

## Resume Writing for Teachers

You seldom get a second chance to make a first impression, and your resume and cover letter are often your first impression. The primary purpose of a resume is to get you a job interview. The resume also serves as the talking point during the interview itself. In a crowded market of teaching candidates, your resume should be designed in such a way to clearly show your unique qualifications for the position – and to set yourself apart from others.

### Start with Your Resume’s Visual Appeal

It is important that your resume has “visual appeal” and attracts the reader’s eye to your content. Given that the reader only spends seconds scanning your resume, visual appeal becomes critical. Here are some considerations for making your teacher resume visually appealing.

- **Type of Document** – Create your resume in a Microsoft Word or as a PDF document. Avoid Internet-based resume templates. They’re too rigid for a customized resume that uniquely expresses your qualifications.
- **Length** – Limit your resume to one page (new teacher) or two pages (experienced teacher).
- **Format** – Choose a resume format (e.g. how you will arrange your information on the page) and be consistent throughout. Remember that those looking at your resume scan it quickly; they do not read it like the page of a book. A consistent look and feel will make it easier to scan.
- **Margins** – Set your margins to .80 to 1.0” on the top, bottom, left and right. Your resume should look like a picture in a frame, with the white space around your content acting as the frame.
- **Font Type** – Don’t use fancy fonts that are hard to read and be consistent with your font type throughout the resume. Times New Roman or Arial are widely accepted font types.
- **Font Size** – Other than your name at the top of your resume, use an 11 or 12 font for your resume content. Your name should be somewhat larger so it is easily recognizable when looking through the pile.

- **Use of Bold/Italics/Underlines** – Use bold, italics and underlines sparingly. Although the use of these creates emphasis, overuse takes away from the visual appeal of your resume.
- **Hard Copies** – For hard copies of your resume, use a heavier white or off-white bond (resume) paper (available at most office supply stores). Print it using a quality laser printer. Make sure your cover letter and other marketing documents are on the same type of paper.

## Choose and Organize Your Resume Categories

Now it's time to decide what topics or areas of interest belong on your teacher resume. Here are some considerations for choosing and organizing your resume categories.

- **A Starting Point** – Always remember that there is no one way to write a resume. Although there are some basic rules, much of it has to do with style. Choose the categories that best market your education, experience, skills and abilities for the teaching position you're seeking. Confer with "trusted others" in the field of education to get their thoughts.
- **Sample Categories** – The following is a list of sample categories for your teacher resume. Don't limit yourself to this list. Create your own categories and give them creative (yet professional) "names" that market you the best way possible. Consider resume categories to be headlines in a newspaper – they are meant to attract attention and peak curiosity.

Because of limited space on your resume, you obviously will not be able to use all of these categories. Choose the ones that are relevant and most important to talk about regarding your teacher qualifications.

- **Name** – Put this in capital letters, bold and a larger font size than your other content.
- **Contact Information** – Always include your mailing address, phone and appropriately named email address. You may also want to consider including the links to your LinkedIn profile or online teacher portfolio, if they represent the best of who you are.
- **Objective** – This is a clear and concise statement of the career/position you're seeking. Some professionals feel that an objective adds focus to a resume; others believe it's a waste of space.
- **Professional Profile** – This is your "elevator speech" on paper – or your "30 second commercial" of what you have to offer, in regard to the teaching profession. Professional profiles are found more often on an experienced teacher's resume.
- **Areas of Expertise** – These are keywords or phrases that denote the "toolbox of skills" you'll be carrying into the classroom. See the section on keywords under "Create Your Content" for some ideas about potential areas of expertise. This category is found more often on an experienced teacher's resume.

