

How to Create a Winning Video Resume

by Maurice Belote, CDBS Project Coordinator

Many individuals who are deaf-blind and/or have severe disabilities are far more capable than they may appear on paper (i.e., written reports, assessments, checklists, etc.). When seeking work experiences—volunteer, shadowing, training, or paid—some people who are not familiar with disabilities may focus more on limitations than strengths. A video resume is a great way to show potential employers that a person with disabilities has specific skills and abilities that might be a good match for a job. It isn't just employers who can use the tape; the tape might be useful when generating the support of a skeptical administrator, job coach, or teacher. While it is a good idea to start early in an individual's school career, it is never too late to create a powerful resume to support that person's transition from school to work. You are creating one of the most important lasting documents of that individual's school years.

Here are some tips for creating a winning video resume:

1. Start early. A person may especially like—and be successful at—a particular job training site at the age of 14, and then may never have the opportunity to do that specific job again. Many years later, it may be difficult (or impossible) to re-create the experience for the purposes of video taping. Re-creations are rarely successful because the person may have forgotten how to do the job or the tasks associated with the job may have changed over time. It is possible that a particular person's favorite job was also one of their first, and if the video tape isn't started until the last 1–2 years of the student's schooling, the opportunity to document the success and preference would be lost.
2. Document all experiences. Early work experiences may include jobs around the school such as delivering attendance reports, cleaning the lunch yard, or stocking vending machines. These jobs may be done independently, with a job coach, or as part of a work crew. You never know what jobs might be available in the future, or what prospective employers might be looking for. The goal is to document on tape jobs or parts of jobs that showcase the individual's strengths and skills. These strengths may be in the specific tasks related to the job, or they may be in other key domains such as communication, social, and orientation and mobility skills.
3. Highlight independence and interdependence. If the individual is successful working independently, document and highlight this. There is nothing wrong, however, with using supports at a job site and showing successful use of these supports. Many persons who are deaf-blind make lifetime use of support service providers on the job, and knowing how to use supports effectively is an important and valuable skill.

Fact sheets from California Deaf-Blind Services are to be used by both families and professionals serving individuals who are deaf-blind. The information applies to students 0–22 years of age. The purpose of the fact sheet is to give general information on a specific topic. More specific information for an individual student can be provided through individualized technical assistance available from CDBS. The fact sheet is a starting point for further information.

4. Voice the date and other significant information as you record. Some time in the future, you may have the time and expertise to lay a voice track over visual footage and make the video resume extra professional in appearance. Just in case that day never comes, however, include basic information as you record, such as the location of the work experience, a description of the task if it isn't entirely clear, and a description of how the task positively supports the mission of the company or work environment.
5. Keep the video tape in a safe place. This may sound obvious, but think about how many times this tape will be recorded on or edited and over a time span of as many as 7–8 years. In this amount of time there could be many transitions, both at school and home.vv
6. Mark the tape with its contents. Again, as obvious as it sounds, sometimes video tapes do get recorded over accidentally. If there isn't a backup copy of the footage, many years of hard work could be lost, and many successful experiences forgotten or overlooked.