



Top 10 Typical Resume Mistakes

More often than not, a company's first impression of you comes in the form of a resume, a simple piece of paper that includes your work and educational history, typically on one to two pages. With such limited space to convey such important information, it pays to make sure you get it right the first time.

In talking with Career Services staff and employers from around the country, we have identified ten of the most common mistakes people make when writing their resumes. While avoiding these mistakes won't automatically make you a shoe-in for the job of your choice, it will make sure you are on the right track.

Mistake #1: Too Long or Too Short

One page is *preferred* for a new college graduate. If your experience warrants it, two pages are acceptable, but only if you utilize the full two pages. Do not submit a 1 ½ page document.

Mistake #2: Disorganized and Poor Formatting

While the most important part of your resume is the content, there is no question that the document's overall look and feel is also important. Illogical order, disorganization, and inconsistent format make your resume difficult to read. By now, you should be comfortable enough with a word processing program to create a clean, polished document. Use consistent formatting for headings and bullet points.

Mistake #3: Too Flashy

Steer clear of flashy formatting or overly creative resumes with unconventional fonts or graphics, unless you are seeking a highly creative position. Also, stay away from fancy binders, exotic paper stock and colors, and photographs. Keep your resume simple, bold and professional.

Mistake #4: Faulty Writing Style and Poorly Typed

Looks unprofessional: poor printing/copying (do not use an inkjet printer); sloppy layout; poor quality of paper; poor grammar; spelling errors and typos; poor punctuation; too wordy; poor sentence/phrase construction; overuse of the same adjectives or action verbs; unclear names, jargon or acronyms; dishonest or boastful tone; language inappropriate for the field. Before you send out your resume, make sure you have proofread it several times. If a typo or misspelling is found, many hiring managers won't give a resume a second look and will automatically toss it.

Mistake #5: Including Unrelated and Irrelevant Personal Information.

As mentioned above, you do not have much room in a resume, so why take up valuable space with information unrelated to the position you are seeking? Your resume 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. Also, leave the details about your personal life, marital status, religion, age, race, height, weight, race, hobbies, and other interests on the cutting room floor.

Mistake #6: Poor Descriptions of Experience and Education

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 back up your claims. Saying you were responsible for a 10 percent growth in overall sales is more impressive than simply stating you worked on a sales team. Your resume 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 resume and make it more interesting and relevant to the reader.

In addition, you do not need to list your related course work if it is implied by your major; although special projects and professionally relevant courses can be cited.

Mistake #7: Unclear Career Objective or Sending an Unfocused/Generic Resume

While your past experience does not change depending on the job or industry you are targeting, your resume certainly should. If you are seeking a sales-related position, your resume will include details that are different than those that would be included in a resume 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 #8: Repetitiveness

While using action words is important, it is also key to make sure you have variety in your resume. 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 #9: Sending a Resume Without a Cover Letter

One of the worst things you can do is send a great resume without an official introduction. Resumes and cover letters should be inseparable. Make sure you don't give up your chance to really sell yourself with a cover letter. Unless told otherwise, send a cover letter.

Mistake #10: Misdirected

Too many resumes arrive on employers' desks unsolicited, and with little or no connection to the organization. If you want your resume to get thrown out with the trash just send it to the company's "Hiring Manager," or "To Whom it May Concern." Targeted cover letters, directed to an identified person in the organization are much more successful. Do yourself a big favor and take the time to find a real person at the company who is responsible for hiring in the department you are targeting. This is often the first and most helpful step to getting your foot in the door.

For more information on writing an effective resume and cover letter, see these Career Preparation Center handouts:

- **Resume Writing 101**
- **Cover Letters**