

Resume: Addressing Employment Gaps

What are employment gaps?

Employment gaps are periods in which you did not have formal employment. An employment gap can range in length from a period of several months to several years. Employment gaps on a resume can be a cause for concern if you do not explain the reason for the gap in employment.

You will usually need to address longer periods of gaps in employment more directly in your resume than you need to with smaller employment gaps. If you have an employment gap that was more than a period of one year, then this gap will be obvious and needs to be explained.

You can overcome this by including what you were doing during the employment gap in your experience sections if it were a job itself. However, you can keep the entry brief, so it is not distracting. For example, if you spent one year as a care giver, then you can include this time in your experience section like this:

Full-time care giver, Cleveland, Ohio 2019-2020

- Took time away from professional career to act as full-time caregiver for an elderly parent.

If you can relate the experience you gained during your employment gap to the position you are applying for, then it may be beneficial to include more detailed information in your employment gap entry. You can include specific examples of daily activities and responsibilities you had during your employment gap that are relevant to the duties or responsibilities of the position you are applying for.

For example, if you have an employment gap of two years because you took time off work to be a full-time caregiver for an elderly relative and you are applying for a position as a nurse, the employment gap entry in your experience section may look more like this:

Full-time caregiver, Fort Lauderdale, FL, 2019 - 2020

- Took time away from professional career to act as a full-time caregiver to an elderly relative
- Assisted relative with daily tasks such as feeding, bathing, dressing and grooming
- Administered medications as prescribed three times daily
- Checked vital signs on a regular basis to gauge recovery progress



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List of good reasons for employment gaps

Employment gaps can occur for both voluntary and involuntary reasons. When explaining employment gaps on a resume, you want to try to show a good reason for the gap. Gaps in your employment history may exist for several good reasons, including:

- Time spent looking for a new job
- Being laid off because of organizational changes
- Taking time off to be a stay-at-home parent or caregiver
- Taking time off for a medical leave
- Time spent furthering your education
- Time spent gaining certifications or licensing
- Relocating from one geographic area to another
- Gap years spent on personal development
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How you spend your time while unemployed and how you explain your employment gap in your resume is usually more important than the reason for your gap in employment. So, when explaining employment gaps on your resume try to focus on the positives gained from your unemployment gap rather than any negatives.

Where to explain employment gaps

In addition to knowing how to explain employment gaps, you should also know where to explain them. Generally, there are three places you should address gaps in your employment: your cover letter, your resume and during an interview if asked about it. While there are ways to minimize the appearance of employment gaps on your resume, it is still important for you to be honest and forthcoming in explaining gaps in your employment.

Your cover letter is a great place to explain significant gaps in employment because it allows you to go into detail about how you used your time unemployed to prepare to return to the workforce. Explaining employment gaps in your cover letter and resume also shows recruiters and hiring managers that you are honest and trustworthy, which can help make you stand out from other candidates.



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