

Resume-writing tips for veterans

Skip to the sections that are relevant to you.

While this resource offers guidance on how to format a resume chronologically, there are many ways to format a strong, comprehensive resume.

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Veteran career resources

Resume tips

Locating important information

Recruiters should be able to find pertinent information on your resume with ease. We recommend:

- Submitting your resume in PDF format
- Capping your resume at 1-2 pages max, aiming for 1 page if you're capturing <10 years of relevant work experience
- Using clean, simple, consistent, bullet points
- Using action words and metrics to demonstrate your results and impact (action words + metrics = results + impact – [more information on this recommendation here](#))
- Including your contact information (no need to include your physical address—email is the standard!)

There's no need to include an objective in your resume, but a 1-2 sentence career or impact summary may be helpful. Similarly, there's no need to include a References section, as your recruiter will reach out for these directly if needed.

Resume structure

We recommend structuring your resume with the sections below, based on whether you're a student or industry professional.

Students:

- Career/Impact summary (optional)
- Education, including certifications and security clearances(s)
- Work experience
- Activities/Leadership
- Honors/Awards
- Interests

Industry professional:

- Career/impact summary (optional)
- Work experience/relevant volunteer experience
- Activities/Leadership
- Honors/Awards
- Education, including certifications and security clearances(s)
- Interests

Career/Impact summary

The purpose of including an optional career/impact summary is to:

- Showcase your expertise/impact as it applies to the job description's minimum and preferred qualifications
- Highlight the role or location you're looking for
- Let employers know when you're available for hire (e.g., if you're six months out from transitioning out of the service, etc.)

Education

Students: You may want to list your **education** information as the first section of your resume, as it's likely your most recent experience. We recommend highlighting:

- Post-secondary school(s) attended
- Intended major/minor/degree
- Expected graduation **month** and **year**
- Grade point average (optional)
- Relevant coursework
- Relevant certifications/security clearance(s)
- (Technical) skills

Industry professionals: Think of this section as an opportunity to highlight additional certifications and skills. Because your work experience is likely more recent, we recommend listing your **education** information toward the end of your resume, and your **work experience** at the beginning of your resume. We recommend highlighting:

- Post-secondary school(s) attended
- Major/minor/degree
- Optional: Graduation **month** and **year**
- Relevant certifications/security clearance(s)
- (Technical) skills

Work experience

Your work experience should focus on your impact. We recommend you:

- Begin this section with your employer, position, and dates of employment
- Keep bullet points clear, concise, and descriptive using this framework:
 - "Accomplished [X] as measured by [Y] by doing [Z]" ([more information on this framework here](#))
- Consider **relevant** experience
- Highlight **transferable skills**
- Include skills gained (i.e., Google Ads & Analytics, Java, C, C++, Python, JavaScript, etc.)

Pro tip: We recommend the detailed information about your work experience follows a 50/50 model of explaining your role responsibilities and what you personally accomplished (how you were successful, or where you went above and beyond).

Addressing gaps in service or work

Wondering how to address gaps in service or work? First and foremost, it's up to you whether you disclose anything regarding a break in service or work. If you do choose to address it, here are a few tips:

- Did you take any classes, conduct any side projects, etc. during the gap? If so, add this to your resume.
- Only share what you feel comfortable disclosing to a recruiter or hiring manager about your gap. Sharing that you took the gap for "personal reasons" is sufficient. The service or job experience that follows the gap is what will be important to your recruiter (what you learned about yourself or the type of work you'd like to do, etc.)
- If you choose to account for the gap, it's OK to simply list the timeline and reason. For example, "2012-2014: Time off to travel" or "Time off spent with family," etc.
- While there's no obligation to address a gap on your resume, you should be prepared to address it if asked about it by a recruiter or hiring manager.

Activities/Leadership

Tell us what excites you! We recommend highlighting any of the following that apply to you:

- Internships
- Clubs and organizations
- National society chapters
- Volunteer activities
- Teaching assistantships
- Research opportunities
- Open-source projects
- Developmental programs
- Case studies, programming competitions and hackathons
- Leadership responsibility (quantify your impact as much as possible)

Honors/Awards

What, in addition to what you've already shared, sets you apart? If applicable, we recommend you highlight the below, along with the selectivity if available:

- Distinguished awards, academic or military-related
- Speaking engagements.
- Presentations and publications

- Volunteer activities

Interests

What makes you you? Space permitting, we recommend you include your personal interests, even if they're unrelated to your studies (e.g., school-related activities, or potential industries of interest to you).

