



Useful Resume Tips

The purpose of a resume is *to get you the interview*, whether it's a phone screen or a fact-to-face meeting.

Some things you SHOULD DO to your resume:

- Most resumes are electronic today, either as *part* of an e-mail or as an *attachment* to e-mail. Whichever method the employer wants, do it the way they ask you to. Regardless of how nice your resume looks on your computer screen, make sure it arrives in a readable format at the employer end. So you should have a plain text version as well as the attractive Word version.
- If you're using the US mail to deliver your resume, use good paper, and keep it simple: it should be plain white or off white or light gray. Just because they sell pretty blue and white cloud paper at Staples does not mean you should use it, as one client, an aviation graduate, wanted to do! (He went ahead and used it but it didn't help him land any interviews.) When I was a hiring manager, it was unbelievable that I received resumes on tissue paper (I am not making that up!), resumes with white-out fixes, resumes with crossed-out parts and handwritten updates, you name it. An unprofessional presentation will not get you that interview phone call. *Ever*.
- Use a cover letter even when sending your resume by email. Never send out a naked resume. For more about cover letters, see our free PDF *Cover Letter Tips*, available on this site.
- Treat each word on your resume as if it costs you \$5 to put it there. If you waste space on, for example, "References Available Upon Request" -- of course it's understood you will furnish them -- you're using space better filled by words that would do a stronger job of selling you to the decision maker.
- Be honest. That's just expected from top-notch professionals, no matter what your field or level. But that doesn't mean you should be modest. You must point out your successes and show what you can do for the prospective employer. If you don't do this, I can guarantee your competition will.
- Customize whenever possible so the resume you send fits that company. This means doing some research at their web site. If, for example, they use the term "enterprise" instead of "business", you should do the same. Yes, this

takes work. But it will make your resume count for you. Why send it out if it's not going to help you?

Some things you SHOULD NOT DO to your resume:

- Don't *ever* include personal information such as marital status, number of children, age, birth date, height, weight, or your photograph! These facts are none of the employer's business, plus it wastes valuable space on your resume. Also, if you post your resume on a (very public) Internet job bank, this personal data exposes you to possible identity theft. In the US, including this information on a resume is just not done.
- Don't list every single off-hours activity you're involved in. If an employer sees a paragraph-length summary of "Little League coach, Town Recreation Committee, School Committee, Active in my church, etc., etc.", he or she will not be impressed you're a good citizen, instead they will picture you leaving work early too often. Sure it's OK to list such activities especially if they are related to the prospective job -- one client seeking a technician position listed his hobby of repairing pocket watches, which helped land him an interview. But keep any activities to one or two very short phrases that fit on one line. And don't list anything controversial; you don't know the biases of the hiring manager.
- Don't treat the resume as if it's some sort of written confession. Meaning, with rare exception, it does not need to include every job since you graduated. Cull out what no longer "counts".