload your resume

Though you should start building your resume with the USAJobs Resume Builder, ***you should not upload the Resume Builder version of your resume as part of your final application (unless it is required)! The font is extremely small and difficult to read.*** Instead, download the Resume Builder version of your resume, increase the font and make any other aesthetic changes you need to, and save that as your final version. This also makes it easier to tailor your resume to different jobs, as you don't have to start again from the Resume Builder each time you want to apply for a job.

Fill out the self-assessment questionnaire, and aim for a high score!

Some positions will require you to fill out a self-assessment questionnaire that allows HR to quickly and easily evaluate if you meet the job requirements. You should be able to find a preview of this questionnaire, if it's required, under the "Required Documents" heading. Candidates that don't have a high score on the self-assessment probably won't be considered, so when filling out your responses, try to get the highest score you can legitimately justify! Don't lie, but give yourself due credit and get as close to 100% as you can.

Add any additional required documents

Another thing to note as you're carefully reading the position description and questionnaire is if there are any additional materials you need to submit. If you are using your education to show that you fulfill some of the job requirements, you will need your official university transcripts. Veterans will also need to submit additional paperwork to claim veteran's preference. Your application won't be considered complete without those other materials, so it's worth double checking that you have included everything you need before submitting it!