



HOW TO HANDLE A RESUME GAP

Is there a period of time on your resume between the end of one job and the beginning of another? Has it been a while since you worked in your field? As long as you address it head on and have a plan for positioning it, that gap in your resume doesn't have to be a deal breaker.



• *See it in a positive light*

A positive attitude is the single most important factor in successfully positioning a resume gap. Whatever the reason—from taking time off to have children, or caring for a loved one, to needing a sabbatical after leaving a role—the first step is to view it as a positive in your own mind. Think about what you learned. The insights or wisdom you gained. The efforts you made to stay current on skills and industry trends. This is an experience that strengthened you as a person and a professional.

• *Prepare your answer*

The gap will be noticed. What's important is how you position and explain it. Remember that resume gaps are not all that unusual. What you may view as a massive issue may be routine to an experienced hiring manager. When they see a gap, their primary concerns are current skills, job readiness and commitment. Be sure to address these concerns in your answer.

Write out your answer. Hone it. Polish it. Practice delivering it. Embed it in your mind. It will help you position your time away with confidence in your cover letter, resume and the interview.

"I took time away from my career path to *[reason for the gap]*, and I am excited to return. During that period, I continued to actively develop my skills through *[any efforts made to develop skills]* and stayed current on our industry through *[frequent visits to websites, other activities]*. Time away also provided valuable perspective and re-energized me—I can't wait to get back to doing what I do best *[key strengths and talents]*. This position is a perfect fit."

• *Be completely up front*

The gap is a part of your life's journey. You should be very straightforward in how you address it, including referencing it in your cover letter with a brief explanation of why it's a positive.

• *Be totally honest*

It's never a good idea to lie in a job application or interview. Even if the deception goes undiscovered in the hiring process and you get the job, discovery later can be grounds for immediate dismissal. So, you don't want to fudge the dates on your resume or be anything less than honest about the gap.

• *Format your resume to address the gap*

It's perfectly acceptable to create a hybrid format for your resume that leads with a short summary of skills, strengths and other qualifications. This approach puts your value proposition upfront, right where it belongs, gap or no gap!

In addition, instead of a traditional reverse chronological "Experience" section, consider a functional resume format. A functional resume allows you to group experiences into skill-based experience sections, like "Marketing Experience" or "Operations Experience." You can feature jobs, volunteer activities, or self-driven projects in these experience sections, and while the experiences in each section should be listed in reverse chronological order, you can decide which sections should come first in the resume, based on the skills that match the job.

• *Shorten the gap*

While you're unemployed, seek out opportunities to continue building relevant skills. Volunteer for a non-profit or provide consulting services to family and friends. You can even take a course through your community center or community college to continue honing skills, especially to stay current with technology or learn new in-demand tools.

Can I include caregiving on a resume?

Good question! Depending on the role you are seeking, you can include a caregiving experience on your resume if the responsibilities translate to the skills and experiences required by the job.

Depending on whether or not the care was for a child (or children) or an adult (elderly or disabled) these skills might include scheduling, health care management, medication management, coordinating in-home therapies and services, positive behavioral and social development, and others.