

Final Cut: Words to Strike from Your Resume

By Elizabeth Lowman

If you've applied for a job recently, you've probably looked over that 8½ x 11" summary of your career more times than you can count—and tweaked it just as often—in pursuit of [the perfect resume](#).



But before you add another bullet point, consider this: It's not always about what you add in—the best changes you can make may lie in what you take out.

The average resume is chock-full of sorely outdated, essentially meaningless phrases that take up valuable space on the page. Eliminate them, and you'll come off as a better, more substantial candidate—and your resume won't smack of that same generic, mind-numbing quality found on everyone else's.

Every word—yes, every word—on that page should be working hard to highlight your talents and skills. If it's not, it shouldn't be on there. So grab a red pen, and banish these words from your resume for good.

Career Objective

My first few resumes had a statement like this emblazoned top and center: "Career objective: To obtain a position as a [insert job title here] that leverages my skills and experience as well as provides a challenging environment that promotes growth."

Yawn. This is not only boring, it's ineffective (and sounds a little juvenile, to boot). The top of your resume is prime real estate, and it needs to [grab a hiring manager's attention](#) with a list of your top accomplishments, not a summary of what you hope to get out of your next position.

Experienced

You can be "experienced" in something after you've done it once—or every day for the past 10 years. So drop this nebulous term and be specific. If, for example, you're a Client Report Specialist, using a phrase such as "Experienced in developing client reports" is both vague and redundant. But sharing that you "Created five customized weekly reports to analyze repeat client sales activity"—now that gives the reader a better idea of where exactly this so-called experience lies, with some actual results attached.

Also eliminate: seasoned, well-versed

Team Player

If you've ever created an online dating profile, you know that you don't just say that you're nice and funny—you craft a fun, witty profile that shows it. Same goes for your resume: It's much more effective to list activities or accomplishments that portray your good qualities in action than to simply claim to have them.

Instead of “team player,” say “Led project team of 10 to develop a new system for distributing reports that reduced the time for managers to receive reports by 25%.” Using a specific example, you show what you can actually accomplish. But simply labeling yourself with a quality? Not so much.

Also eliminate: people person, customer-focused

Dynamic

While resumes are meant to highlight your best attributes, some personality traits are better left to the hiring manager to decide upon for herself. There is a difference between appropriately and accurately describing your work skills and just tooting your own horn. Plus, even the most introverted wallflower will claim to be “dynamic” on a piece of paper because, well, why not? When it comes to resumes, keep the content quantifiable, show tangible results and successes, and [wait until the interview](#) to show off your “dynamism,” “enthusiasm,” or “energy.”

Also eliminate: energetic, enthusiastic

References Available Upon Request

All this phrase really does is take up valuable space. If a [company wants to hire you](#), they will ask you for references—and they will assume that you have them. There’s no need to address the obvious (and doing so might even make you look a little presumptuous!). Use the space to give more details about your talents and accomplishments instead.

In a crummy job market with a record number of people applying for the same positions, it takes more than a list of desirable-sounding qualities to warrant an interview. Specific examples pack a punch, whereas anything too dependent on a [list of buzzwords](#) will sound just like everyone else’s cookie-cutter resume. So, give your resume a good once-over, and make sure every word on that page is working hard for you.