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## Resume English Simplified

### Start Each Sentence with an Action Verb

Do not be boring! Be excited about yourself! Use hard-driving language! "Handled" is a ho-hum verb, but "orchestrated" is a vivid, thought- and image-provoking verb. Although your resume should not read like a war novel, use evocative verbs whenever possible.

### Effective Resume Verbs

Create	Implement	Schedule	Install	Administer	Attain
Design	Revise	Motivate	Analyze	Oversee	Evaluate
Manage	Reorganize	Coordinate	Prepare	Guide	Streamline
Supervise	Troubleshoot	Act as liaison*	Teach	Execute	Maximize
Direct	Overhaul	Select	Promote	Conduct	Facilitate
Establish	Resolve	Compile	Increase	Provide	Contribute
Plan	Initiate	Produce	Test	Generate	Consolidate
Devise	Originate	Ensure**	Start	Advise	Utilize
Organize	Train	Reconcile	Orchestrate	Develop	Negotiate

\*"Liaise" as a verb is a backformation; "act as liaison" is better usage.

\*\*More exact than "insure."

There is no magic to any of these verbs. You should use words you are comfortable with, but if you get stuck at any point in writing your resume, just browse through this list. You'll find an exciting way to describe your experiences.

Sentence structures to avoid, however, are "responsible for..." and "duties included..." Remove these passive constructions and start your sentence with a verb, and you'll have a *much* better line. "Duties included managing a staff of seven, opening and closing the store, and the nightly cash count"

becomes “Managed staff of seven. Opened and closed the store. Conducted the nightly cash count.” That’s much better.

## Be Precise

Be exact whenever you can! Use precise numbers and specific nouns. To a seasoned resume reader, “supervised staff” has a slippery feel. On the other hand, “supervised three project engineers (team leaders), seven design and mechanical engineers, and 22 technical support personnel” gives the reader a lot of confidence in the truth of your resume.

Every time you can specify a figure, you increase the verifiability of your resume. It is a point of psychology that more people will believe an exact figure than a rounded one. A resume is probably one of the only places in the known universe where \$9.65 million is greater than \$10 million. Exactitude makes the readers comfortable with your claims.

The old rule from secretarial school was to spell out numbers one through ten, and use Arabic numerals for 11 and over. In a resume, however, using 2, 3, 4, and so on makes for a good, businesslike read. Just be sure to use one system or the other throughout the document. I prefer “\$350,000” to “\$350K” but it’s probably not critical, again, as long as you do it one way or the other consistently. “\$350,000,000” is very impressive written out fully, but it is a bit pretentious if everyone in your field would have written “\$350 million.” Use your own judgment. Incidentally, on international resumes “US\$350 million” means “350 million *United States* dollars,” an important distinction.

## Search for the Superlative

Superlatives are compelling. I cannot emphasize this enough. You are the “first,” “only,” “most,” or “best” something, I guarantee it. Be creative. Here are some superlatives:

- Top producer companywide, out of over 100 full-time sales professionals.
- Ranked #1 in the office for customer satisfaction.
- First account executive in the nation to sign an order for our off-site storage system.
- Managed the fastest-growing enterprise group on the West Coast.
- Merchandised the most profitable line in the company.
- Had the lowest error rate in the department.

and so on . . .

Observe the following transitions, each better than the last:

- Traveled to Boston for client meeting.
- Traveled to Boston *with senior management* for client meeting.
- *Selected to* travel to Boston with senior management for client meeting.
- *Only intern* selected to travel to Boston with senior management for client meeting.

## Use Insiders' Language

Baseball players do not normally use the term "batting practice." They say "BP." Similarly, the "players" in the financial world don't say "mergers and acquisitions" inside their own offices. They discuss "M&A activities." Use of insiders' language is a critical way of identifying that you are in fact an insider.

So, contrary to what other resume books say on this issue, I encourage you to use jargon and abbreviations. Use them judiciously, but do use them. The test is simple: If everyone on the inside will know what you mean, go ahead; if the jargon might seem foreign to those on the inside, leave it out. Do not forget that your own company's most common jargon may be unintelligible outside your office walls. That is the type of jargon to avoid.

So if you're trying to get out of the military and go into a defense contractor, some DoD jargon can stay in (such as "DoD"). If you're trying to get out of the military and into the non-military worlds of business, education, nonprofit, or government, it's all got to be translated into English they'll understand. So, "platoon" becomes "team," "soldiers" becomes "staff" or "employees" or "subordinates." Materiel such as MRAPs and A-10s or Warthogs becomes "equipment." It is jargon the reader will understand that is okay. For more on this, check out this web site for transitioning military: [www.destinygroup.com](http://www.destinygroup.com).

Some abbreviations are pretty common in most business settings. Here are a few examples of abbreviations and jargon that I think are useable in almost any resume. They have the benefit of being efficient, and can give your resume a hard-driving feel: CEO, COO, CFO, LOC or L/C, A/P, A/R, RFP, ROI, P&L, T&E, CPA, IP, CIO, IT and most of the 5,324 other most common technology terms. If these are not familiar to you, then they are not insiders' language to you, and you should consider not using them. If you know them and use them in a normal business setting, then put them into your resume fearlessly.