- **Education** – Include the name of college (and city and state), name of degree, area of concentration, anticipated or actual date of graduation, and grade point average (if 3.2 or higher). List graduate and undergraduate degrees – no high school (at least for your public school resume).
- **Thesis/MAT Project** – Listing and briefly describing your thesis (graduate and/or undergraduate), or your MAT Project, helps promote your research skills and content knowledge. Both research skills and content knowledge are valued in the teaching profession.
- **Study Abroad** – Global or international experience can help highlight your ability to work with people of different ethnicities and cultures.
- **Certifications** – Provide the name of your actual certification(s), grade levels, issuing body (including state), and effective dates.
- **Teaching Experience** – This is your actual classroom experience, including your internship(s) – include name of district (and city and state), actual job title (e.g. Social Studies Teacher Intern), dates of employment, and bulleted key duties/responsibilities/accomplishments/achievements. Given that teaching internships at Clarkson University are a full year, this would be an important thing to highlight as well.
- **Other Education Experience** – This may include working as a teaching assistant, after-school tutor, museum educator, or some other position where teaching/instruction/training was the primary responsibility. Highlight your transferable skills to the teaching profession.
- **Coaching Experience** – If you have coaching experience, talk about it here. Coaching can denote leadership, as well as skills in teaching, mentoring and guiding. You also make yourself more valuable to a school district if you bring both teaching and coaching experience.
- **Other Professional Experience** – This will include any work in a professional environment (outside of teaching) – doctor’s office, law office, real estate office, bank, finance firm, etc. This will show that you know what’s required to work in a “professional” environment (like education). Highlight your transferable skills to the teaching profession.
- **Other Experience** – This is simply any work experience (outside of teaching or other professional environments) – including camp counselor, life guard, retail sales clerk, child care worker, etc. Highlight your transferable skills to the teaching profession.

- **Professional Development** – If you’ve attended any workshops, seminars, courses, or conferences (outside of your degree program preparation), note that here. List the professional development activity, the organization that sponsored it, and dates attended.
- **Professional Associations (or Affiliations or Memberships)** – These are professional associations within the teaching/education profession, or other related ones that may relate to your content area. Professional associations are excellent sources for information about the profession, professional development opportunities, and networking contacts.
- **Awards/Honors** – Note your academic or community recognitions. Provide the name of the award/honor, the organization that presented it to you, and the date received. In addition, if the name of the award/honor is not self-explanatory, provide a short description of the qualities or characteristics you were recognized for.
- **School Activities** – These are extracurricular activities, including athletics, clubs, organizations, honor societies, etc. that you participated in. Note the name of the activity, the organization that sponsored the activity, and dates participated. If you held a leadership role or worked on a special project or committee, make sure to highlight that as well.
- **Community Service** – This is any volunteer work you’ve done in the community with government, human service and/or other non-profit agencies. List the community service you performed, the organization you performed it for, and dates of service.
- **Classroom Technology Skills** – If you have integrated technology into the classroom (e.g. Smartboard, Whiteboard, Blackboard) list them here. This includes any technology used in the classroom to attain or manage student success. You need to go beyond the Microsoft Office programs to make this section relevant.
- **Language Skills** – In the global workplace, proficiency (or even conversational ability) in multiple languages is valued. List languages and level of proficiency.
- **Interests** – List only those that may be of interest to someone in a school setting.
- **Getting Organized** – Once you’ve selected the categories you want to include in your teacher resume, organize them in a logical fashion and from most important to least important. Remember, if you have a one page resume, your most important information needs to be in the top half. If you don’t get the reader’s attention in the top half they’ll never make it to the second half.

## Create Your Content

With your categories established, it's now time to develop compelling content that will best market you for appropriate teaching positions. Here are some considerations for developing compelling content.

