

10 Résumé Killers

By Kate Lorenz, CareerBuilder.com Editor

Writing a résumé isn't exactly a speedy process. First there's the brainstorming. Then, you have to write -- and rewrite, and rewrite -- your educational and work histories until your résumé perfectly boasts your background. Plus, there's all that proofreading.

Even though your résumé took you hours to write, hiring managers will typically spend less than one minute reviewing it. If your résumé has any glaring errors, however, employers will waste no time deleting it.

To ensure your résumé gets proper attention, avoid these 10 all-too-common blunders:

1. Not bothering with a cover letter.

Cover letters are so important to the application process that many hiring managers automatically reject résumés that arrive without them. Make the most of your cover letter by expanding on a few of your qualifications, explaining any gaps in employment or providing other information that will entice the employer to read your résumé.

2. Assuming spell-check is good enough.

In a 2007 survey, 63 percent of hiring managers told CareerBuilder.com that spelling errors are the most frequent mistakes they see in résumés. Spell-checkers can pick up many typos -- but they won't catch everything (manger vs. manager, for example). Always proofread your résumé several times, and ask a friend to give it a final once-over.

3. Being too generic.

In the same CareerBuilder.com survey, 30 percent of hiring managers said résumés not tailored to the position was the most frequent or annoying mistake. Always customize your résumé and cover letter for each job and employer to which you apply. This way, you can tailor your materials to show how you will be a perfect fit for the position.

4. Focusing on duties, not accomplishments.

Instead of writing a list of job duties on your résumé, demonstrate how each duty contributed to your company's bottom line. For example, anyone can plan the company fund-raiser, but if you note that your fund-raiser brought in 50 percent more money than the previous year's event, the hiring manager will be more impressed.

5. Having a selfish objective.

Employers are trying to determine whether you're a good fit for their organizations, so everything on your résumé should point to your experience. A summary of qualifications that conveniently displays your accomplishment and background is far more effective than a generic objective statement ("To gain experience in...").

6. Giving your résumé format a little "flair."

Unusual fonts or fluorescent pink paper will certainly make your résumé stand out -- in a bad way. Keep your résumé looking professional by sticking with standard white or cream-colored paper, black type and a common font like Arial or Times New Roman.

7. Guesstimating your dates and titles.

With the proliferation of background checks, any "upgrades" you give your titles or stretching of employment dates to cover gaps will likely get caught -- and you will be eliminated from consideration.

8. Tell everyone why you left.

Never put anything negative on your résumé. If you left the position due to a layoff or you were fired, bring it up only if asked.

9. Include lots of personal information.

It's fine if you enjoy fly fishing on Sunday afternoons, but unless your hobby relates to your career, it doesn't belong on your résumé. The same goes for your height, weight, religious affiliation, sexual orientation or any other facts that could potentially be used against you.

10. Going long.

Your high school job scooping ice cream probably isn't relevant to your career anymore, so there is no reason to include it on your résumé. Your résumé should be no more than two pages -- and no more than a page for most professionals -- so only include your most recent and relevant work history. Take it from hiring managers: 21 percent think a résumé more than two pages long is the most frequent and annoying résumé mistake.