

## Seven Signs it's Time to Toss Your Résumé

They've reviewed millions of résumés and seen it all. From the candidate whose stated objective was to "seek a high-paying, relaxing job" to the software developer who included a photo of himself bare-chested, cavorting in the surf.

Corporate recruiters say you'd be surprised at how many candidates leave out important facts, such as the names and locations of companies where they've worked, or include too much information, like the candidate who asterisked her dates of employment with the caveat: "Please do not misconstrue the fact that I have had 12 jobs in six years as job-hopping...I have never quit a job!"

Is your résumé working for you or against you? Here are seven signs it may be time to tweak (or toss) your résumé:

### 1. No Career Summary/Introductory Statement

Most hiring companies don't have time to match unspecified résumés to open positions, so lead off with a career summary or introductory statement that makes it clear what type of position you are seeking and why you are qualified for the job.

### 2. Lack of Keywords and Phrases

To pass through a company's applicant tracking software, your résumé must contain the keywords and phrases it is screening for. These words are not the verbs stressed in paper résumés, but nouns such as job titles and technical skills.

To find out what keywords you should be using, read the job posting or obtain the actual job description. You also may want to check out the book *2,500 Keywords to Get You Hired* by Jay Block and Michael Betrus, which lists critical keywords for each career and shows examples of how to use them in your résumé.

### 3. No Evidence of Your Experience

Your résumé should not merely list the jobs you've held; it should provide specific examples of how you achieved success. Résumé-writing professionals recommend using the PARS formula: Describe a *Problem*, the *Action* you took, the *Results* you achieved and *Skills* you applied.

### 4. Use of Personal Pronouns and Articles

With just two pages to sell yourself, make each word count. Write in a telegraphic style, eliminating all personal pronouns and articles like "the," "a" and "an." Removing the "I," "me" and "my" from your résumé not only frees up space, but creates a subliminal perception of objectivity.

## 5. Irrelevant Information

Irrelevant information keeps the reader from seeing your selling points. Weigh each portion of your experience from the hiring company's perspective to decide what to include and what to emphasize. If you're applying for an engineering position, for example, don't devote a whole paragraph to your job as a camp counselor unless the position has elements that are transferable to the engineering job. And never include information about your marital status, personal situation, hobbies or interests unless they are relevant to the job for which you're applying.

## 6. Poor Formatting

Unless you have no work experience or have held a number of different jobs in a short amount of time, a chronological résumé is the most effective. That means using the following order:

- Header (your name, address, e-mail address and phone number)
- Career summary, profiling the scope of your experience and skills
- Reverse chronological employment history emphasizing achievements
- Education

Since poor alignment, spacing and use of bolding and caps make a résumé hard to read, you may want to use a résumé template.

## 7. Typos and Misspelled Words

From the would-be administrative assistant who claimed to be a "rabid typist" to the executive who boasted that he was "instrumental in ruining the entire operation," misspellings communicate that you have poor writing skills or a lackadaisical attitude. Proofread your résumé carefully and have several friends and family members read it as well.

Last, remember that the purpose of your résumé is to communicate your experiences and accomplishments as they relate to an open position and to obtain a job interview. Because each situation is different, you should tailor your résumé to each opportunity.