

The SMART method for creating Accomplishment Statements

The one thing that separates a so-so resume from a great one is the use of accomplishment statements. The accomplishment statement reveals what someone completed or achieved as opposed to simply what they were responsible for. Most resumes read like job descriptions using phrases beginning with “responsible for”, “experienced at” or “worked on”. That’s fine, but does not communicate how well the job was performed. Job title alone tells the resume reader what someone was responsible for in most cases. For instance, if the title were Customer Service Representative, it’s fairly obvious that someone was responsible for providing service to customers in whatever area the company does business in.

Specific – Specifics make a difference and help to differentiate. In as concise a manner as possible, list the things that you’ve done that made a difference - the things that were most helpful or most important that set you apart. This may include skills that were obtained or used, efforts that went above and beyond or tasks that were especially appreciated and were well received. What were your specific contributions?

Measurable – Numbers, percentages, dollars and symbols draw visual attention and help to focus the reader on the accomplishment being presented. Employers seek people who can provide measured, tangible, and verifiable results and even day-to-day tasks should be presented with some kind of measurement that adds credibility. What value did you add?

Achievements – If you are entry level, your achievements thus far may relate more to your training, education and skills. What actions have you taken to prepare yourself to be a productive employee? How will your training be of benefit to an employer? Things like working while going to school or volunteering for a worthy charity may be framed as achievements. Ask yourself questions like:

- Was I given any added responsibilities, assignments or special projects?
- In what way did I improve things? How did I grow?
- What was I most effective at? Did I exceed goals or expectations?
- Were there any especially challenging problems that I solved?
- Did I contribute to team activities? Was I sole contributor who works independently?
- What were the challenges? What actions did I take? What result did I get?

Relevant – The hiring manager’s job is to match people with positions and it is often that special combination of activities, qualities or skills they’re looking for that makes the difference. Focusing accomplishment statements on the most relevant knowledge, skills, abilities and work activities of the position being sought can be researched within the Optimal Resume builder Tools section in the Explore Careers function, or directly via O*Net. Also, read through job ads and make an inventory of skills requested. Prioritize and highlight your most relevant accomplishments.

Timeframe – One of the most critical performance indicators is timeframe, and if your accomplishments are completed on or ahead of schedule, noting this on your resume will make a huge difference. Getting projects or tasks done on time is a highly prized quality and when you convey this, it will add a sense of energy and results-orientation.

Using action verbs to craft accomplishment statements helps to punch-up the resume too, and examples of these are listed under Tools within the Optimal Resume builder. Instructions, wording suggestions and ideas for areas to highlight can also be found in the categorized examples of resumes.