

# How to Match Your Qualifications to a Job Description

## Tips for Matching Your Resume and Cover Letters to Jobs

By *Alison Doyle*

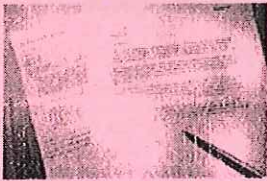


Image © iStockphoto.com/Pali Rao

Employers will usually only spend a few seconds deciding if you are a good enough fit for a job to warrant a more thorough review, so you need to **make sure that it is immediately obvious that you have many of the skills, experiences and qualities that they value most highly.**

### Make a List

The first step in making this impression is to create a list of the preferred qualifications for the ideal candidate for your target job. If a job advertisement is well written and detailed, you **might be able to assemble much of your list right from the ad.**

Extract any of the **keywords** describing **skills, qualities or experiences** which the employer has listed as required or preferred. Also review the job duties and make some assumptions about the qualifications needed to carry out those duties. For example, if the ad mentions that you would organize fundraising events for potential donors, you can assume that event planning skills would be highly valued and should be added to your list.

### Get More Information

Sometimes ads for jobs are very short and don't reveal much about the employer's expectations. Try **looking on the company's website**, since there might be a longer description in the human resources section of their site than in the ad you saw.

Another strategy is to search mega sites like Indeed.com and SimplyHired.com by the same job title to get a sense of what other employers are looking for in candidates. Also search Google to see descriptions of similar jobs. For example, if you are applying for a credit analyst position, try searching by the phrase "credit analyst job description".

## Ask for Advice

If you are really motivated to land a particular job, interview professionals in the field and ask them what it takes to excel in their job. Reach out to college alumni through your college's career and/or alumni office, LinkedIn contacts, and family friends to generate a list of contacts for these consultations.

## Make a Match

Once you have assembled a detailed list of the qualifications for your target job, review each item on the list and try to think of how you might prove that you possess that asset. Write a sentence about as many of the qualifications as possible detailing how you used that skill or exhibited that quality in a work, volunteer, academic or co-curricular role.

Whenever possible, point to any positive results or recognition you received while applying the skill. For example, if a job requires strong writing skills, you might say "While working as a campaign intern, I wrote press releases about the candidate's platform which resulted in two articles in the local media".

## Prioritize Your Qualifications

Prioritize the sentences about your qualifications and incorporate the hardest hitting statements into your cover letter. Compose a thesis statement for the beginning of your cover letter which references 2 - 4 assets which make the job an excellent fit for you. For example, for a bank teller job, you might say "my strong mathematics skills, customer service orientation, attentiveness to detail and ability to work with precision make this job an excellent fit for me". In subsequent paragraphs, you should provide proof of how and where you applied those skills.

## Review Your Resume

Review your existing resume and make sure that you have incorporated as many statements about the preferred qualifications for the job as possible. List the highest priority phrases at the beginning of your descriptions to get

the most attention. If you have a couple of jobs which are more qualifying than others, you might develop a lead category towards the top of your resume like "Related Experience" (if they are not your most recent jobs).

## **Include Headlines**

Some candidates will have clusters of experiences which correspond to key qualifications. Take the example where writing and event planning are highly qualifying for a particular job.

If a candidate has experiences which fit those categories, then they might have headings like "Writing Experience" and "Event Planning Experience" and place the related experiences in those sections of the resume. **Relevant headings will draw the employer's attention to key qualifications at a glance.**

*Alison worked for many years in Human Resources. She has also worked in a college career services office, developing information technology resources to assist constituents with job searching. Alison is highly regarded as an expert in understanding how to take advantage of all the resources available to job seekers.*

*Alison has been quoted or mentioned in many major online and print publications, including Forbes, The New York Times, CNN.com, MSNBC.com, CBS MoneyWatch.com, Newsday, NY Daily News, Los Angeles Times, Philadelphia Inquirer, ABCNews.com, HR Magazine, The Christian Science Monitor, The Arizona Republic, US News & World Report, The Wall Street Journal, WashingtonPost.com, FastCompany.com, Employment Digest, AOL Jobs, Bankrate.com, HireVue.com, Kiplinger.com, LinkedIn, Mashable.com, TypePad, Women For Hire, Chicago Tribune, Consumer Reports, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and the syndicated Careers Now column.*