

# Writing Stand-Out Resume Descriptions

The key to writing a strong resume is to focus on **transferable skills** and **accomplishments** when describing your experiences. Skills are “transferable” from one experience to the next; you don’t leave them behind when you change positions or companies. By focusing on the skills you have developed and the achievements you’ve made, you will help employers better understand your strengths as a potential employee or intern.

- ✓ **Identify essential skills.** What professional skills and characteristics does someone need to be successful in your field? Brainstorm a list, then consider: which of these qualities do you have? How will you prove it?
- ✓ **Show, don’t tell.** It’s not enough to write a list of skills on your resume. Show employers when, where, and how you’ve developed and used those skills or characteristics when writing descriptions of your past experiences.
- ✓ **Add details.** Whenever possible, quantify your descriptions. You supervised staff—how many? You raised money—how much? You surpassed sales goals—by how much?
- ✓ **Feature achievements.** Highlight special accomplishments or recognitions from your past. This may include formal awards (e.g. “Employee of the Month”), recognitions (e.g. “Regularly receive excellent reviews from customers, earning an average 4.8 out of 5.0 satisfaction score”), or contributions you made (e.g. “Identified process inefficiencies and implemented necessary improvements to reduce order fulfillment times”).
- ✓ **Show skills in action.** Start each of your descriptions with a verb (action) and skip using personal pronouns (like “I”). Consider “mixing it up” when selecting verbs to use so that you aren’t repeating the same wording over and over again. This action-oriented writing style will engage readers of your resume.

YES: Managed a team of six camp counselors... NO: I managed a team of six camp counselors...

## Examples of Verbs for Your Resume

Achieve	Communicate	Expand	Lead	Oversee	Recommend	Speak
Analyze	Complete	Execute	Launch	Perform	Reconcile	Spearhead
Assist	Create	Evaluate	Manage	Persuade	Reduce	Strategize
Audit	Delegate	Facilitate	Monitor	Plan	Repair	Streamline
Balance	Design	Generate	Motivate	Process	Research	Strengthen
Budget	Develop	Implement	Negotiate	Produce	Review	Supervise
Build	Diagnose	Improve	Operate	Program	Reorganize	Teach
Calculate	Direct	Influence	Organize	Promote	Schedule	Train
Collaborate	Eliminate	Innovate	Overhaul	Provide	Solve	Write

Going beyond basic descriptions will really help your resume—and your experiences—stand out!

### Examples: Basic Descriptions

- Serve food to customers
- Shelf inventory
- Operate machinery
- Fix computers

Notice how the improved descriptions are more descriptive and include additional details that the basic descriptions are missing.



### Examples: Improved Descriptions

- Communicate in a professional manner and multitask effectively while serving food to customers
- Demonstrate strong organizational skills and attention to detail while shelving inventory
- Operate industrial machinery safely and efficiently, resulting in a 15% reduction in production time
- Evaluate, diagnose, and troubleshoot hardware, software, and network issues on PC and Mac laptops



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# Practice Writing Descriptions

Imagine someone who is successful in the type of job or internship you're applying for. What skills and personal characteristics do they need to have to be one of the best in their field? Record your ideas here:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Which of these skills or characteristics do you have? Circle or put a star by them.

Pick one of the skills or character traits you circled/starred above. Now, think about experiences you've had: identify one experience where you've used the skill or demonstrated the character trait that you picked out. *These experiences could be jobs, internships or clinicals, class projects, clubs or activities, or volunteer experiences.*

Practice writing a description about that experience featuring the skill/character trait you picked out. Remember to begin with a verb (action) and add details where possible.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Pick another skill or character trait from your list and repeat the process above: identify one experience where you've demonstrated that skill/character trait and practice writing a description below.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Pick another skill or character trait from your list and repeat the process above: identify one experience where you've demonstrated that skill/character trait and practice writing a description below.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

One last brainstorming activity! Think back on your experiences again. Can you think of any awards or recognitions (formal or informal) you received? Or contributions you made? Practice writing descriptions highlighting those achievements below.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_