



**MAKE YOUR CASE**  
A few formatting and content tips can help you highlight the most important details on your résumé.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

# Résumés: Putting Your Best Foot Forward

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**C**reating a résumé is your chance to present yourself as a valuable hospital team member. Hiring managers are looking for the best fit for their hospital culture. Good managers are only partially concerned with your technical skills and experience. They also assess your interpersonal skills, teamwork, and communication abilities.



Your résumé not only needs to highlight *what* you have done and *when* but it should also give the hiring manager a sense of *why* you would be a great addition to their team. What contributions do you bring? Specifically, how are you going to make a difference? Think of your résumé as a beautifully wrapped gift; the recipient should be eager to open it and look inside with interest.

## STAND TALL, YOU'RE A VETERINARY PROFESSIONAL

You've worked hard to become a veterinary nurse/technician. But you're more than an IVC-placing, anesthesia-monitoring, radiograph-obtaining, blood-drawing automaton. You're also a human being. You have unique traits, aptitudes, and talents that will enhance a hospital team. You have the ability to make a positive impact on patient care and client service. You have the capacity to learn and grow. You have your own dreams and goals, and you are seeking a hospital fit that not only fully utilizes your skills but also provides the opportunity to achieve your best.

Your résumé is the place to showcase your skills and accentuate your abilities. How best to portray the unique components that make up *you*, veterinary nurse extraordinaire, and set you apart from others?

Highlight the aspects of veterinary medicine that excite you the most. Why do you go to work each day? Is it the patient care? Helping clients through tough times? A sense of community with your coworkers? Portray the essence of you, beyond the veterinary nurse.

## FORMATTING MATTERS

Yes, on the surface this appears basic; however, a surprising number of résumés are thrown out because they are hard to read or confusing. Create a résumé that looks clean and well organized so the key information is easy to locate. Your résumé needs to appeal to a wide variety of managers—those who skim for specific qualifications and those who want all the intricate details. When formatting your résumé, consider the following guidelines.

### Do:

- Use a simple, legible font, at least 11 points or larger. This is not the place for artistic style. If the hiring manager needs to squint, it goes in the trash.

- Be concise. Aim to keep your résumé at 2 pages max, but don't be overly concerned with cramming it all onto a single page.
- Leave at least 1-inch margins all around so the interviewer has room to make notes.
- Include a footer with your last name and page numbers (e.g., "Becker|1").
- Print your résumé to check the formatting. There should not be large spaces or blank pages.
- Name your résumé document with your last name. "Becker.Resume" is more professional than "Very Best BEST Final Resume."

### Don't:

- Don't rely solely on spell check (e.g., "costumer service" versus "customer service" won't be picked up). Ask someone to review for clarity, spelling, and grammatical errors.
- Don't include your picture or your pet's pictures. You are not being evaluated based on your appearance or the cuteness of your own companion animals.
- Don't send more than 1 attachment in an email. Type your cover letter within the body of the email. If the job posting specifically requests letters of recommendation or other requirements, then by all means include them, but otherwise, limit your attachment to just your résumé.

## CORE ELEMENTS

A well-organized résumé makes your qualifications stand out. Hiring managers need to make early cuts so they can focus on top candidates. Emphasize your competencies.

Avoid starting your résumé with an objective statement. "To obtain a position as a veterinary technician." Duh. Instead, right below your contact information, include 3 to 4 sentences that speak to what intrigues you, how you contribute, and why you are aligned with their culture. Take your time—this is probably the most challenging section to write.

Following that, use **HEADINGS** that are bold, capitalized, and/or underlined so they stand out. This builds the framework for your résumé.

## Key Accomplishments

Highlight your achievements, whether in school or at previous jobs. What projects have you completed or



programs have you implemented? Small changes can have a big impact, so don't overlook accomplishments such as, "Implemented a new organizational tracking system for ICU patients."

### Career Summary

Organize your work history with the most recent job first. Include the company name, your position, and dates of employment. Bullet point your responsibilities and group by category (e.g., Surgical Duties, Nursing Care, Laboratory Functions).

### Skills

Think beyond just technical skills to include triage abilities, customer service, inventory management, teaching experience, etc. If you are a recent graduate, include skills that inspired you during school. Be sure to include soft skills that illustrate your talents in communication, interpersonal relations, and collaboration.

### Certifications and Education

List your CVT, LVT, or RVT credentials first. If you are not yet credentialed as a veterinary technician or nurse but are eligible to take the certification or licensure exam, say so. For example, "CVT eligible, pending VTNE, anticipated June 2022." Include certifications that may bring value to other areas of the practice (such as a marketing certification).

List degrees and significant college programs. Did you take 1 anthropology class at your community college 10 years ago? Leave it off.

### Volunteer Work

Only include volunteer work that is recent or with significant relevance (not the day you ran the bake sale 8 years ago). If you don't have recent animal care or service-related volunteer experience, omit this section.

### References

List 3 to 4 professional references, with contact information and relation (e.g., former colleague). Be sure to let your references know so they aren't surprised by a call. If you're short on space then omit this section on the résumé, but be prepared with a separate list of references if asked to provide them.

## COMMON MISTAKES VETERINARY NURSES MAKE

- **Saying you love animals.** Almost without exception, people in the veterinary profession have a passion for animals, so avoid taking up valuable space on a résumé stating this. Instead, speak to the aspects of being a veterinary nurse that excite you. Is it the science behind the medicine? A fascination with emerging surgical procedures? A desire to utilize pain management techniques to aid faster recovery from traumatic injuries? Being a source of calm support for grieving pet owners?
- **Focusing exclusively on technical skills.** So much of being a technician is beyond the technical aspects. It's about comforting patients and clients. It's about supporting the members of your team. It's about learning and adapting as medicine changes. Build these strengths into your résumé.
- **Not believing in yourself.** Confidence goes a long way, especially if you are new to the profession. You don't have to know it all—you just have to show that you are willing to learn. Remember that you are a whole human being with much to offer.

#### Carolyn Becker

Founder and president of Starpath Consulting LLC, Carolyn has an insider's perspective from more than 20 years in the veterinary profession as a CVT, practice manager, HR director, HR partner, and HR consultant. Carolyn's deep understanding of veterinary team dynamics is the foundation for Starpath Consulting LLC, which provides veterinary-focused HR support. Carolyn is a Colorado native, and is grateful for the blue skies, Rocky Mountain views, and sunshine. She lives in southwest Denver with her family and 3 dogs. Carolyn is passionate about veterinary practice culture and empowering hospital teams. She offers résumé review and individual coaching services; see details at [starpathconsulting.com](http://starpathconsulting.com).



### WHY YOU?

In presenting your résumé, aim to intrigue the manager with the depiction of you, the person, and not just you, the veterinary nurse. And, as with any wonderful gift, leave them wanting for more. You might just get the interview. **TVN**