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Transitioning Military Personnel ~ Bridge the resume gap with these 4 insightful tips

Whether it's as short as a few weeks or as long as a few months, some employers may consider a resume gap a red flag, but there are a number of legitimate reasons that you might find yourself out of work or between jobs.

This is especially true for [transitioning military personnel](#), as making the move to civilian life is a complicated and time-consuming process that doesn't always leave room for job hunting. [Military spouses](#) also are all too familiar with the sudden upheaval that a new deployment can deliver.

Whatever the case, a resume gap does not have to be a hiccup on your application. At VA, we understand the challenges that Veterans and military spouses face, so we know your work experience is going to look a little different.

Consider these tips to make sure your resume showcases your work and life experience—even the gaps—in the best possible way.

Put your best foot forward

This is good advice for any [resume](#) building exercise, but review your work experience and skills to shine a spotlight on your professional accomplishments. However, if your resume has a gap (or 2, or 3) in it, it's going to be extra important to put your experience front and center.

You can also redesign your resume to a more skill-focused outline, similar to something a recent graduate might use. [Skills-based resumes](#) are also effective for people who are changing careers and want to emphasize abilities and experience rather than consistent employment.

The goal here isn't to hide the resume gap, but instead tell the hiring manager or recruiter that your work experience overshadows any concerns they may have

regarding those breaks in employment. Making your skills shine emphasizes your qualifications for the job and can help you overcome any objections.

Highlight personal successes during your resume gaps

As a military spouse or a service member transitioning to civilian life, any gaps in your resume aren't going to be times you sat around and did nothing.

If you were moving between bases, you probably had to locate living quarters, find doctors or schools, navigate new neighborhoods, and build a new network on base. Meanwhile, any Veteran will tell you that making the jump to civilian meant spending time navigating bureaucracy or filling out forms to keep the process running smoothly and secure benefits.

The things you do during breaks in employment can still be useful in showcasing your aptitudes. Whether it's developing interpersonal relationships or displaying organizational expertise, those efforts are transferable skills that are applicable to many jobs.

Use your cover letter

Your resume should be a highlight reel of your experience, but it doesn't always tell the whole story. That's why you should use your [cover letter](#) to help share anything else you want a recruiter or hiring manager to know.

This is especially important when it comes to addressing resume gaps. Using your [cover letter](#) to address gaps in employment will give you an opportunity to frame the discussion, rather than leaving it up to the assumption of someone who only has a resume to work with.

"Your cover letter is an explanation of your resume," said [Mike Owens](#), a national recruitment specialist with VA. "Because of different circumstances in life, some of us have had to take gaps in our employment. That cover letter can help you explain things to the hiring manager and cross out some of the question marks in your resume."

Prepare an answer for the interview

No matter how you address any employment gaps in your resume or cover letter, expect that a hiring manager will still want to ask you about it during your [interview](#). Rather than being caught off-guard by the question, prepare an answer you're comfortable with ahead of time.

Your answer can be as simple or as detailed as you want it to be. A military spouse might say, "I gave up my last job when we transferred to this area, and now that we're settled, I'm ready to get back to my career," while a newly transitioned Veteran can say, "The end of my service was a busy time, but I'm looking forward to new challenges."

Make your answer your own, and regardless of how much information you wish to share, be confident in your response. Own the gap and show you're ready to move beyond it. With your answer already prepared, you can meet the interviewer's question head-on and be confident in your response.

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- READ more [job news and advice](#).
- SEARCH for an opportunity to work at [a VA facility near you](#).

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