

11 DOs (and 6 DON'Ts) to Maximize the Impact of Your Resume

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Writing the perfect resume is a daunting task, and it is important to do everything you can to make yourself stick out (in a good way). Recruiters pore over volumes of resumes and may spend mere seconds looking at each one. As someone who has reviewed hundreds (maybe even thousands) of resumes myself, the following is advice to help your resume stand out.

Overall

- **DO** spend some time thinking about what kind of job you are applying for, who is likely to review your resume, and what they are looking for. Focus yourself on questions like What adds the most value to my personal brand? and What sets me apart from the competition?, especially as it relates to the specific job and/or company to which you are applying.
- **DO** develop your story to have the most positive impact possible. Minimize non-relevant information and focus on demonstrated impact and results.

Formatting

- **DO** organize your resume in order of relevance. If your educational degree(s) will set you apart, put that before work experience (or vice versa, if work experience is most relevant).
- **DO** be consistent with fonts, headings, dates, locations, etc. The more consistency there is, the easier recruiters can find the information they are looking for. Using templates, learning to right justify text (e.g., dates), and maintaining adequate white space help your resume to look professional.
- **DO** be creative and recognize the potential that electronic resumes bring. Most recruiters will be viewing your resume on some form of computer, tablet, or phone screen. Consider embedding links to relevant online pages, like your LinkedIn profile, professional blog, work samples, or the corporate webpage for companies listed in your work experience. This gives resume reviewers an option to seek out additional information, without taking up valuable additional space on your resume. Another possibility is using color to add visual appeal, but be careful that it isn't distracting and that the resume still works if printed in black and white.
- **DON'T** use jargon or abbreviations unless you are 100% sure that reviewers of your resume will understand them. Instead, use more general and readily understandable terminology or spell out potentially ambiguous abbreviations. Similarly, don't use contractions, which are often viewed as informal and unprofessional.

Education

- **DO** focus on what sets you apart from the competition. For example, did you get a 4.0 GPA in college? Then list that under your degree. Did you get a 2.3 GPA in college? Then leave that out. As a general rule, list things like awards, GPA, and extracurriculars only if they help you tell your story and have a positive impact.

Work Experience

- **DO** be concise and simplify as much as possible. Try to limit yourself to 2-5 bullet points per job, and try to keep each bullet point on a single line. This forces you to clearly and distinctly summarize the job, because recruiters do not want to slog through irrelevant details.
- **DO** list bullet points in order of relevance, importance, or impact for each job. Whatever is most likely to make you stand out should be listed first to catch the recruiter's attention.

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- **DO** focus on quantifiable results, wherever possible. Instead of just listing your job duties, find way to demonstrate your impact, accomplishments, or learning in objective terms. Instead of saying Conducted sales calls to develop new client relationships, say something like Increased new clients by 30% and revenue by \$250,000 through targeted phone campaigns.
 - **DO** use active, powerful verbiage to illustrate your duties and accomplishments. For example, Member of team that set company sales record could have much more impact when stated as Actively engaged new clients as part of a team that set company sales record.
 - **DON'T** copy and paste the same bullet point into multiple jobs or use the same verb for sequential bullet points or bullet points within the same job. These things demonstrate a lack of attention to detail or a lack of effort in compiling your resume.
 - **DON'T** include irrelevant information. Focus on the job duties and accomplishments that are pertinent to the job and company where you are applying. Including all prior work experience, even when it is not relevant, will dilute your resume. As recruiters scan your resume, they are just as likely to focus on irrelevant information as they are on relevant information. So highlight the things the recruiter wants to see by getting rid of the rest.

What to Exclude



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- **DON'T** include a Summary/Profile/Objectives statement. This is typically full of subjective information (I'm a hardworking, conscientious people-person...) or information that is redundant. Recruiters already know your objective (to get the job) and should be able to put together their own profile of you based on the clear and concise information in your resume (e.g., work experience, education, etc.).

- **DON'T** list your references (or even include a references are available upon request statement) unless specifically requested by the employer. The employer will assume that you can provide references and will ask for this information if and when it is needed.
- **DON'T** include personal information. There is no need to highlight your love of fishing, watching football, knitting, or cooking - and definitely do not include marital or parental status. Keep your resume focused on job-related information.

Editing

- Finally, **DO** have multiple people review your resume and give you feedback. It is hard to catch your own typographical errors, and others can help identify any inconsistencies or make you aware of anything unclear or confusing. It is always a good idea to get multiple honest perspectives about your resume. In the end, it is your resume, and you can choose what to incorporate and what to ignore from these friendly reviews. But it's better for a friend to catch a major error before your resume is in the hands of a company recruiter.

This post was originally posted on my [BizarreHR blog](#).