

Two Dozen Hot Tips on Resume Writing

Adapted from Yana Parker

1. **What is a resume anyway?** Remember: A resume is a marketing piece --- not a "career obituary"! It's not a confessional either.
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 predicts 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. (See tip #11 for one way to write them.)
4. **What is the most common mistake made by resume writers?** Leaving out their job objective! Show a sense of direction or employers won't be interested.
5. **What's the first step in writing a resume?** Decide on a job target or ("job objective"), say it in 5 or 6 words. Anything more is "fluff" indicating lack of clarity and direction.
6. **Can't decide on using a Chronological or a Functional style resume.** Choose the chronological format if staying in the same field (especially if you've been upwardly mobile). Choose a Functional format if changing fields. A skills -oriented format

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- shows off your transferable skills better and takes the focus off job-titles.
7. **What if you don't have 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 (1 day/week/month) to have at least some experience for your resume. Also look at past volunteer work you've done and see if any of it helps document some skills you'll need for your new job.
 8. **What about gaps in your work experience?** You could start by looking at it differently. General rule: Gracefully tell what you were doing, rather than leave a gap. If you were doing anything valuable (though unpaid) during those "gaps," you could just insert that into the work history section of your resume to fill the gap-- for example: "1993- 1995 Full time parent" or "1992 - 1994 Maternity leave and family management" or "Travel and study" or "Full -time student plus community service"
 9. **What if you have several different job objectives you're working on at the same time?** Or, if you haven't narrowed it down yet to just one job target? Then write a different resume for each different job target. A targeted resume is much, much stronger than a generic resume.
 10. **What if you have a fragmented, scrambled-up work history, with lots of short-term jobs?** To minimize the job-hopper image, combine several

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- similar jobs into one "entry" for example "1993- 1995 Secretary and/or Receptionist: Jones Bakery, Micro Corp., Central Lab" Also you can just drop some of the less important, briefest jobs. But don't drop jobs where you acquired important skills or experience, even when it lasted a short time.
11. **Want to impress an employer?** Fill your resume with Action-Problem-Benefits statements. Here's an example: "Transformed a disorganized, inefficient warehouse into a smooth-running operation by totally reorganizing the layout; this saved the company over \$250,000 in recovered stock." Another: Improved engineering companies obsolete filing system by developing a simple but sophisticated functional coding system. This saved time and money by recovering valuable, previously lost, project records.
 12. **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 more descriptive job title, i.e. "Administrative Assistant (Office Manager).
 13. **If you're over 40 and want to avoid age discrimination, remember, you don't have to give your entire work history!** Use the label "Recent Work History" or "Relevant Work History" and only cover the last 10 or 15 years of your experience. At the end of your 10-15 year work history, you could add a paragraph labeled "Prior Relevant Experience" and refer to any additional important (but ancient) jobs with

14. **What if you never had any "real" paid jobs---just self employed or odd jobs?** Give yourself credit, and create an accurate, fair job-title for yourself. For example, "A&S Hauling and Cleaning (Self Employed)" or "Household Repairman---Self Employed." Be sure to add, "Customer references available on request" Be prepared to provide some very good references of people for whom you've worked.
15. **How far back should you go in your work history?** Far enough; and not too far! About 10-15 years is enough --unless your "juiciest" work experience is older.
16. **Students can make their resume look neater by listing seasonal jobs very simply,** such as "Spring 1999" or "Summer 2000" rather than 6/99 to 9/2000. (The word "Spring" can be in very tiny letters, say 8 point font size.
17. **What if you don't quite have your degree or credentials yet?** You can say "Graduate studies in Instructional Design in progress." Or "Masters Degree anticipated May, 2002" or "Eligible for U.S. credentials."
18. **What if you worked for only one employer for 20 or 30 years?** List separately each different position held there. Make your job progression within the company obvious.
19. **Don't include hobbies on a resume unless the activity is somehow relevant to your job objective, or clearly reveals a characteristic that supports your job objective.** For example, a hobby of Sky Diving (adventure, courage) might seem relevant to some job objectives (Security Guard?), but not to others.

20. **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 the Director of Inner City Youth Programs.
21. **Don't mystify the reader about your sex;** They'll go nuts until they know whether or not you're male or female. So if your name is Chris or Pat or Lee or anything else not clearly male or female, use Mr. or Ms.
22. **Got your degree from another country?** You can say "Degree equivalent to U.S. Bachelors Degree in Economics---Tehran, Iran".
23. **Employers HATE parchment paper and pretentious brochure-folded resume "presentations."** They think they are phony and toss them out.
24. **Don't fold a laser - printed resume right along a line of text.** The "ink" could flake off along the fold.

For more help with your resume or job search come to the Lafayette Work- One Center's Information Resource Area at 2301 Concord Road. We're right in between Michael's Furniture and Toys "R" Us.

Ten Steps to a Great Resume.

1. **Choose a job target** (Also called a "Job Objective"). Actual Job Titles work best.
2. **Find out what skills, knowledge and experience are needed to do that target job.**
3. **Make a list of your 3 or 4 strongest skills or abilities that makes you a good candidate for the target job.**
4. **For each key skill, think of several accomplishments from your past work history.**
5. **Describe each accomplishment in a simple, powerful, action statement that emphasizes the results that benefited your employer.**
6. **Make a list of the primary jobs you've held, in chronological order.** Include any unpaid work that fills a gap or shows you have skills for the job.
7. **Make a list of your training and education that relate to the job you want.**
8. **Choose a resume format that fits your situation--either Chronological or functional.** (Functional works best if you're changing fields, Chronological works best if you're moving up in the same field.)
9. **Arrange your action statements according to the format you choose.**
10. **Summarize your key points at or near the top of your resume.**

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