

The 10 Most Common Résumé Mistakes

Mistake #1: Writing your résumé to sound like a series of job descriptions.

You need to give the reader an idea of what you have done throughout your career, but instead of focusing on the duties you were responsible for at your previous jobs, list your accomplishments along with quantifiable facts to break up your claims. Saying you were responsible for 10 percent growth in overall sales is more impressive than simply stating you managed a sales team.

Mistake #2: Writing in the first person.

Your résumé is not a personal correspondence, and should not include words such as “I,” “my,” and “me.” Save the first person pronouns for your cover letter.

Mistake #3: Including unrelated and personal information.

As mentioned above, you do not have much room in a résumé, so why take up valuable space with information unrelated to the position you are seeking? Leave the details about your personal life, marital status, hobbies and other interests on the cutting room floor.

Mistake #4: Using passive language or no action words.

Your résumé needs to make a bold, strong statement, and the best way to do this is by utilizing action words to describe your accomplishments. Words like “coordinated,” “achieved,” “managed” and “implemented” will spice up your résumé and make it more interesting and relevant to the reader.

Mistake #5: Repetition

While using action words is important, it is also key to make sure you have variety in your résumé. Don’t pick a couple of words and stick with them throughout the entire document. Break out a thesaurus if you are having problems coming up with new ways to say the same thing.

Mistake #6: Poor formatting or formatting that is too flashy.

While the most important part of your résumé is the content, there is no question that the document’s overall look and feel is also important. By now you should be comfortable enough with a word processing program to create a clean, polished-looking document. Use consistent formatting for headings and bullet points. In the same respect, steer clear of flashy formatting or overly creative résumés with unconventional fonts or graphics, unless you are seeking a highly creative position. Keep your résumé simple, bold and professional.

Mistake #7: Sending a résumé without a cover letter.

One of the worst things you can do is send a great résumé without an official introduction. Résumés and cover letters should be inseparable. Make sure you don’t give up your chance to really sell yourself with a cover letter.

Mistake #8: Sending an unfocused or generic résumé.

While your past experience does not change depending on the job or industry you are targeting, your résumé certainly should. If you are seeking a sales-related position, your résumé will include details that are different than those that would be included in a résumé for a management job. Make sure you write to what you are seeking and make it easy for the reader to see why you are a good fit.

Mistake #9: Typos and other spelling or grammatical errors.

Before you send out your résumé, make sure you have proofread it several times. If a typo or misspelling is found, many hiring managers won’t give a résumé a second look and will automatically toss it.

Mistake #10: Sending your résumé to a nameless, faceless person in the department you are targeting

This is often the first and most helpful step to getting your foot in the door. Want your résumé to get thrown out with the recycling bin? Just send it to the company’s “Hiring Manager,” or “To Whom it May Concern.” Do yourself a big favor and take the time to find a real person at the company who is responsible for hiring.

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