

# The 25 magic resume words

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Grew, increased, augmented: The trick to writing the perfect resume is choosing the perfect resume words. That is, making good verb choices without a thesaurus.

The structure for each bullet point on your list of accomplishments is a success verb plus specific numerical data regarding an accomplishment in your field or role. Which means that you're in the market for 25 or so verbs.

### Finding the perfect resume words

Finding enough different verbs to say "I did it" in a clever way is often a struggle for professionals writing their resumes. Typical resume advice has focused on making sure that each verb is an active verb, but we've found two problems with this advice.

First, most Americans don't work with active vs. passive verbs on a daily basis, so the concept is not entirely relevant to their lives. "Was shot out of a cannon," for example, doesn't count.

And, second, even the stable of active verbs includes some very bland duds that do nothing to help persuade a future employer.

### The worst resume action verbs

My least favorite active verb is 'managed,' but there are others equally as tepid such as 'established,' 'defined,' and 'performed.'

None of these are very good, even though they are active, because they don't sell your future employer on what you are able to do, or what benefits you are able to bring to their team.

After all, white-collar employees by definition establish, manage, define and perform a wide variety of tasks. But were you any good at them? That's the important fact a hiring manager or recruiter wants to know.

### Use success verbs for your resume accomplishments

Which makes it important that every bullet point in your resume include a success verb, not just an active verb. Success verbs demonstrate success — something got better. Because you were there, something changed, something improved, something progressed.

Verbs such as increased, decreased, improved, reduced, are all success verbs. Explicitly forbidden are active verbs and phrases that are nonetheless static: "managed," "my responsibilities included," "hired to," "was responsible for," and so forth. Verbs that merely tell a fact rather than show you in a heroic light.

Look, we live in the United States of America in the 21st century. Of course you were hired for your current job. You obviously didn't inherit it from grandpa or get appointed to the role by the King.

And given the nature of the modern organization, if you're a manager, of course you've managed some number of fellow human beings. And of course you were given a budget with which to do something interesting with those human beings in the service of the organization's greater goals.

So when you begin a bullet point with empty non-achievements such as "I was hired, I managed and I was responsible for," you are squandering the opportunity to showcase the benefits you brought to your boss and your company in your prior role.

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These are the exact words you should use on your resume

Rather than leave you wondering what success verbs might be, I'm providing you a list of 25 success verbs you can use for the 25 bullets on your resume. Simplest would be to use these, and only these, verbs. Unless you have a good reason to expand your variety, the below success verbs can cover most bullets you can think of. Limiting your choices will save plenty of time and headache while ensuring a higher quality resume.

This might seem boring, but unless you are applying to be a thesaurus writer, no one looking at your resume will care how clever your success verbs are. The millions of hours lost each year to professionals like you looking up synonyms for "improved" is a complete waste of time.

Here, then, are all the success verb you should ever need:

1. Accelerated
2. Achieved
3. Added
4. Awarded
5. Changed
6. Contributed
7. Decreased
8. Delivered
9. Eliminated

10. Exceeded
11. Expanded
12. Gained
13. Generated
14. Grew
15. Improved
16. Increased
17. Introduced
18. Maximized
19. Minimized
20. Optimized
21. Produced
22. Reduced
23. Saved
24. Sold
25. Streamlined

Of course, it's not enough to just have the verb. You need a specific numerical accomplishment, too...

*This article is adapted from [Ladders 2018 Resume Guide: Best Practices & Advice from the Leaders in \\$100K – \\$500K jobs](#) (Ladders, Inc. , 2018). Purchase the Kindle Single for immediate download [here](#).*