Finally, if you are a design engineer appointed to the Space Suit Topographical Reconnaissance Inquiry Panel (SSTRIP), spell it out one time and then list the acronym in parentheses (as I just did). Thereafter you can just call it SSTRIP.

## Write a Letter to Your Sister for a First Draft

If you write a letter to your sister about your job accomplishments, it will be a great first draft of your resume. All your sentences will make sense, the verb tenses will be correct, and you won't have to worry about the grammar police.

For example, here is the letter to your sister:

I have been part of the start-up management team for Repeat Advertising, a global advertising art recycling company. I report to the president. I serve as the chief administrative officer (CAO). I participate in all strategic business planning functions. I have contributed to the phenomenal success of this company, from a small entrepreneurial firm to a \$22 million international company with 100 employees and four offices (New York, London, Shanghai, Tokyo). I directed the start-up of

a subsidiary, Repeat Sound, a library of original music and sounds for rent by advertising agencies worldwide. I conducted the feasibility study for this start-up, collaborated with IT on the design of our sound vault and retrieval system, and designed the initial marketing push. I collaborated with our legal staff on global copyright and IP law.

Now, to turn your first draft into traditional resume language, just take out some of the words to create that clipped business style that is traditional for resumes.

- Take out most references to yourself, such as “I,” “we,” “my,” and “our.” You can occasionally use an “I” or a “we” to emphasize a point, but most of these can go.
- Take out some appearances of “a,” “an,” and “the.” That makes it zippy.
- Remove these words unless doing so distorts the meaning: “am,” “is,” “are,” “were,” “be,” “been,” and “have,” “had,” “may,” “might.” Occasionally a transition will sound better with one of these words in place, but most of them can go.
- Look for any other words that are unnecessary. If you can throw them out without changing the meaning, do so.

Very quickly this will come naturally to you. So, here’s the letter to a sister with most of these words marked out:

~~I have been~~ part of the start-up management team for Repeat Advertising, a global advertising art recycling company. ~~I~~ report to the president. ~~I~~ serve as ~~the~~ chief administrative officer (CAO). ~~I~~ participate in all strategic business planning functions. ~~I have~~ contributed to the phenomenal success of this company, from a small entrepreneurial firm to a \$22 million international company with 100 employees and four offices (New York, London, Shanghai, Tokyo). ~~I~~ directed ~~the~~ start-up of a subsidiary, Repeat Sound, a library of original music and sounds for rent by advertising agencies worldwide. ~~I~~ conducted the feasibility study for this start-up, collaborated with IT on the design of our sound vault and retrieval system, and designed the initial marketing push. ~~I~~ collaborated with ~~our~~ legal staff on global copyright and IP law.

Voilà, here’s how it reads on the resume:

Part of the start-up management team for Repeat Advertising, a global advertising art recycling company. Report to the president. Serve as chief administrative officer (CAO). Participate in all strategic business planning functions. Contributed to the phenomenal success of this company, from small entrepreneurial firm to \$22 million international company with 100 employees and four offices (New York, London, Shanghai, Tokyo). Directed start-up of a subsidiary, Repeat Sound, a library of original music and sounds for rent by advertising agencies worldwide. Conducted the feasibility study for this start-up, collaborated with IT on the design of our sound vault and retrieval system, and designed initial marketing push. Collaborated with legal on global copyright and IP law.

## 10 THE OVERNIGHT RESUME

Note that current and ongoing duties are in the present tense, and past projects and accomplishments are in the past tense.

Here's another first draft:

I am the assistant manager in charge of store operations for the Round Tire Co. I am in charge of customer service and staff supervision on a day-to-day basis. Some of my accomplishments include reducing headcount by three with a concurrent increase in sales, establishing a new safety compliance program that reduced our insurance costs, and resolving a Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) complaint about our tire storage procedures. Also initiated a free rotation promotion which brought in increased revenues.

Here's the final draft, with extra words removed, more precise numbers and information, a superlative added in, and sentences restructured to begin with action verbs:

### **Round Tire Co.**

#### **Assistant Manager**

Direct all aspects of store operations on a day-to-day basis. Oversee customer service. Schedule and supervise a staff of 7 to 15 per shift.

#### **Accomplishments:**

- Reduced headcount by 3 with a concurrent increase in sales.
- Established new safety compliance program resulting in reduced insurance costs.
- Resolved a Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) complaint about our tire storage procedures.
- Created a "free rotation" promotion, resulting in \$12,000 increase in sales per month in brake and suspension repairs. This was the store's most successful promotion over the last year.

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To sum up: Tenses should be accurate, and you are the (unstated) subject of most sentences. **Write the first draft of your resume as though it were a letter to your sister.** Avoid complex sentence constructions. If you follow these guidelines, your English will be fine.