

Résumé Guidelines

What is a Résumé?

A résumé is a document which outlines your experiences and the skills you have acquired as a result. Preparing your résumé is like starring in your own commercial. Often, the first impression an employer has of you is based solely on your résumé. While there is no one right design, there are some guidelines and commonly accepted practices you should follow. Following these rules will help present a professional impression to employers.

Résumé Length

One page is the accepted rule for résumé length. A two-page résumé should only be used if you have extensive experience relevant to the position for which you are applying. If you choose to develop a two-page résumé, be sure to organize your content in a manner that places the most important information on the first page. If the first page is not impressive, an employer may not look at the second page. Also, be sure to make full use of your second page. It is not needed if you only have a few lines on that page.

Margins

Your résumé margins serve two purposes: 1) to contribute to the visual appeal of your résumé and 2) to provide your prospective employer with space to make notes. Overly narrow margins can make your résumé appear jumbled, and overly wide margins can project a perception of emptiness. The standard rule of thumb is to set your margins at one inch on all sides to create a well-balanced design. If you desperately need more space, decrease the top and bottom margins slightly, but avoid decreasing the side margins.

Font Size & Style

The font size on your résumé should be between 10 point and 14 point. Absolutely no information should be crossed out or handwritten. You should select a font that is professional and easy to read. A few common font styles are Times New Roman, Palatino, Garamond, Futura, Book Antiqua, Century and Perpetua.

SUCCESS STRATEGY: Be consistent throughout your résumé! Make sure font size, spacing, bullets and capitalization are the same throughout your document.

Use Action Statements

Rather than using lengthy sentences or paragraphs to describe your experiences, use bulleted statements beginning with action verbs. Your résumé should be easy to read at a glance and “to the point.” Short statements are easier and faster to read and understand. Also, be sure the grammatical structure of your statements is correct and consistent. Past tense should be used when describing experiences you have already had. Present tense should be used only to describe those activities you are involved in now.

SUCCESS STRATEGY: Don't rely on spell check! Be sure to proofread your résumé and have several others proofread it. Errors imply that you didn't put your full effort into your résumé and you won't put your full effort into the job either.

Paper Selection & Printing

When printing your résumé, be sure to use a professional quality paper and printer. A bond paper with a watermark in a solid, conservative color, such as white, ivory or light gray, is ideal. Dark colored paper and patterned paper should be avoided because your résumé may be photocopied for review by more than one person, and dark or patterned paper does not copy well. Lastly, a laser printer should be used to print your résumé with the watermark of the stationary right-side up and face forward. If ink from a laser printer becomes damp, it will not smear as easily as that from an ink jet printer.

File Type & Name

When preparing your résumé to e-mail to a prospective employer, be sure you save it as a file type that is commonly used, such as a .doc (Microsoft Word document) or .pdf (Adobe PDF). Saving your résumé as a pdf maintains its design and format. When sending Microsoft Word documents, be sure to use a font that is common to all computers as your document may be reformatted if the receiver does not have your font selection on his or her computer. Also, be sure to name the file appropriately. File names such as “Alberta Gator Resume.pdf” allow the recipient to easily save the file to his or her computer and quickly refer to a particular individual's résumé.