

## RESUME WRITING TIPS

Once you have decided on the content of your resume, on the type of resume that will best present your qualifications, and on the best organization for the parts of your resume, you should consider the following guidelines and conventions.

### STYLE

- Write resume sentences as sentence fragments which omit the pronoun “I.”
- Use strong action verbs in your sentences (*supervised, audited, created*), not weak verbs (forms of *be* or *have*). Likewise, use nouns that contain or imply action (*manager, project director*).
- Use parallel structure at each level of the resume, in headings and subheadings, and in sentences within each paragraph.
- Be as consistent as possible throughout the resume. For example, if you end each item in one section with dates, then position dates at the end of each item in other sections. If you begin one item with a job title in a given section, begin all items in that section with a job title.
- In any resume, when you are listing activities, job, or education by dates, always list those activities in reverse chronological order (most recent experience first).

### FORMAT

- Be sure your resume can pass the “three-second” test. A quick (or impatient) reader should be able to find any piece of information in a one-page resume within three seconds – five seconds for a two-page resume. Concise, specific headings are essential for this purpose.
- Use white space to improve the look of the resume and to help it pass the three-second test. However, remember that too much white space can suggest that you have too little to say about yourself.
- Look at your resume from arm’s length or farther to check for a well-balanced page.
- When in doubt about what format to use, try the “hanging-indentation” format (only each major heading is at a flush left margin and the text is tabbed in). Free-floating left headings and centered headings can work well but are more difficult to use effectively.
- Use ragged right margins. Right justified margins can give resumes a very “toothy” look, with words spread too far apart.
- Use paper that is a match with your cover letter and the mailing envelope.
- Use only white or very light-colored paper, like light beige or very light grey. Do not use loud colors, unless the job you are applying for calls for a “flashy approach.”

## Resume Myths

**Myth #1:** The purpose of a resume is to list all your skills and abilities.

**Fact:** The purpose of a resume is to kindle employer interest and generate an interview.

**Myth #2:** A good resume will get you the job you want.

**Fact:** Hundreds of thousands of good resumes cross employers' desks every day. A good resume can get you an interview.

**Myth #3:** Your resume will be read carefully and thoroughly by an interested employer.

**Fact:** Your resume probably has less than ten seconds to make a good impression.

**Myth #4:** The more good information you present about yourself in your resume, the better.

**Fact:** By including too much information, a resume may actually kill the reader's appetite to know more.

**Myth #5:** If you really want a good resume, have it prepared by a resume service.

**Fact:** Many resume services use undistinguished standard formats, so you should prepare your own – unless the position you're after is very high level and you choose the service carefully.

Adapted from Murphy H., & Hildebrandt, H. (1991). *Effective Business Communications*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

## Resume Checklist

1. Opening Section
  - a. Your name, address (school and/or home), telephone number, and e-mail address.
  - b. Job and/or career objective (short and long-term goals).
  - c. Summary of basic qualifications (acquired knowledge, training, talents, personal qualities, what you can offer this employer).
2. Education
  - a. Advanced schooling beyond high school, including military – school names and locations, dates attended, degrees, and certificates (include high school if no advanced schooling has been pursued).
  - b. Major, significant, pertinent courses; academic honors; grade-point average, if high; special skills; significant speeches, research, reports.
  - c. Positions, such as class assistant, grader, or research assistant to instructor (these could also be under “Work Experience”).
3. Work Experience
  - a. Employer names, locations, and dates of employments (beginning and ending month and year) in reverse chronological order, titles and positions held, supervisory positions and number of people supervised, specific accomplishments.
  - b. Volunteer work, research, tutoring, publications, etc.
4. Achievements, Awards, Service Activities
  - a. School and community memberships, offices held, honors, publications.
  - b. Travel, languages, self-support, other facts.
5. Personal Data – Optional (unless job requires it or state law forbids it).
  - a. Age, health, military service, hobbies.
  - b. Date of availability.
6. References – Usually provided “upon request.”
  - a. Include at least three people not related to you whose experience with you relates in some way to the job for which you are applying.
  - b. Include references’ names, addresses, phone numbers, occupations, and relationships to you.
  - c. Be sure to obtain permission from references before including them on the list.