

# Money Matters: Biggest Mistakes By First-Time Federal Job Seekers

By Kathryn Kraemer Troutman

I asked my resume writing team to make a list of the biggest mistakes they continually see in federal job seekers' efforts to write a federal package. Major mistakes in resumes could cost job applicants months of searching and possibly mean never landing a federal job.

An initial part of any job search is considering where you might want to work. For the federal job market, the government information Web site, [www.firstgov.gov](http://www.firstgov.gov), can be a big help, as it is a gateway to background on most of the federal agencies. Develop a network of contacts made of people who are federal employees. Members of your network might include friends, relatives, neighbors or acquaintances. You can also ask people who know federal employees to introduce you to them. Also study federal job announcements. I suggest touring Web sites where federal openings are listed, such as [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov), [www.federaljobsearch.com](http://www.federaljobsearch.com) and [www.fedjobs.com](http://www.fedjobs.com). Pay special attention to the duties and qualifications sections, the job titles, and the application instructions in the announcements.

Consider our list when writing your federal package.

## ***Submitting a one-page resume.***

The federal resume can be 2,3,4, or 5 pages. There is no limit. The selecting official wants more details of your experiences so he or she can understand your experience, skills and assignments better. In order to get Highly Qualified, you will have to be very clear about your experiences.

## ***Not including the required information on the federal resume.***

You must include your SSN, addresses and zip codes for employers for the last 10 years; supervisor names and telephones for 10 years; salaries for 10 years; hours per week for jobs held for 10 years. Also you need to include your years of experience in the military.

## ***Writing work experience descriptions are way too short.***

If you're tempted to write 3 paragraphs about your current job, make it 6 paragraphs.

## ***Not including any accomplishments.***

If you want to stand out, impress the reader, keep their attention, include the accomplishments, projects and achievements you have made in your jobs.

## ***Including every job—even those that are not relevant.***

If you worked in retail over Christmas; parked cars for extra cash; do telemarketing; clean houses, type at home, leave these details out of your resume.

## ***Including early clerical, non-professional jobs.***

Leave out the early positions in clerical and start-up positions. The reader will never imagine you were ever a clerk if you don't tell them. You do not have to include jobs past 10 years if you choose not to.

## ***Not read the vacancy announcements in depth.***

Yes, agreed, the announcements are long, difficult to read and understand, but they contain a wealth of information for your federal job search. The important components of the vacancy announcement are: name of agency and office, city and state, opening and closing date of the announcement, duties, qualifications, how to apply instructions. Human resources staff say that the biggest mistake is "not reading the announcement and not following the directions."

## ***Not including keywords in your resume.***

To be successful you must focus your resume toward the position. If the announcement duties state that the job involves, serving as a liaison and representative for the director, then your resume should say that you have experience serving as a liaison and representative for your past manager. It's okay to use the

skills of the new position in your resume—if they are truthful.

***Not studying the mission statement of the agency before applying.***

To successfully focus your resume, you should be familiar with the mission of the agency so you can reflect a few words from the agency's mission statement (customer service, team oriented, quality-oriented, always on-time, etc.) in your resume.

***Sending the package by regular mail.***

You need a receipt for your package. In case you have to research the application, keep your tracking number.

***Not taking the time to write the best possible KSAs.***

Yes, you have to write the knowledge, skills and abilities statements if requested. They seem lengthy and unneeded, but actually, the KSAs are the key to your success. The KSAs are graded and you may get a high grade or a low grade, depending on your effort in writing KSAs.

***Not presenting unique competencies and values in the resume and KSAs.***

Are you flexible, hard-working, work well under pressure, resourceful, have initiative and willing to manage new projects. Resourceful, creative, dependable, detail-oriented, organized? If so, include these competencies in your resume in the "duties" section of the resume.

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