

RESUME WRITING TIPS

What IS a resume anyway? Remember: a Resume is a marketing piece that presents you in the best possible light, for the purpose of getting invited to a job interview. It's not an official personnel document. It's not a job application. It's not a "career obituary"! And it's not a confessional.

What's a resume about? It's not just about past jobs! It's about YOU, and how you performed and what you accomplished in those past jobs-especially the accomplishments that are relevant to the work you want to do next. A good resume predicts how you might perform in that desired future job.

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 a 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.

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? Then write a different resume for each different job target. A targeted resume is much, much stronger than a generic resume.

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: 2000-2002 Secretary/Receptionist; Jones Bakery, Micro Corp., Carter Jewelers -- or 2002-2004 Waiter/Busboy; McDougal's Restaurant, Burger King, Traders Coffee Shop. Also you can just drop some of the less important, 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.

What if you never had any "real" paid 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.

How can a student list summer jobs? Students can make their resume look neater by listing seasonal jobs very simply, such as "Spring 1996" or "Summer 1996" rather than 6/96 to 9/96. (The word "Spring" can be in very tiny letters, say 8-point in size.)

What if you don't quite have your degree or credentials yet? You can say something like: Eligible for U.S. credentials -- or Graduate studies in Instructional Design, in progress -- or Masters Degree anticipated May, 2005

What about listing hobbies and interests? 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.

What about revealing race or religion? Don't include ethnic or religious affiliations (inviting pre-interview discrimination) UNLESS it supports your job objective. Do include "Association of Black Social Workers" if you're applying for Director of Inner City Youth Programs, for example.

What about fancy paper? Use plain white or ivory, in a quality appropriate for your job objective. Never used colored paper unless there's a very good reason for it (like, you're an artist) because if it may be scanned into a database. Also, most resumes are emailed today to employers anyway