

5 Do and Don't to Create a Quality Resume



Introduction

I tell all my career coaching clients that the most challenging job they will ever have is finding a job. As layoffs and recession are in the air, competition for a job will get more difficult. There will be many more in the marketplace looking for employment, and your competition will be significant. Creating an attractive, quality resume formatted for the [Applicant Tracking System \(ATS\)](#) is the only way to get noticed. If you aren't producing something that someone wants to read, it won't get read.

You're probably familiar with the word "resume." But that word may be a little outdated because, in reality, you're writing an application—not a resume. It's not just to apply for a position; it represents who you are. The resume is your marketing piece. A quality resume is designed to get you noticed and to get you an interview. The interview gets the job. But without the resume getting you in the queue, there is no interview. If you follow the steps below consistently, you will start getting feedback and end your job-hunting season; otherwise, you will be frustrated for a long time. You will not get noticed using the same resume for every job you apply for.

5 things to do to create a quality resume

1. Understanding the ATS

Today's applicant tracking systems (ATS) look for keywords and buzzwords more than they look for specific details about your education or experience; they're programmed to scan specific document parts automatically to save time and money on the humans who review them. ATSs look at things like keywords, spelling errors, and formatting errors before sending anything through their final stage: human eyes.

In this instance, a resume of one does not fit all. Your resume should be formatted for the ATS algorithm if you want an interview. A human can understand what you're saying, but this system is optimized for machines, not people. This means you must ensure your document uses relevant keywords and avoids formatting errors like capitalization or indentations that would throw off the search engine's algorithm.

An ATS will read your resume, which scans resumes as quickly as possible. This means that any formatting quirks will be flagged immediately and thrown out. For example, if your name is "John Smith," but you write "Smith J" on your application without realizing it, the ATS will see this as a typo and skip over your resume entirely.

2. Keywords for the ATS search

- Use keywords and industry-specific buzzwords
- Use active verbs and spell out acronyms the put the abbreviation in ()
- Use results-oriented accomplishment statements, for example, "Increased sales by 25% in six months" instead of "Increased sales"
- Make use of bulleted lists when listing achievements or skills: they're easy to scan, and they allow you to include more information
- Account for all absences such as "career pause," "sabbatical," etc.
- Be prepared to write – layout, keywords, employers, dates of employment, education, training, and all the information required for a good resume. With the materials in one place before you start makes the process so much easier

3. Formatting techniques

Use a concise, consistent format throughout your resume. This means not using bullet points in one place but using paragraphs later. It also means consistent spacing between headings and text are consistent formatting, for example, always putting phone numbers in parentheses within the body of your text.

Line spacing is either single-spaced or 1.15 pt spacing to make it easy to read. Margins are 1” all around or .75” on the sides and 1” at the top and bottom. Ink is always black on white paper.

Use standard fonts like Calibri, Times New Roman, or Arial with 11-12 point size—no more and no less! Make section headers at 14-point size but no bigger. Make the footer with the page number on the right and your name on the left. These are easy-to-read fonts and sizes, leaving room to get all the information on the resume. These are also compatible across platforms; they’re also compatible with every type of computer monitor and smartphone because many hiring managers review resumes on their phones before moving them over to desktop reviews.

Be specific. If you’re applying for an office manager job at a business, use that title in the cover letter, and include the keywords from the job description in the resume’s text.

Key takeaway: One [resume](#) for every job isn’t get you an interview. When crafting your resume, tailor it to the job description or posting. Read the job posting carefully and note any keywords or requirements listed. Reread your resume for errors. A single typo or formatting error can cause your resume to be discarded.

4. Resume layout

Always include a summary statement. The statement should summarize who you are and what makes you different from other candidates, so have relevant accomplishments here. If you’re having trouble writing it, start by using an appropriate layout depending on the type of resume you create. The traditional ones are still relevant - chronological by years at a position, functional by job tasks, or hybrid by a combination of both.

Chronological	Functional	Hybrid
<p style="text-align: center;">Summary Professional Experience by Company and dates of employment (year to year) – no more than 8-10 max accomplishment statements with measurable outcomes</p> <p>Relevant Skills – no more than 5-8</p> <p>Education and Other Training Professional awards and/or relevant memberships</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Summary Relevant Professional Experience – no more than 8-10 relevant accomplishment statements with measurable outcomes</p> <p>Work Experience – list of employers by Company, dates of employment (year to year), and a one-sentence brief of what the Company does</p> <p>Relevant Skills – no more than 5-8</p> <p>Education and Other Relevant Training Professional awards and/or relevant memberships</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Summary Relevant Skills - no more than 5-8</p> <p>Education (can be here or at the end, depending on the type of job)</p> <p>Professional Experience by Company, dates of employment (year to year), brief of what the Company does, and 2-3 accomplishment statements with measurable outcomes per employer</p> <p>Professional awards and/or memberships</p>

- Create a resume that’s not exaggerated, flashy, or hard to understand – simple is better
- Use active verbs – if you don’t know what they are, look them up on Google. Don’t overuse an active verb over and over
- Select the keywords from the job posting and industry-specific buzzwords
- Use short sentences and lists to make it easy to read

5. Final checks

Read, reread, and double-check for spelling, grammatical errors, and formatting. Let someone read it for you to see if there are any errors, the keywords are there, and the buzzwords are clear and relevant. Remember that this is your brochure, marketing piece, etc., and it represents you. If you aren’t proud of it, then why send it?



5 things not to do to create a successful resume

- Don't go back more than 10-12 years of employment on your resume unless it is job specific
- Don't include your age or the year you graduated from university/college
- Don't add your photograph
- Don't use these: I, me, she, they, them, etc.
- Don't add an objective – everyone knows what you are looking for

Tips to keep you on track

If you're applying for an entry-level position, it's a good idea to keep your resume short by only including relevant information. For example, instead of listing every computer program, you've ever used, list the ones most relevant to the job description.

Using a complex font will make your resume difficult to read and can make you look unprofessional in the eyes of an employer. It also makes it harder for them to understand what you're trying to tell them in the first place, which can negatively affect their opinion of you as an applicant. Make sure it's readable.

The adage "less is more" applies here too! Don't try cramming too much on one page; instead, focus on highlighting your best accomplishments and experiences so that employers don't get overwhelmed by all the things that have happened throughout your life. This will also help ensure that when they look at other resumes from other applicants later on down this journey, there won't be any confusion about why yours stood out from theirs!



Conclusion

Finding a job isn't easy, and frankly, it never was. It's now more sophisticated, with less human interaction until you get to the interview stage. You must work at being ATS compliant as the first major hurdle to getting noticed. Don't let it stress you. Work with the 5 things to do and eliminate the 5 things not to do. Good luck!!