- **Some General Rules** – The following are some general rules for resume content development:
  - Keep descriptions clear and to the point; use concise bulleted statements whenever possible. Bulleted statements are easier to scan.
  - Customize information to the teaching profession and your content area; emphasize specific and transferable skills.
  - When listing information with dates, always list this information from most to least recent.
  - Be accurate, direct and honest – never exaggerate or misrepresent yourself on a resume. You must be able to explain and talk about everything on your resume.
  - Put a heavy emphasis on your quantitative and qualitative accomplishments and achievements – see more information about this below.
  - Use action verbs to describe your key responsibilities, accomplishments and achievements. Go to <http://resumewritingacademy.com>, click on “Free Resources,” then click on “Verb List” for 395 great verbs for your resume and other career documents.
  - Make sure to include “keywords” (usually nouns) that are common to the teaching profession, specifically for resumes that are scanned electronically as part of the screening process. Some sample keywords include, but are not limited to:
    - Teaching and Learning
    - Instruction
    - Instructional Best Practices
    - Teaching Across the Curriculum
    - Interdisciplinary Teaching Approaches
    - Experiential Learning
    - Curriculum Development, Planning and/or Design
    - Creative Lesson Planning
    - Teacher-Parent Relations
    - Student Success
    - Testing
    - Standardized Testing/Scoring
    - Learner Assessment

- Classroom Technology Integration
  - Classroom Management
  - Student Engagement
  - Student Involvement
  - Parental Involvement
  - Special Needs Students/IEPs
  - Mainstream
  - Inclusion
- Don't use abbreviations or acronyms, even if they're recognizable. They can be viewed as shortcuts. There are some exceptions here, but they are few.
  - These things don't belong on your teacher resume:
    - Personal information such as height, weight, health, age, race, gender, sex, marital status, or ethnicity
    - A photo of yourself
    - Names or contact information for supervisors
    - Salaries for present or past positions
    - Reasons for leaving past positions
    - The statement "References furnished upon request"
    - Names and contact information for references
  - Always proofread your resume for spelling, punctuation and grammar; have several other people proofread it as well. They will add the value of "fresh eyes."
- **Developing Results-Based Statements (Teacher-Specific Positions)** – Always remember that employers predict future success through past performance. Therefore, it is critical to develop "results-based" statements on your teacher resume. Consider the following, in regard to your direct teaching experience.
    - Did you increase student performance – elevate test scores – over a certain period of time? If so, by what percent?
    - Have you shown success with challenging student populations? What was that success and how did you achieve it?
    - Do you have a specialty or expertise in particular teaching methods or approaches? How have they proven to be effective?
    - What classroom management strategies have you used to increase engagement and decrease incidents? What metrics can you use to prove this?
    - Did you increase parental involvement or strengthen community ties? How? What value did this add to student learning and engagement?

- Have you employed the use of creative and innovative curriculum, lesson plans and/or instruction? How can you prove it was effective?
- What were the results of your observations and performance evaluations? These are typically very good sources for quantitative and qualitative accomplishments/achievements.
- Have you actively participated in professional development activities? How has this professional development led to improved instruction?
- What leadership positions outside of the classroom – coaching or club advisor – did you assume? How have these teams or clubs benefited from your leadership?
- Were you chosen or selected for special projects, assignments or committees within the district?
- Have you incorporated any classroom technology enhancements to promote learning across the curriculum? What were the outcomes?
- What would your mentor and supervisor say about your teaching skills and abilities? Think about meeting with them to brainstorm how you've made a difference, inside and outside of the classroom environment.

Consider the following – from a career planning website called Quintessential Careers ([www.quintcareers.com](http://www.quintcareers.com)) – regarding positions outside of the teaching profession. Some of these questions may even apply to the teaching profession.

- What special things did you do to set yourself apart from others? How did you do the job better than anyone else did or than anyone else could have done? What evidence would you give to back that up?
- What did you do to make this job your own? How did you take the initiative? How did you go above and beyond what was asked of you in your job description?
- What special things did you do to impress your boss so that you might be promoted?
- And were you promoted? Rapid and/or frequent promotions can be especially noteworthy.
- How has the organization benefited from your performance? How did you/will you leave this employer better off than before you worked there?
- Did you win any awards, such as Employee of the Month?
- What are you most proud of in this job, in terms of what you achieved?

