



Résumé Guidelines

While no "right" or "proper" design for résumé content exists, a few guidelines for résumé format are commonly accepted practices. Following these structural rules for your résumé will help you present a professional impression to prospective 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 or qualifications relevant to the position for which you are applying. If you do choose to develop a two-page résumé, be sure to organize your content in a manner that places the information most likely to impress an employer on the first page. If the first page is not impressive, then an employer may not even look at the second page.

Type Size and Style

A résumé should always be typed with the font size between 10 point and 14 point and with absolutely no information crossed out or handwritten. In regards to the type style, use a style that is professional and easy to read. Dense styles and styles with curlicues should be avoided. A few common font styles are Times, Schoolbook, New Century, Optima, Palatino, Helvetica, Futura, Universe, and Courier.

Margins

The margins of your résumé serve two basic purposes. First, the margins can contribute to the visual appeal of your résumé. Overly narrow margins can make your résumé appear jumbled, and overly wide margins can project a perception of emptiness in your résumé. The standard rule of thumb is to set your margins at one inch (1") on all sides to create a well-balanced design. If you are in a crunch for space, try decreasing the top and bottom margins slightly, but avoid decreasing the side margins. Side margins are the key to the second purpose of your résumé margins, to provide your prospective employer with space to make notes on your résumé.

Sentence Structure

"To the point" is how sentences should be written when constructing your résumé. Sentences should be brief and informative rather than long and excessively descriptive. Short sentences are easier and faster to

read and to understand, showing that you value the time the prospective employer is taking to review your résumé.

Also, be sure that the grammatical structure of your sentences is correct and consistent. Past tense should be used when describing experiences you have already had or activities in which you have already participated. Present tense should be used only to describe those activities you are involved in now, such as your current job. You should also avoid beginning sentences with the word "I"; the employer already knows that the résumé is about you.

Word Choice

Be active in your word choice on your résumé. Begin your sentences with action verbs that describe exactly what you did, or are still doing, in your experiences and activities. See the Verbs, Modifiers, Qualities, & Skills Ready Reference (E7) for a listing of action words.

Paper Selection & Printing

When you are ready to print the final copy of your résumé, a professional quality paper and printer should be used. A bond paper with a watermark in a solid conservative color, such as white, ivory, or light gray, is the best stationary to use. Dark colored paper and patterned paper should be avoided because your résumé will likely 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.

✓ **HOT TIP:** Don't rely on spell check to catch all of the errors in your résumé. Be sure you proofread your résumé, and have several others proofread it as well. Errors imply you didn't put your full effort into your résumé; therefore, the job isn't important to you.