

Resume Do's and Don'ts

Resumes

Don't sacrifice quality for speed.

Check spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Don't try to do 'fancy' things to the way your resume looks, as formatting may get lost when you email and the receiver may not be able to read your resume!

Just because your resume is online doesn't mean it should be any longer/shorter than a hardcopy.

Cover letters

- Mention why you are contacting them (what job, what department, what field).
- Explain your interest or relevant experience.
- The same rules apply as with off line cover letters: don't make cover letters too long or too short.
- Don't become slack on punctuation and grammar.
- Ensure it is well written, accurate and well presented.
- Display your contact details clearly.

Email communication

- Remember that email communication in the application process can be more prevalent than verbal communication.
- Emails should be written as per a letter, i.e.: address the person properly, for example "Dear Mr Smith,".
- Sign the letter, "Yours sincerely" or similar, with your full name underneath.
- Many people forget about punctuation, capital letters and grammatically correct sentence formation when they email.
- Do not write as you speak, as this doesn't always make sense to the receiver, save your conversational style for the interview!

The rule should be that when you write something via email, you treat it like a letter, not a post-it note! Your application and resume are the first introduction to a potential employer or recruiter, remember first impressions count!

Resume Do's

Communicate your strengths, your achievements, your initiative and your personality; in short, your credibility and suitability.

Your resume should be no more than two - four pages long. Think quality, not quantity. On average, readers absorb 60% of the first page, 40% of the second, and the third is generally a waste - this has been proven time and time again.

Aim to make an impact on the reader.

Put the greatest emphasis on your most recent positions. Summarise older roles. Include dates and months of employment for each.

Include your competence in foreign languages (basic, good, fluent), but be honest. So, if you only have a School Certificate in French, then you have 'basic French'.

Be positive - don't be too modest and don't lie about your experience. Positive thinking is vital to secure that next position.

Tailor your resume to each job application. Tailor the resume to the company/department and position whenever possible. Although this may be time-consuming, it could help you clinch that job! You could include a 'position sought' section in your resume for this purpose.

Resume Don'ts

A badly prepared resume challenges the credibility of its contents.

If you cannot produce a professional document about yourself, an employer may conclude that you are unlikely to have the competence to fill an important job.

Do not make false/exaggerated claims, honesty is always the best policy. If the interviewer identifies inconsistencies in your resume you will not be successful.

Do not provide too much personal information such as weight, height, place of birth and number of children and their ages. You can include information about your interests, but keep it short.

Do not enclose a picture.

There is no need to include your 'hobbies'. If you have some outstanding achievements, such as 'Olympic Rower' or such, there is clearly no harm in mentioning this, it may enhance the interview.

Don't include your required rate/salary. You cannot win - the figure will often be too high, or sometimes even too low. You can negotiate this after you've got the job!

Resume Content

Make sure your resume has a clear structure - include career overview, skill overview, qualifications (education/professional) and employment history.

Employers often make up their mind from reading the initial summary and key skills. Use an effective summary on the first page and include a list of your key skills and key applications in bold. Note the quantity of experience you have for each key skill, e.g. Business Analysis (5 Years), Database Design (4 Years), etc.

Bullet points break up a resume well. Employers want to get straight to the salient points so direct them there. Important information should stand out but avoid using just one or two words.

Each bullet point should give the reader a feel for:



- when you instigated a particular idea/project. (Self-starter)
- when you are/were responsible for a particular task. (Primary influence)
- when you assisted on a particular task. (Secondary influence).

Give the reader a feel for the type of tasks and responsibilities that you can cope with and how proactive you have been.

Think about how you can break projects down into specific tasks. Any ad hoc projects must be backed up with examples of issues that were tackled on this basis.

Highlight achievements to demonstrate your successes.