

Military-to-Civilian Resumes and Letters

Six-Step Translation Process

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Now it's time to take your general knowledge of the translation process and apply it to your particular situation. To assist you in this process, follow the six-step approach.

- STEP 1:** On a clean sheet of paper, write down your military assignments in reverse chronological order as if you were doing a chronological resume. Under each of those assignments, describe **what** you did in detail. Across from each skill, describe how you applied the skill to accomplish a given task or project. Where possible, accentuate the content-specific (as opposed to transferable) skills or knowledge you applied in the performance of your military duties. Don't worry at this point about using military-specific terms or acronyms. We'll take care of them in a later step.
- STEP 2:** Based on the job-seeking research you have performed to date, make a list of the required skills or experience in which prospective employers in your chosen civilian career field have interest. Here is where your informational interviewing and other networking activities pay dividends. Because you have thoroughly researched those civilian occupations, you will know the types of skills, knowledge, and experience that hiring managers seek. If such is not the case, you might consider doing some additional research, perhaps by contacting an association in the desired industry, to better understand the language and skills relevant to individuals working in your chosen career field.
- STEP 3:** On another page, list your military skills in the left column and the needed civilian skills in the right. Now compare items on these two lists. Can you connect any of the items on the first list to those on the second? If not, is it a problem of semantics (different words but similar meanings) or is it the case that you simply do not currently have the skills required? If the latter, you might consider obtaining additional training or schooling either on a part or full time basis. (Don't forget to explore your military service connected education benefits!)
- STEP 4:** Once you have matched items in the left and right columns, return to the detailed experience chronology you created in Step 1. For those military skills that relate to the civilian occupations in which you are interested, carefully revise your documented skills and experience by incorporating appropriate civilian expressions that relate to what you did in the military. Your objective is to accurately and honestly restate your military experience using language that civilian hiring managers will understand. Wherever you used military acronyms or unique expressions in Step 1, consider how you can restate the information in a more industry-relevant way without losing the meaning or impact of your experience.

STEP 5: Show this revised write-up to civilian friends and colleagues who are currently working in your employment field(s) of interest. Ask them to objectively critique your write-up and evaluate whether it conveys your qualifications in terms relevant to their industry. When they are done, don't forget to send them a thank-you note expressing your appreciation for the time and effort expended on your behalf. Such thoughtfulness will keep you remembering in a positive way.

STEP 6: Continually refine this document by incorporating the comments received in the previous step. The finished document should clearly and accurately portray your qualifications in terms appropriate to your targeted industry. Keep this document – it is the WORK HISTORY section of your resume.

If you follow these six steps, we're confident that you will have succeeded in translating your military experience into civilian terms. Remember that perseverance is key. You must discipline yourself to seek better ways of expressing your qualifications in words that match the needs of civilian employers.

Savino, Major, USAR, (Ret.), Carl S., and Ronald L. Krannich, Ph.D. *Military-to-Civilian Resumes and Letters. Six-Step Translation Process*. 3rd. Manassas Park, VA: Impact Publications, 2007. 82-3.

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