

Resume Building & Tips

1. What IS a resume anyway?

Remember: A Resume is a MARKETING PIECE--not a "career obituary!"

2. What's a resume ABOUT?

It's NOT about past jobs! IT'S ABOUT YOU, and how you performed in those past jobs--which predict how you might perform in a future job.

3. What's the FASTEST way to improve a resume?

Remove everything that starts with "responsibilities included ..." and replace it with on-the-job ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

4. What the COMMONEST MISTAKE made by resume writers?

Leaving out their Job Objective! (Equivalent to: Somebody knocks on your door. You open it and say, "Hello, what do you want?" They say, "Duh ...")

5. What's the FIRST STEP in writing a resume?

Decide on a job target (or "job objective") that can be stated in about 5 or 6 words. Anything beyond that is "fluff" and indicates lack of clarity and direction.

6. HOW FAR BACK should you go in your Work History?

Far enough; and not TOO far. About 10 or 15 years is enough--UNLESS your "juiciest" work experience is from farther back.

7. Don't include "Hobbies" on a resume.

UNLESS the activity is somehow relevant to your job objective. OR it clearly reveals a characteristic that supports your job objective. (A hobby of Sky Diving (adventure, courage) might seem relevant to some job objectives (Security Guard?) but not to others.)

8. Don't include ethnic or religious affiliations (inviting pre-interview discrimination) UNLESS it SUPPORTS your job objective

For example, include "Association of Black Social Workers" IF you're applying for Director of Inner City Youth Programs. *This example is fictitious.*

9. Employers HATE parchment paper and pretentious brochure-folded resume "presentations."

They think they're phony, and toss them out.

10. Don't fold a laser-printed resume right along a line of text.

The "ink" could flake off along the fold.

11. Don't MYSTIFY the reader about your SEX; they'll go nuts til they know whether you're male or female.

And while they're worrying about that, they're NOT thinking about what you can do for them. So if your name is Lee or Robin or Pat or anything else not clearly male or female, use a Mr. or Ms. prefix.

12. What if you don't have any EXPERIENCE in the kind of work you want to do?

GET SOME! Find a place that will let you do some VOLUNTEER work right away. You only need a brief, concentrated period of volunteer training (for example, 1 day/week for a month) to have at least SOME experience to put on your resume.

Also, look at some of the volunteer work you've done in the past and see if any of THAT helps document some skills you'll need for your new job.

13. What if you have GAPS in your work experience?

You could start by LOOKING at it differently. If you were doing ANYTHING valuable (though unpaid) during those so-called "gaps," you could just insert THAT into the work-history section of your resume to fill the hole--for example: "2004-2005 Full-time parent" or "2002-2003 Maternity leave and family management" or "Travel and study," or "Full-time student," or, "Parenting plus community service."

14. What if you worked for only ONE employer for 20 or 30 years?

Then list separately each different position you held there, so your job progression within the company is more obvious.

15. What if you have a fragmented, scrambled-up work history, with lots of short-term jobs?

To minimize the job-hopper image, combine several similar jobs into one "chunk," for example:

2003-2005 **Secretary/receptionist** - Jones Bakery; Micro Corp.; Carter Jewelers.

OR

2004-2006 **Waiter/Busboy** - McDougal's Restaurant; Burger-King; Traders Coffee Shop.

ALSO you can just DROP some of the less-important or briefest jobs. But DON'T drop a job, even when it lasted a short time, if that was where you acquired important skills or experience.

16. Students can make their resume look neater by listing seasonal jobs very simply.

Use something such as "Spring 2006" or "Summer 2006" rather than 6/06 to 9/06. (The word "Spring" can be in very tiny letters, say 8-point in size.)

17. What if your job title doesn't reflect your actual level of responsibility?

When you list it on the resume, either REPLACE it with a more appropriate job title (say "Office Manager" instead of "Administrative Assistant" if that's more realistic) OR use "their" job title AND your fairer one together "Administrative Assistant (Office Manager)".

18. Got your degree from a different country?

You can say: "Degree equivalent to U.S. Bachelor's Degree in Economics; Tehran, Iran."

19. What if you don't quite have your degree or credentials yet?

You can say "Eligible for U.S. credentials," or "Graduate studies in Instructional Design, in progress," or "Masters Degree anticipated May, 2008."

20. What if you have several different job objectives you're working on at the same time?

Or you haven't narrowed it down yet to just one job target? Write a different resume for EACH different job target. A targeted resume is much, much stronger than a generic resume.

21. If you're over 40 or 50 or 60 and want to avoid age discrimination, remember that you DON'T have to present your ENTIRE work history!

You can simply label that part of your resume "Recent Work History" or "Relevant Work History" and then describe only the last 10 or 15 years of your experience.

(If something really important belongs in the distant past, here's what to do: at the end of your 10-15 year work history, you can add a paragraph headed "Prior relevant experience" and simply refer to that ancient job without mentioning dates.)

22. Can't decide whether to use a Chronological-style resume or a Functional one?

Choose the Chronological format if you're staying in the same field (especially if you've been upwardly-mobile). Choose a Functional format if you're changing fields, because a skills-oriented format shows off your transferable skills better and takes the focus off your old job-titles.

23. Want to impress an employer?

Fill your resume with "PAR" statements. PAR stands for **Problem-Action-Results**, in other words, first you state the problem that existed in your workplace, then you describe what YOU did about it, and finally you point out the beneficial results.

Here's an example:

- "Transformed a disorganized, inefficient warehouse into a smooth-running operation by totally redesigning the layout; this saved the company \$250,000 in recovered stock."

Another Example:

- "Improved an engineering company's obsolete filing system by developing a simple but sophisticated functional-coding system. This saved time and money by recovering valuable, previously lost, project records."

24. What if you never had any "real" paid mainstream jobs - just self-employment or odd jobs?

Give yourself credit, and create an accurate, fair job-title for yourself. For example, "A&S Hauling & Cleaning (self-employed)" or "Household Repairman--Self-employed," or "Child-Care--Self-employed." Be sure to add "Customer references available on request" and then be prepared to provide some very good references of people you worked for.