

TIPS FOR CREATING A CONCISE RESUME

BY KIM ISAACS, MA, CPRW, NCRW

Monster.com's Resume Expert

Are you asking yourself any of these questions:

How long should my resume be?

How can I fit all my experience on one page?

What can I eliminate, and what should be highlighted?

If you are, you are not alone. As millions of workers update their resumes, one of the top concerns is length. Not long ago, job seekers followed the resume golden rule: No resume should exceed one page. However, today's job seekers are finding that rule no longer applies.

In this time of mass confusion, the solution is simple: Use common sense. If you are just graduating, have fewer than five years of work experience or are contemplating a complete career change, a one-page resume will probably suffice. Some technical and executive candidates require multiple-page resumes. If you have more than five years of experience and a track record of accomplishments, you will need at least two pages to tell your story.

YOUR RESUME IS NOT AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Don't confuse telling your story with creating your autobiography. Employers are inundated with resume submissions and are faced with weeding out the good from the bad. The first step involves quickly skimming through resumes and eliminating candidates who clearly are not qualified. Therefore, your resume needs to pass the skim test. Dust off your resume and ask yourself:

Can the hiring manager see my main credentials within 10 to 15 seconds?

Does critical information jump off the page?

Do I effectively sell myself on the top quarter of the first page?

THE SALES PITCH

Because resumes are quickly skimmed during the first pass, it is crucial your resume gets right to work selling your credentials. Your key selling points need to be prominently displayed at the top of the first page. If an MBA degree is important in your career field, your education shouldn't be buried at the end of a four-page resume.

An effective way to showcase your key qualifications is to include a Career Summary statement at the top of the first page. The remainder of the resume should back up the statements made in your summary.

USE AN EDITOR'S EYE

Many workers are proud of their careers and feel the information on a resume should reflect all they've accomplished. However, the resume shouldn't contain every detail. It should only include the information that will help you land an interview.

So be brutal. If your college days are far behind you, does it really matter that you pledged a fraternity or delivered pizza? The editing step will be difficult if you are holding on to your past for emotional reasons. If this is the case, show your resume to a colleague or professional resume writer for an objective opinion.

EIGHT TIPS TO KEEP YOUR RESUME CONCISE

1. Avoid Repeating Information

Did you perform the same or similar job tasks for more than one employer? Instead of repeating job duties, focus on your accomplishments in each position.

2. Eliminate Old Experience

Employers are most interested in what you did recently. If you have a long career history, focus on the last 10 to 15 years. If your early career is important to your current goal, briefly mention the experience without going into details. For example: Early Career: ABC Company-City, State-Served as Assistant Store Manager and Clerk, 1980-1985.

3. Don't Include Irrelevant Information

Avoid listing hobbies and personal information such as date of birth or marital status. Also, eliminate outdated technical or business skills.

4. Cut Down on Job Duties

Many job seekers can trim the fat off their resumes simply by removing long descriptions of job duties or responsibilities. Instead, create a paragraph that briefly highlights the scope of your responsibility and then provide a bulleted list of your most impressive accomplishments.

5. Remove "References Available Upon Request"

Many job seekers waste the valuable last line of the resume on an obvious statement. Unless you're using this as a design element, remove it.

6. Use a Telegraphic Writing Style

Eliminate personal pronouns and minimize the use of articles when preparing your resume.

7. Edit Unnecessary Words

Review your resume for unnecessary phrases such as “responsible for” or “duties include.” The reader understands you were responsible for the tasks listed on your resume.

8. Customize Your Resume for Your Job Target

Only include information relevant to your goal. This is particularly important for career changers who need to focus on transferable skills and de-emphasize career accomplishments.