

ASK THE EXPERTS

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RESUME

What is parallel structure, and why is it important when it comes to writing my resume?

Parallel structure in resume writing means using the same format or structure across similar content or sections. Employing parallelism ensures clarity, professionalism, and ease of understanding, as it offers a rhythmic and organized presentation of information that is easier to read and understand.

For instance, if you're listing job responsibilities or accomplishments, maintaining a parallel structure aids the reader in quickly digesting the information.

Good Examples:

- Developed and implemented a new marketing strategy.
- Managed a team of 15 sales representatives.
- Increased quarterly sales by 20%.

Here, each bullet point begins with a past-tense action verb, followed by the details of the action. It's clear, concise, and easy to follow.

Bad Examples:

- New marketing strategy was developed and implemented.
- Managing a sales representative team of 15.
- There was a 20% increase in sales during the quarter.

These bullets lack consistency. The first uses a passive voice, the second begins with a present participle, and the third is an indirect statement. The inconsistent structure can disrupt the reader's flow and make the content harder to quickly comprehend.

Parallel structure in resumes is also about adopting a voice and perspective that's personal and direct. Starting resume bullets with action verbs ensures that the document is written in the first person, without explicitly using "I" or "my." This approach is favored in resumes because it focuses on the actions and results, placing emphasis on what the candidate has accomplished, rather than the narrative structure of the sentence itself.

Using action verbs in the first person directly attributes responsibilities and achievements to the candidate, making their contributions clear and impactful and the content more engaging and assertive.

For instance, consider the difference between the following statements:

With Pronouns: "I developed a new marketing strategy that increased sales by 30%."

Action Verb without Pronouns: "Developed a new marketing strategy, increasing sales by 30%."

Both statements convey the same accomplishment, but the second is more concise and direct. In the context of a resume, where space is at a premium and the goal is to convey information quickly and clearly, the streamlined approach is preferred.

Furthermore, consistently starting bullets with action verbs maintains parallelism throughout the resume. It creates a rhythm, making the resume easier to skim and digest. Recruiters and hiring managers, who often have to go through a large number of resumes in a short amount of time, will appreciate this clarity and consistency.

Adhering to parallel structure in resume writing is not merely a stylistic choice, but a strategic one. It streamlines information, enhancing clarity and readability and ensuring that a candidate's achievements are presented in the most impactful way. Embracing this approach is a testament to a candidate's attention to detail, professionalism, and effective communication.

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