- Were you formally evaluated in this job? If so, note any glowing or even complimentary quotes from your reviews. Did you consistently receive high ratings?
- Have you received any complimentary memos or letters from employers or customers? Provide quotes from these letters that support your accomplishments.
- What tangible evidence do you have of accomplishments -- publications you've produced, products you've developed, sales you've generated, etc.?
- How did you contribute to this employer's profitability, such as through sales increase percentages, fundraising efforts, grants written, etc.? In other words, how have you helped your employer to make money in some way?
- How did you contribute to operational efficiency in this job, such as through cost reduction percentages? How did you help this employer or a part of the organization to save money, save time, or make work easier?
- How did you contribute to productivity, such as through leading a team or being a member of a team that was successful in completing an important project?
- How did you build relationships or image with internal and/or external clients? How did you attract new customers or retain existing ones?
- What is the organization's mission statement? How did you help the organization fulfill its mission statement?
- How did you solve one or more specific problems in this job? What were the problems or challenges that you or the organization faced? What did you do to overcome the problems? What were the results of your efforts?
- Were you selected or chosen for special projects, a team, or a committee based on some skill or expertise that you possess?
- If you had to "ghost-write" a letter of recommendation about you from your boss, what would he/she say about you? Be specific.
- Overall, what difference did you make? What did you contribute? What value did you bring to the organization? State these in specific/concrete quantitative/qualitative terms.



## Public Schools vs. Private Schools

Not all teaching is alike. Although there are some similarities, there are also some distinct differences between teaching in a public school setting and teaching in a private school setting. Consider what each are looking for (sample list only):

### Public Schools

- Teacher certification is required.
- Academic achievement – a high GPA – in your degree programs is generally valued.
- Training and/or experience in both pedagogy and content knowledge is desirable.
- If you have previous coaching experience, that may prove to be helpful.
- Information about high school should not be provided.

### Private (Independent) Schools

- Teacher certification is **not** required.
- Academic achievement – a high GPA – in your degree programs is valued.
- Mastery and demonstration of content knowledge is critical. Consider a summary of expertise in a particular area (e.g. Contemporary American Women Poets).
- Previous teaching experience and other education experience (as noted above) is desirable.
- Involvement in extracurricular activities – including clubs, organizations and sports – as a participant and/or advisor/coach/leader is looked upon favorably. In a private school you will be involved in the community – inside and outside of the classroom.
- Information about high school is welcomed – particularly if you attended a private high school, participated in sports or other extracurricular activities, and/or displayed high academic achievement.
- Address the goals and priorities of the private schools, based on your research of them. For example, if a school has an outdoor education/environmental emphasis be sure to include any coursework, volunteering or unique training you have in that field.
- Pay close attention to the vocabulary used on a private school's website (e.g. often private schools don't use the term "social studies," but rather "history.")

- Because private schools differ widely, you might find you need to tweak your resume to make it unique for each school.

If you are interested in both public and private school teaching, it would not be uncommon to have a separate resume for each. In that way, you could highlight what's important based on the setting.

## Time To Save

When creating your teacher resume save your document early and often in the process. A hard drive crash or loss of power could cause you to lose your work if you haven't saved it. Consider the following points:

- **Name It** – When saving your resume electronically, save it as “Last Name First Name Resume.” For example, John Smith would save his resume as “Smith John Resume.”
- **Save In Multiple Places** – Saving it in multiple places (computer hard drive and USB) helps assure that if your hard drive crashes, your resume doesn't crash with it.

## Closing Comments

We are here to support you in developing your teacher resume, as well as in other aspects of your career development and advancement. For assistance with your resume, including a resume critique, contact Clarkson University Career Services at [career@clarkson.edu](mailto:career@clarkson.edu).

The faculty in the School of Education can serve as an excellent resource in the development of your resume. Also, your mentor and supervisor are your advocates and will be more than willing to conduct a resume review. Consult with them as well.

Finally, you will receive a lot of feedback about your resume and sometimes it will conflict. Although there are some resume writing rules, much of resume writing is about style. You need to make decisions that you are most comfortable with – as it is your resume and it needs to reflect your style. Ultimately, more and different perspectives will lead to a stronger resume and thus increase your rate of success in a crowded job market.