PONGO®

RESUMES:
RESUME WRITING BASICS: BUILDING BLOCKS OF A GOOD RESUME

Takeaway Points

- Your resume must grab the hiring manager's attention within 30 seconds.

- Therefore, your resume must be attractive, organized, and easy to read.

- Limit resume length to two pages; one if you've been in the workforce less than five years.

- Leave enough margin space for the reader to make notes on the resume.

By: Team Pongo

Anyone who sees resumes all the time – recruiters, hiring managers, HR staff – will tell you they typically spend between 10 and 30 seconds deciding whether a resume is worth reading. That's all you get to make your case. If nothing relevant or impressive is obvious within that brief window of time, the resume is rejected without a second glance. But if your resume is attractive, organized, and easy to read, 30 seconds is plenty of time to grab the reader's attention and inspire them to take a closer look.

Follow these standard guidelines to create a clean, organized resume that helps readers see quickly that you're a candidate who's worth their time!

Order of Elements
Generally, a resume will flow in this order:

1. Full name, address, and contact information.
2. Objective and/or Summary of Qualifications.
3. Past employers' names, locations, and dates of employment, with a description of your roles and significant accomplishments on each job.
4. Education and training.
5. Other relevant details (e.g., computer skills, memberships in industry organizations, etc.).

Of important note, recent graduates may find it appropriate to place Education immediately after the Objective, followed by past employment or internships and relevant coursework.

Length
A general rule of thumb is to keep your resume to one or two pages. The final length really depends on the amount of relevant information you have to present. If you've been in the workforce for only a short time, a one-page resume will suffice. Only in extreme cases should your resume be any longer than two full pages.

Limit your work listings to the past 10 or 15 years, unless earlier experience was highly relevant to your targeted position. If you need a second page, make sure there is enough content to fill at least a quarter of the second page, and make sure there are no stray headings left behind on the bottom of the first page.

Format
To maximize your chances of landing an interview, choose an attractive and organized resume format, with effects such as bold or italics, uppercase, centering of text, lines, or indentations for emphasis and organization. Keep it simple and consistent. For instance, if one heading is bold, every heading should be bold.

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Did you know?

Pongo's Resume Builder provides you with all the tools you need to enhance your job search. You can build as many resumes as you like!

When you're perusing a prospective employer's web site, you can get a good idea of how traditional or contemporary the corporate culture is. Your choice of stationery and format can reflect that.

Your paper choice should be high-quality, bright white paper. In the past, the standard was cream or light gray stationery, but bright white is a better choice if the resume will be scanned, faxed, or copied.

Graphics

A simple graphic can add a burst of color at the top of your resume (and your cover letter, which should always have the same letterhead as the resume). It may help your documents stand out visually from the rest on the interviewer's desk.

If the industry or the organization you're applying to is very traditional (such as law), a graphic may be seen as too informal. Bear in mind that graphics may not work ideally in faxed or emailed resumes. But in a printed resume, they can be very effective.

Fonts

Good choices for resume fonts include time-tested typefaces such as Times New Roman, Arial, or Georgia. Other good choices include Tahoma, Trebuchet, and Verdana. Even Courier New, which offers a traditional "typewriter" look, may be appropriate.

The type size on a resume will usually be anywhere from 10 to 12 points.

"Fancier" fonts can often look garbled if the resume is faxed or copied, so it's wise to stick with fax- and copier-safe fonts such as those mentioned here.

Margins

The main criteria to consider when selecting resume margins are:

1. Adequate "white space" on all four sides to create a clean and readable look.
2. Space for the interviewer to make notes on the page.
3. Fitting all the content on one page (when appropriate).

In most cases, margins should be no less than a half inch and no greater than 1.25 inches, depending on the format you choose.

Most Importantly ...

Sending a beautiful resume with an error in it is like going to an interview with spinach in your teeth. So please, spell check, proofread, and have other people proofread your resume before you send it out.

www.pongoresume.com

Pongo Resume is a full-service online resource for job seekers. The Pongo Resume web site provides all the tools and support needed to write professional resumes and cover letters, ace tough interviews, and secure a great job. Pongo members generate over 100,000 resumes per month. Privately held and headquartered in Northborough, Massachusetts, Pongo Resume currently has more than 4 million registered members and averages over a half-million unique visitors per month. In 2009-2011, Pongo was named to the Inc. 5000 list of America's fastest-growing private companies.