

PREPARING A RESUME FOR A GREEN JOB

Whether you are moving into the green economy from a job in another industry or directly from a training program, the first step in getting a green job is writing a solid resume. When preparing a resume, you should be aware of how your experience, credentials, and skills compare with what the employer is looking for in a job candidate. While the type of information you put in your resume may be fairly standard, you should focus on the green aspects of your work history and education. Although you will want your resume to shine, remember to be clear, consistent, and credible in your summation of skills and experience. Nothing will derail your success faster than a resume that can't stand up to scrutiny.

Suzanne White of Austin, Texas, is an electrical engineer who was laid off more than once when her job was outsourced overseas. She went back to school to prepare herself for jobs that will stay in the United States, taking solar energy systems classes at Austin Community College. Now she teaches a solar class for women and recently was hired as a technical sales representative/solar design engineer at a local solar company owned by one of her students. She advises women to think creatively about how they can use their new skills in green jobs. "Get in there and don't be afraid to find out what the technology is about. Get your feet wet, take some classes," she said. "We all have skills and experiences that are very solid. You bring that skill set with you. It's being able to apply it into a new industry that's essential."

The hardest part of writing a resume is often just getting started. To overcome "writer's block," take a look at sample resumes for a variety of fields and experience levels. A local workforce organization, such as a One-Stop Career Center, can also help by providing resume and curriculum vitae templates to follow. Colleagues, friends, and family members may also be willing to share their own resumes or review your draft.

At a minimum, your resume should include these essential features:⁶⁹

- **Contact Information:** A prospective employer will need to connect with you to arrange an interview or to request additional information. Include a telephone number and e-mail address that you check often. Be sure your voicemail recording and e-mail address leave a positive impression.
- **Education:** List your academic achievements, awards, and additional training. Be sure to include the certificates and/or degrees earned. If you received a merit-based scholarship or other education honors, note these as well.
- **Licenses or Certificates:** Let potential employers know about any licenses you have that might fulfill state or industry requirements, as well as any certifications that show your areas of expertise.
- **Work Experience:** Introduce employers to your employment history by including your position titles, the companies or organizations for which you've worked, the locations, and brief descriptions of your job responsibilities and achievements. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your abilities and how previous jobs may be applicable to the one for which you are applying. The use of bold lettering or italics is one way to emphasize experience and skills relevant to the position.
- **Special Skills:** List skills that demonstrate special abilities related to your desired job, such as computer or technical skills. For examples, see "Using Industry Terms" below.



- **Professional Affiliations:** You may also want to include professional, civic, or social organization memberships, especially if you have held an officer’s position or participated in the planning and implementation of projects that would demonstrate your interest in a green issue.

USING INDUSTRY TERMS

Using green economy “buzz” words in your resume demonstrates that you understand the nature of the business for which you are applying. Even if the position is a more traditional one, green terminology might capture the interest of an employer, recruiter, or human resources department, and make your resume stand out. For instance, “sustainability” and “environmentally conscious” are terms you might want to include. Refer to the “Glossary of Terms” in this guide, or visit websites such as <http://www.job-hunt.org/green-jobs-job-search/green-industry-glossary.shtml> for examples of green terminology.

RECASTING YOUR SKILLS

Your work history is more than a listing of tasks and responsibilities. It may also showcase your transferable skills, demonstrate your interest in the environment, and highlight specific issues you have worked on that are related to the job for which you are applying.

DRAFTING A COVER LETTER

Your cover letter is just as important as your resume. It should personalize your resume, highlight areas of importance to the employer, and sell your specific set of skills. Generally, a cover letter should include the following:⁷⁰

- **Heading:** Include the date and your mailing address, e-mail address, and/or telephone number.
- **Greeting:** If you know the name and/or title of your point of contact, the person who will be reviewing the resumes or who is chairing the search committee, use it in the greeting. If you can’t find out who this person is by name, “To Whom It May Concern” or “Dear Madam/Sir” is appropriate.
- **Opening:** Begin your letter by explaining your reason for writing, listing the job for which you are applying and the source of the job announcement.
- **Body:** This is your opportunity to shine. Explain why your skills and abilities are the perfect match for the job, remembering to use terms from the job description. Use examples of your previous successes to help you stand out from other applicants. You will also want to write about what interests you about the company and the position.
- **Closing:** Let the employer know when and how you plan to follow up or make additional contact, and be sure to thank the person for her/his time and consideration.

As with your resume, if you need a model, look for examples of cover letters online or elsewhere. Avoid using a generic cover letter. Tailor your letter to the opportunity and organization. Failing to do so reduces your visibility. Employers typically attract many applicants for a given job, so they are looking for those candidates that they can immediately identify as both qualified and unique.

DON'T FORGET THE BASICS

- Show your green awareness by printing your resume and cover letter on recycled paper.
- Grammar and spelling do count; have someone else proofread your letter and resume.

BUZZ WORDS

Here is a small sampling of common words that can be found around the new green economy. Refer to the “Glossary” at the end of this guide for definitions and more terms.

- Carbon footprint
- Climate change
- Ecosystem
- Fossil fuel
- Green building

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WHAT CAN YOU OFFER AN EMPLOYER?

Your resume and cover letter should articulate what sets you apart from others and what benefits you bring to the employer. Start with these questions as you think about how to write concise descriptions and sentences: What have you done at previous jobs that is relevant to this one, and how can you do the same for this job? What unique set of skills do you bring to the job that another candidate would not?

COMPILING A WORK PORTFOLIO

A work portfolio is a collection of samples of your previous work. That could include writing samples, technical drawings, or perhaps photographs of something you built, especially if you are applying for a trade position. Having these examples identified, organized, and ready to show an employer is another important way to demonstrate your abilities. Even if employers don't specifically ask you to share such materials in the job posting, in your resume or cover letter, you can mention that you have such examples available.

UNCOVERING GREEN JOB LEADS

Printed “want ads” are one way to find job leads, but they are far from the only source of information about current openings. Tapping into a variety of sources is more likely to bring you the important result you are looking for in your job search — a great new job! Because jobs can be posted and removed at any time, day or night, it pays for job seekers to check multiple sources several times a week, if not daily.

TRADITIONAL NEWSPAPER ADS

While there has been movement away from the printed word to the world of the Internet as the prime source for information, printed newspaper ads do remain a source for job postings. Look at the postings in the newspapers for the areas where you are seeking to work.

ONLINE JOB BOARDS

According to CNN Money, as of March 2010 there were more than 80 green job boards online.⁷¹ Some job boards list opportunities in different sectors of the green economy, while others have a more specific sector focus. Industry organizations, such as the American Wind Energy Association (<http://www.careersinwind.com>) or the U.S. Green Building Council (<http://careercenter.usgbc.org>),⁷² often host more targeted job boards. See this chapter's “Additional Resources” section for more information on job boards.

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