

# *Creating resumes and CVs for wildlife and fisheries professionals*

by Rhiannon Jakopak

Resumes and CVs are absolutely essential documents for every wildlife and fisheries professional to have, and you should be working on your records early and often. But, our profession is unusual, and the advice that comes up when you search “how to write a resume” will often not apply to wildlife and fisheries folks. This document provides a short list of things to keep in mind as you build your resume and CV.

## **1. Take time to create thoughtful explanations of the work that you have conducted.**

- a. Use strong action verbs. Look at websites like [this](#) and [this](#) if you are lacking inspiration. Action words might include operated, orchestrated, implemented, delivered, reorganized, facilitated, analyzed, measured, quantified, etc.
- b. Talk about the tasks you completed, as well as how you did it. Did you work as part of a small team, independently, with 1 other person? Did you have to backpack to a site and carry a heavy pack while doing it? Did you have to learn new skills on the job?
- c. Organize your thoughts in bullets instead of paragraphs. Each position you list might have 2 – 4 bullets.

**2. Even when applying for wildlife jobs, it's ok to list your non-wildlife related work.** If you worked retail, then you are probably quite good at interacting with members of the public, which we all need to do wildlife work. Just don't list wildlife and retail work under the same category. List wildlife work in the “professional experience” category and retail work under “other experience.” Be sure to tailor how you describe non-wildlife work to be relevant to wildlife work: for example, instead of saying that you stocked shelves, say that you were responsible for maintaining inventory and ordering new supplies when needed, which is a skill that would be essential for many wildlife-related jobs. Say that you worked with a small team in a high-stress environment. There are lots of transferable skills; just make that connection obvious!

## **3. Be sure that you are presenting a well-organized document.**

- a. Have relevant sections for your resume and CV. Education, professional experience, additional experience, skills, presentations/writing, classes, organizations, and service are all basic sections that you will likely have. Additional sections might be certifications, grants/awards, and interests.
- b. Within each section, list items in reverse chronological order, with the most recent experiences being towards the top.
- c. This should go without saying, but make sure that you proofread your document. Check for correct grammar! For example, if your job ended, then everything in that job description should be in the past tense.
- d. Organize your content so that your most relevant information is towards the top. Remember that most people won't look at your resume/CV for more than a minute or two, so what do you want them to see?

**4. Be sure to list your skills in an easy-to-navigate, well-organized way.** Include (and consider differentiating between) “hard” and “soft” skills.

- a. Skills to consider and, if you have them, include: communication with landowners and members of the public, ability to work in small or large teams, leadership, using GPS and other navigation tools/compass and map, drive 4-wheel vehicles, drive a trailer, radiotelemetry, vegetation surveys, small mammal trapping, animal handling, animal husbandry, programming/GIS, Microsoft Access/Microsoft Suite, Google Suite.
- b. Don't put things like “hard working” and “well-organized.” Everyone says that, and it's better to demonstrate it through your numerous experiences and well-organized documents than to ask someone to believe that you are hard working and well-organized.

**5. Tailor the document to the position you are applying for.**

- a. Cut and paste exact phrases and terms and put them into your job descriptions. This is especially important if you are applying for federal positions, since your documents have to make it through HR people who do not necessarily have wildlife/fisheries backgrounds.

**6. List references at the end.**

- a. Select professional references who know you well and can speak to your strengths. When asking people if they will be references, be sure to ask whether they will provide a positive reference for you, not just a reference for you!
- b. When listing a reference, be sure to include who they are and how you know them. For example,

Gail Heber, Wildlife Biologist with Wyoming Game and Fish Department  
Direct supervisor June 2022 - August 2022.  
Email: [gail.1234@gmail.com](mailto:gail.1234@gmail.com)  
Phone: 123-123-1234

**7. Use style strategically, but do not overdo it.**

- a. Use a mix of bold, italics, and font sizes to differentiate content. Pick an overall heading for each topic, and make that different from the heading for each of the elements within the topic, and then make that different from the text within the topic. For example:

## **Professional Experience**

*Undergraduate Research Assistant, University of Wyoming*

-Cared for and maintained captive frog populations for research on breeding under different climate change scenarios.

- b. Once you pick a style, stick with it throughout the entire document.
- c. Make sure your document can be read without color. If someone prints the document, it will probably be in black and white.

**8. If possible, submit your resume/CV as a PDF.** PDFs are stable across the computers that open them, but if you send your document in Word or another word processing platform, the file will look different on each computer that opens it. Your beautiful formatting may be lost!

**9. Be truthful.** Do not sell yourself short, and do not exaggerate your skills. If you have used Program R one time, do not put R as one of your skills. However, if you have used R to clean data for undergrad research, put that as a skill and reference your skill level.

**10. Know the difference between a resume and a CV, and use them accordingly.** Resumes are good for jobs outside of academia. They are typically shorter and emphasize different things than CVs—they emphasize things like skills and experiences, over publications and research. Your resume should not be 1 page in wildlife, unless the job post explicitly calls for a 1-page resume. We work so many seasonal jobs, and they are usually all relevant. Include them, and let your resume be 2 or 3 pages. CVs, however, are used for academic positions, like graduate school or research scientist positions. They will list everything that you've done, including service, publications, presentations, and more.

**11. Keep a running list of everything you do in a master version of your resume/CV.** You will do a lot of things, and you will forget about them if you have to make a resume/CV from scratch. Take time once a month, semester, or year to update your document—your future self will thank you.

**12. Look at other resumes/CVs whenever you get the chance.** Notice what formatting works and what formatting doesn't work. Mimic it and learn from it! Don't let this be discouraging to you, though! Remember that everyone is on their own path, and just because your CV is not as long as your professor's, it doesn't mean you're doing something wrong.



Rhiannon Jakopak is a wildlife ecologist whose work at the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources focused on researching mammal behavior, sharing science with a wide range of stakeholders, and teaching essential skills and concepts to undergraduate students. She earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University of Wyoming, and she currently works for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

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