

Ten Résumé "Don'ts"

by Peter Newfield



Résumés are a necessity for almost every job on the planet -- accountant, teacher, CEO or municipal employee. But unless you carefully and objectively examine your résumé before sending it out, recycling bins across America may be filling up with those ill-planned documents.

Before mailing your next résumé, check the ten résumé "don'ts" below:

- 1. Appearances Count** -- Don't try to save money by printing your résumé on cheap copy paper instead of good quality stock. Check for typos, grammatical errors and coffee stains. Use the spell check feature on your word processor and ask a friend to review the résumé to find mistakes you might have missed.
- 2. Does Size Matter?** -- If your career warrants a two-page résumé, then go ahead and create a document that reflects the full range of your experience and accomplishments. Don't reduce the type size to such a degree that your résumé becomes difficult to read.
- 3. Truth or Consequences** -- Don't fudge over dates or titles on your résumé to hide the fact that you have been unemployed, that you switched jobs too frequently or that you held low-level positions. If a prospective employer conducts a background check and discovers that you lied, you can kiss the job good-bye.
- 4. State Your Case** -- If you are seeking a job in a field in which you have no prior experience, don't use the chronological format for your résumé. By using a functional or skills-oriented format, you can present your relevant experience and skills up front.
- 5. Put Your Best Foot Forward** -- Don't simply copy the job description jargon from your company's HR manual. To show that you are more qualified than the competition for the positions you are seeking, you need to do more than simply list your job responsibilities. Present specific accomplishments and achievements: percentages increased, accounts expanded, awards won, etc.
- 6. No Excuses** -- Don't include the reasons you are no longer working at each job listed on your résumé. The phrases "Company sold," "Boss was an idiot" and "Left to make more money" have no place on your résumé.
- 7. What Have You Done Lately?** -- While it is certainly acceptable to have a two-page résumé, don't list every single job you've ever held. Personnel managers are most interested in your experience from the last 10 years, so focus on your most recent and most relevant career experience.
- 8. Target Your Audience** -- Don't mail out your résumé to every ad in the Sunday newspaper. If you are not even remotely qualified for a position, don't apply. Read the ads, determine if you have the right credentials and save the wear and tear on your printer.
- 9. No Extra Papers, Please** -- When you send out your résumé, don't include copies of transcripts, letters of recommendation or awards, unless you are specifically asked to do so. If you are called in for an interview, you may bring these extra materials along in your briefcase for show-and-tell.
- 10. Don't Get Personal** -- Personal information does not belong on a résumé in the United States. Don't include information on your marital status, age, race, family or hobbies.