Translating your military experience for civilian roles

Job qualifications

When you're considering applying to a role, examine the job's qualifications. Your recruiter will be interested in how your skills, experiences, and impact could translate to the open role. Before applying, be sure to represent the job's qualifications in the accomplishments you list in your resume. In other words, look at the job responsibilities and qualifications and determine if they correlate to your experiences. If so, proceed with your application. If not, you may want to consider other roles.

The list below contains examples of skills and strengths that you may have gained from the military. Many of them are directly applicable to a variety of roles. Please note that this list is *not* exhaustive; there are likely many more skills and experiences you gained during your time in the military.

- Leadership
- People management
- Project/Program management
- Teamwork
- Innovation
- Communication
- Adaptability
- Analytical skills
- Problem solving
- Strategic decision making
- Risk assessment
- Ability to handle complex situations under pressure

We've highlighted examples from four skill sets (leadership, project/program management, teamwork, and problem solving) below in the section of this resource dedicated to [highlighting the skills and strengths gained from the military](#).

Important note: While meeting all preferred qualifications may strengthen your candidacy, it's likely not a barrier to applying.

Depicting your work or project experience

Consider these questions when depicting your work or project experience in your resume:

- What was the value of your impact to your employer/project/team?
- What was the purpose of the project?
- Did you conduct an analysis, create a design, or create/execute a plan?
- What tools or software did you use?
- Did the project increase user/client productivity? If so, by how much?
- Was the project re-engineered or new?
- What development methodologies did you use?
- How many users did your work/project support? What size was the impacted audience?
- How does your impact compare to others' in a similar context or role?
 - Example: If your work resulted in a 20% increase in profits, how will the person reading your resume know how to interpret the impact? The impact could be extraordinary if your team's average is a 5% increase. Key context helps to frame your impact.

Tailor your resume to each job

Consider how your experience is relevant to the open role. Keep in mind that the most relevant experience may not come from your primary job—it may be from a collateral billet, volunteer work, or something you did in your spare time outside of the military, like in these examples:

- **Primary job:** As Leading Construction Mechanic for my military unit, I specialized in diesel mechanics, fuel injection, and 3M Equipment Maintenance, reducing Mean-time-to-repair (MTTR) by 2 days per vehicle.
- **Collateral billet/volunteer work:** As Lead Athletic Petty Officer for 150 sailors, I became an expert on physical fitness and nutrition, organizing Physical Training tests for all members and achieving an 85% pass-rating.
- **Collateral billet/volunteer work:** As Command Career Counselor for 327 people, I became an expert on military human resources procedures, and assisted 34 people in submitting promotion packages.

Demonstrate impact

Accomplished [X] as measured by [Y] by doing [Z]

We recommend you demonstrate your impact by beginning with an active verb, numerically measuring what you accomplished, providing a baseline for comparison, and detailing what you did to achieve your goal.

When demonstrating your impact, don't be afraid to **highlight your individual achievements**. We recognize that military experience can often be team-centered, and it may feel unnatural to call

out individual work. We encourage you to speak to your individual achievements, as that's often what a recruiter needs to better understand the value add you could bring to a role, team, and company. For example:

- Increased operational readiness of \$4M worth of military equipment, resulting in a \$200k annual savings (the highest savings in 10 years accounting for inflation), by reorganizing maintenance assets.

Quantify your military experience using a data-driven approach

We recommend you use actual numbers, percentages, dollar values, and volumes to lend credibility to your accomplishments, like in the examples below:

- Supervised maintenance of 10 helicopters worth \$200 million.
- Ranked 1st out of 12 managers in my area for performance.
- Created a database for paperwork processing, cutting average time spent on paperwork by 20%.

Translate military terminology and acronyms

We recommend you translate military terminology whenever possible to help those without a military background interpret your accomplishments. For example:

- Instead of simply writing your rank and duty title, also include the appropriate civilian equivalent e.g., "MAJ/Brigade S3 (Operations Director)."
- Instead of "Deployed in support of OIF as a M249 gunner in a 20 man recon platoon," you may want to include, "Served in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as part of a 20 person team tasked with intelligence gathering missions."

Pro tip: Learn more about how [Google's MOS tool](#) can help you find your next job by matching your military occupational specialty code to jobs with a similar skill set.

