

ASK THE EXPERTS

MARCH 2024

RESUME

Do I need to address a career gap, and if so, how do I do that on my resume?

Addressing a career gap on your resume is important, as potential employers will likely notice any significant periods of unemployment – and may have questions about them. Here are seven strategies to address a job gap in your resume:

1. **Be Honest:** If asked, provide a straightforward explanation without going into unnecessary detail. Misleading potential employers can lead to issues down the line.
2. **Highlight Productivity:** Showcase any activities you engaged in during the gap period that are relevant to your professional growth, such as volunteering, taking courses, getting certifications, or freelancing. Check out our [Lifelong Learning Resources](#) guide for educational and professional development ideas.
3. **Use a Different Resume Layout:** Consider altering your resume format to minimize the visibility of the gap. CAUTION: A functional resume, which emphasizes skills and abilities over chronological work history, might not be parsed effectively by ATS due to its unconventional structure. Instead, you might consider using a hybrid resume that highlights your skills and achievements upfront and provides a straightforward, chronological work history that ATS can easily parse. Watch our two-part interview with career practitioner and recruiter Arthur Hughes to learn more about ATS:
September 2023 Newsletter - [Part 1](#)
November 2023 Newsletter - [Part 2](#)
4. **Explain the Gap:** If the gap was due to a layoff, personal health issues, caring for a family member, retraining or education, or even a sabbatical for personal growth, you should include a brief explanation in your cover letter or the resume itself. Focus on how the experience gained during the gap can contribute to your desired role. For tips and sample scripts, read the “Crafting Effective Reasons for Leaving Statements” article in our March 2024 newsletter on [page 6](#).
5. **Prepare Your Pitch:** Be ready to discuss your employment gap during interviews. Prepare a concise explanation focusing on what you learned during the gap and how it makes you a better candidate for the job. Practice until you feel comfortable and confident sharing it in interviews and networking events.
6. **Focus on Your Strengths:** Make sure the rest of your resume shines by highlighting your achievements, skills, and experiences. A strong resume that showcases your value can make an employment gap seem less significant.
7. **Network:** Getting your foot in the door is often about who you know. Networking can help you bypass initial resume screenings. Connections can vouch for your character and work ethic, which might make potential employers less concerned about employment gaps.

Employers are becoming more understanding of resume gaps, especially considering events like the pandemic. By addressing your job gap proactively and positively, you can demonstrate resilience, growth, and valuable experiences gained during that time.

Career Experts Group

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