



Positioning Volunteer Experience on Your Resume

Placing volunteer experience on your resume is a way to demonstrate your full range of skills and capabilities, show productivity in employment gaps and to set yourself apart as an involved citizen, willing to take on new experiences and make things happen. Now the tough question is where to place this experience on your resume. *Volunteer work should be presented with the same value, importance and level of achievement as paid work.*

There are a few different placement options that numerous people have taken note of:

1. Add a section to your resume called "Community Service", or something of the like
 - a. Shows interest outside of work experience
 - b. Shows accomplishments during gaps in employment.
2. Present volunteer experience along with paid work
 - a. Gives ongoing volunteer service same weight and importance as a paying job
 - b. With this approach, it is at the interview stage that you discuss how the experience was gained
 - c. Most recommended placement of volunteer experience
3. Do a combined resume that lists skills gained from related volunteer work along with paid work and at the bottom lists briefly paid and volunteer work.

As with posting your paid work experience, try to include as many similarities between the prospective position and the applicant's experience. For instance, if you are applying for a management or lead position you could focus on your volunteer experience leading other volunteers or taking charge of a project.

It is recommended that you NOT use "volunteer" as a job title. It's an adjective and alone does not convey the work that you have accomplished. If you volunteered teaching children you could use the title "Tutor", or if you volunteered in an office setting, "Office Assistant."

It is advised to focus on the volunteer experience most relevant to the position you are seeking, not list all volunteer experience if some of it does not relate. It is also recommended to not overstate what was gained in the volunteer experience.

The following guidelines can be helpful for volunteers (and others) when writing resumes: (from <http://www.energizeinc.com/art/resumes.html>)

- Use an easy-to-follow format. Use bullets and phrases that are clearly written and can be read quickly.
- Use the same format throughout. For example, use all CAPS for the job title and Caps and Lower Case for the name of the organization. Or vice-versa, highlighting whichever is the more important.
- The specific address of the organization is not necessary; city and state are sufficient.

- Make sure there are no gaps in the time sequence. If there are, explain them in the cover letter.
- Use "Professional Experience," not "Employment History" as a heading. This broader phrase very nicely includes volunteer work.
- If the volunteer position was full-time or ongoing, clearly note that on the resume. Most employers will assume that volunteer work is very part-time, short-lived, and/or sporadic.
- Continuing education and on-the-job training should be placed after high school and college information. The volunteer manager's records should help volunteers recall various training sessions. This information serves to verify that skills presented elsewhere in the resume were learned in a formal setting.
- A Summary of Skills and Experience is the area of the resume for volunteers to emphasize special skills, whether formally or informally learned. List three to five bulleted points at either the beginning or end of the resume. For example: "Proven motivational skills" or "Easily adapt teaching style to reach all age groups" or "Excellent organizational and project coordination skills."