List relevant certifications, awards, citations, and security clearances

Including relevant skills and achievements in your resume will help you stand out from other applicants. While some of your certifications may seem trivial to you, they may be important to hiring managers. For example:

- Cleared for Top Secret information and granted access to Sensitive Compartmented Information (based on SSBI completed 13 Jan 2019).
- Awarded Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal after being named 'Service Member of the Year' from a pool of 4k peers aboard Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, Africa.
- Certified by the Department of Energy to operate and maintain a nuclear propulsion plant.

Ask a non-military friend to read your resume

Before you share your resume with a civilian recruiter, you may want to ask a few friends who didn't serve to review your resume. If they don't understand some of the military experience or content, it could be a signal that you need to further breakdown and explain military jargon.

Represent your experience consistently

While you'll likely share different versions of your resume with different potential employers, be sure the basic timeline and dates of your work experience are consistent on your resume and on your professional online profiles. Recruiting teams may use various methods, including those professional profiles, to identify potential candidates for specific jobs.

Highlighting skills and strengths gained from the military

In this section, we've highlighted examples from four skill sets (leadership, project/program management, teamwork, and problem solving).

Leadership

Think through both your formal and informal leadership roles. For example, many military collateral duties have "leader" or "head" in the title, which are types of formal leadership roles. Informal leadership roles can include leading a project, influencing without authority, or knowing when to take a step back and let others lead. We want to hear about both types of leadership.

Consider the following questions when writing about your leadership experience:

- Were you ever responsible for a group of people outside of your normal position?
- What projects did you lead where you had to influence others in order to achieve a goal?
- What positions did you hold in the military? How many people did you supervise in each position and what was your responsibility? For example:
 - Platoon leader responsible for 30 soldiers and equipment valued at \$25M.
 - Company Commander, Officer in Charge (OIC), selected as "Company Commander" over peers and higher ranking officers to lead a company of 30 personnel.
- What were the responsibilities and specific accomplishments of the team you led?
 - **Example:** Responsible for maintaining a checkpoint and team which inspected over 15k vehicles and individuals without incident.

Project/program management

Remember, many of your accomplishments *can* be translated into project or program management experience in a business context. Consider the following questions when writing about your project/program management experience:

- Can you describe when you had to work under a deadline?
- Were you responsible for the maintenance of equipment or for a task where you had to keep track of several different items?
- Can you name a time when you had limited resources? What did you do to get the job done or accomplish the mission?

For example:

- Supervised the maintenance of 200 pieces of equipment, fixing over 90% of them over a 1 year period.
- Supervised 65 telecommunication specialists who implemented and maintained communication networks for tactical command headquarters and operations, while managing over \$20 million worth of equipment.
- Directed network management, training, quality assurance, and customer satisfaction operations.
- Coordinated layout, submissions, and editing deadlines for monthly publication during deployment.
- Created, redesigned and implemented policies and procedures related to healthcare service delivery to military and non-military personnel.

Teamwork

Service members from the same rank may work together on missions or initiatives outside of the formal structures of a squad, platoon, etc. An example of this might be a task force that's created to achieve a specific goal or even a smaller, more administrative role.

Consider the following questions when writing about your teamwork experience:

- Can you name a time when you worked as part of a team?
- Can you describe the specific accomplishments of the team and what your responsibilities were?

For examples

- Worked with 3 other officers to create a battalion operating handbook, used by over 400 people in the organization.
- Worked with several different military teams with a variety of responsibilities to sweep the village of Letnica in Kosovo prior to a large public gathering.
- Worked as part of a 5-soldier staff that successfully produced a substantial monthly publication and provided public affairs support for a 4,000 member combat brigade

during an active deployment in Iraq and Kuwait.

- Worked with several small military teams to plan and execute the logistics of bringing 4,000+ soldiers home, including homecoming ceremonies, media coverage, and notifying families.
- Successfully led a 40-man division responsible for the ship's anti-missile defense through pre-deployment certification. Joint training with US Marine Corps as a naval shore bombardment and close air support controller.

Problem solving

Think about the times in which you identified a problem and solved it. Consider the following questions when writing about your problem solving experience:

- Did you ever identify a target issue on your own? Did you take steps to solve it? If so, how? What were the results?
- What sort of problems did you run across during your time in the military? How did you handle problems that came up? Was there ever a time you solved a particularly large issue? What were the results?

Examples:

- Identified accounting error in food orders, leading to \$150k savings over 6 months.
- Implemented a shorter training pipeline, allowing the same number of trainees to graduate in 20% less time with the same skills and knowledge.

Veteran career resources

Check out this comprehensive list of [veteran career resources](#). There's something for everyone, regardless of education level, date of separation, or years of experience in any industry.