

How to Create a Brag Book

We've all been taught it's not nice to brag about ourselves. But sometimes, you have to toot your own horn a little.

In the world of sales, job candidates have adopted a useful tool for spotlighting their accomplishments. It's called a "brag book." But you don't have to be looking for a sales job to have one. In fact, the brag book is a great way to tell your story and prove you're the right person for the job no matter what industry you're in.

Study Your Resume

A brag book is meant to substantiate the information you've included in your resume.

To begin building your brag book, take a look at your resume. Note each accomplishment and gather documentation that supports it. For example, if your resume states that you earned the "Gold Cup Award" in your present job, include a copy of the award certificate in your brag book.

Here are some other items you may want to include, assuming they tell a positive story:

- Letters of recommendation
- A copy of your college transcript
- A copy of your background check and credit history

It's best to work from the present backward so that your most recent accomplishments are in the front of your brag book.

Gathering the Missing Pieces

If you haven't been building your brag book all along, you may have to contact past employers, coworkers and mentors to request items to include.

Contact previous employers for references or letters of recommendation. Call your college or university and request a copy of your transcript.

Consider conducting a background check (<http://hotjobs.choicetrust.com>) on yourself. You'll be able to review the results and correct any mistakes. Plus, including a background check (assuming it's clean) can impress an employer with your honesty.

Putting It All Together

Now that you've gathered your materials, it's time to physically assemble your brag book.

1. Get a nice binder or report holder from an office supply store. Be sure to buy something that looks professional (no bright colors or patterns unless the job you're going for demands creativity).
2. If your binder does not feature clear sleeves in which you can place your documents, buy some. These allow you to store duplicate copies behind display copies, avoid punching holes in your documents and prevent stains.
3. Put your resume in the front of the folder. Place extra copies behind the first page.
4. Include documentation related to your current or most recent employer on the next page.
5. Keep working in reverse chronological order using your resume as a guide.

Practice Using Your Brag Book

Being able to professionally use your brag book is almost as important as the book's contents.

Practice using the book by role-playing. Have a friend or family member ask you interview questions and refer to your book as you answer.

In a real interview, always take your cues from the interviewer. At the start of your interview, tell the interviewer you have prepared a book to illustrate your past successes.

Ask if she wants you to use the book during the interview. If she says no, put the book away and offer the book for review at the interview's conclusion.

A good brag book will not only help you feel more comfortable during a job interview, it should also make it easier for the recruiter and hiring manager to see how well prepared, hardworking and successful you are.