

Writing Effective Resumes for Veterans

DOs

- ❑ **Get a copy of your Verification of Military Experience and Training (VMET).** This can be acquired from the Department of Defense. Your VMET will give you an overview of the skills you've gained while in the military, which will be helpful while constructing your resume. To get a copy of your VMET, visit: <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/tgps/>
- ❑ **Think about the format.** When producing a resume, it is important to think about which format (chronological or skills-based) will be preferable based upon your background and job prospects. A chronological resume lists all of your work experiences in the order they happened. The skills-based approach may be more effective at communicating the strengths you acquired in the military and in any previous civilian jobs. No matter if you choose a chronological or skills-based resume, the skills and work habits you acquired in the military may not be immediately obvious to employers. As a result, you will need to find ways to express them effectively in terms that civilians will understand.
- ❑ **Develop a list of technical skills.** Some military jobs, such as computer technicians, mechanics, and engineers, have skills that can be easily converted to civilian jobs. If you have any specific technical skills that are relevant to the job you are searching for (such as budgeting or welding), be sure to include these skills on your resume.
- ❑ **Develop a list of transferrable skills.** Transferrable skills such as leadership, discipline, strong work ethic, and teamwork are often cited by employment recruiters as desirable. Many service members have developed these skills to a degree often unmatched by other job seekers. Incorporating these skills into your resume will showcase them to potential employers. Transferrable skills are the foundation of every successful military-to-civilian career transition resume.
- ❑ **Identify industry keywords.** Keywords (or buzzwords) are words or phrases that are specific to a particular industry or profession. Identify any keywords you know that are related to your intended career and insert them into your resume where applicable. This will show potential employers you are up-to-date with the industry jargon. Talking to professionals and professors in your intended industry and reviewing job descriptions can be great ways to collect some career specific keywords.
- ❑ **Use language civilians will understand and has relevance for civilian work.** Employers are looking for workers who can jump right into the job without a lot of retraining, so you need to make your experience sound comparable to a civilian job. A tank is “heavy mobile equipment.” Establishing a new FOB is a “construction project.” Instead of saying what you were “responsible for,” talk about your actions and accomplishments.

DON'Ts

- ❑ **Avoid using your military rank or newly achieved “Retired” label anywhere (especially in your heading).** For instance, do not use LTC Barbara Jones (Ret.); instead, use your full name (Barbara A. Jones). Additionally, the civilian employer reading your resume may not have a clue what your rank means; he or she might interpret it as a point of self-inflated importance. Lastly, omit any reference to being a retiree, if that applies to you, because a retiree in the military is not the same as a retiree in the civilian world.
- ❑ **Refrain from using military jargon, like acronyms and titles.** It’s important for civilian employers to understand that your years in the service have prepared you well for the civilian world. However, if they have not served, it may be difficult for them to wade through a series of titles and acronyms they don’t understand. It’s important to translate your experience and skill sets into civilian terminology. A good test to see if your resume is understandable is to have a civilian read it. If he or she can’t understand what you did in the service, you need to spell it out more clearly. Ask one or more non-veteran friends or family members for their perspective on your resume. Do they understand everything you did without needing more clarification? When in doubt, spell it out!

Adapted From:

Enelow, W. S., & Kursmark, L. M. (2010). *Expert resumes for military-to-civilian transitions*. Indianapolis, IN: JIST Works.

Farley, J. I. (2010). *Military-to-civilian career transition guide: The essential job search handbook for service members*. Indianapolis, IN: JIST Works.

Shatkin, L. (2013). *150 best jobs for the military-to-civilian transition*. St. Paul, MN: JIST Works.