



National Society for Histotechnology
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Your Resume – How do I know what to trim?

By: Leslie Ernst

Once the days of desperately trying to fill the empty face of your resume are over, you may find yourself slowly inching into the opposite problem. How long is too long and what do you trim if you need to get your resume down to size?

It may be a good idea to start fresh with a resume. There are guidelines released every year from sites like Forbes.com and Time/money.com about what is appropriate for a resume in the current market to keep it competitive. Here are a few of my rules, I use when I am reviewing histology resumes, to help you know where to cut the fat, and what to substitute.

Page Length:

I have seen multiple sites with different opinions about what is "too long". From the point of view of a manager who has to screen all these incoming applicants, I can say that if a resume is more than 2 pages, it had better be fantastic and completely relevant to keep my attention. I, personally, would prefer **no more than 2 pages**, however, if you need 3, make it 3 pertinent, well-tailored pages. If you keep the word RELEVANT in mind, most people can trim a resume to 2 pages and still have the information needed to convey your level of expertise to a prospective new boss. But before you start removing anything, remember, **don't cram the text by using narrower margins or smaller font size** in an attempt to fit more on the page. If it is too dense to comfortably read, your prospective employer may miss something critical.

Contact Info and Objective:

The easy ones: avoid photos, social security numbers, reasons why you left positions, salary expectations, and full sentences. You also don't need to mention references (you will be asked for them, you **don't need to say "References on request" – it wastes space**).

A full address – We definitely need a way to contact you, of course! It is helpful to know what city you live in to determine if you are going to need special arrangements for travel for an interview etc. There are some people who feel revealing their full address could lead to security issues. We will get that through HR if the position is offered to you. Your name, city, email address, and one phone number are enough. Please don't send multiple phone numbers. I am not going to call them all looking for you.

The objective – we know you want a job. Most of the time, no useful information comes from a "traditional" objective. **A "Professional Summary" that concisely lists competencies and what you can add to a position may convey more relevant information.** It may seem like a subtle difference, but it is different. An objective may be necessary if you are seeking to change careers and want to explain why



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your resume is full of graphic design and you are applying for a laboratory job now. So consider whether your objective or summary is appropriate and relevant to your career goal.

Work Experience:

I was always taught to include EVERYTHING. However, if it is irrelevant to the work at hand, it doesn't need to be included. I may ask about a gap in a resume in an interview, but the important facts are the ones that relayed to me how qualified you are for the job in question.

You don't need to list your duties in great detail for each job. We know what histotechnologists "do" for the most part. Rather than rehash what we already expect you to be able to do as a certified technologist, **list your accomplishments**. Have you improved turn-around time, decreased error rates, or streamlined a process to save supplies or time? Focus on what you want to do and mold your accomplishments into a format that shows how good you would be at the current job, what you can bring to the table.

If your skills are obvious from other sections of your resume, you may not need to have a separate SKILLS section. **If you have skills that may be important, but cannot be inferred from other experience listed, you should definitely include them.** This may include computer skills. I have known some great lab techs who couldn't turn a computer on but given the increasing technical nature of our jobs, computers are a necessary evil. Therefore, computer skills are as well.

Education:

For a new graduate, school information can be quite important if that is the bulk of the accumulated experience. For those of us who have been out of school and gained a wealth of "real-world" learning, the school section can be moved closer to the end of your resume, after your experience.

If you have been out of school for a while, say over 10 years, it would be acceptable to **remove the filler information about the degree**. For example, the name and degree would remain; but the school address, individual courses, and your G.P.A. would definitely be removed. Unless it is desired in the position, other languages spoken also is unnecessary. Avoid awards and prizes unless somehow directly related to the position for which you are applying.

The dates of attendance are a little trickier. Some would prefer to see them, some worry that it could possibly lead to ageism if the prospective employer feels the applicant may be close to retirement age. My general feeling is that it is not necessary to include them.



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Hobbies:

Your hobbies – they may be fantastically interesting, but unless they are related to your job, not likely to get you hired. The same goes with community and volunteer activities. ***Unless your volunteer activity is somehow related to your intended position, skip it.***

In short, the "rules" on resume writing do change! It is hard to break old habits, but you should tailor your resume to fit in with the current job market and certainly tailor it to target your dream job.