Basic Resume Etiquette

1. Not proofreading

It's clear there are many possible mistakes job candidates can make when crafting their resumes, but for many hiring professionals, one stands above the rest. "The worst, most egregious mistake? Typos, misspelling and poor grammar," says Lynda Spiegel, founder of Rising Star Resumes. A resume littered with errors is the quickest way to convince prospective employers to move on to the next resume.

2. Being forgettable

Establishing a "personal brand" can feel awkward and self-promotional at first—but hey, you are here to show prospective employers what you have to offer! "Create a compelling tagline and statement that quickly definea your differentiators.

3. Using too many buzzwords

A big mistake can be using buzzwords instead of demonstrating what you've actually accomplished. For example, instead of saying, "I am great team player," try providing details that are true to your experience, such as, "I worked in a team of five," says Anna-Jane Niznikowska, career coach at Telegraph Street.

4. Underestimating the power of keywords

Pay attention to the words and phrases used in the job description and be sure to include some in your resume. That way you'll be sure to catch the eye of the initial screeners who will then pass your resume along to the hiring managers who make the larger decisions.

5. Focusing on intangibles

It's tempting to fill your resume with unnecessary adjectives or generic information to make it appear more robust. But job candidates should always try to link their achievements to real, solid numbers, according to Jasmine Elias, marketing manager at Kizkaz. "I don't want to hear that you created a new social media strategy, I want to know what the results were."

6. Stretching the truth

This probably seems like another no-brainer. But hiring professionals run into this more often than we'd like to believe! "Lying on a resume can cost you the job," says Tracy Vistine, lead recruiter for Messina Group. "Companies require background checks and if your experience does not match your resume, an offer will be rescinded."

7. Being too lengthy

There's no hard-and-fast rule for this one, but many professionals recommend keeping your resume between one and three pages. The important thing here is to consider the fact that the person reading it will like be reading dozens of others. Making your information easily skimmable by labeling sections and including bulleted lists could help it get past the first round of screening.

8. Recycling resumes

Basic Resume Etiquette (cont)

We briefly mentioned this already but it's worth highlighting again. While many jobs are similar in nature, a resume must be tailored specifically to each job you are applying for. No matter how sneaky you think you are, most employers can tell the difference.

Personal information

9. Using an unprofessional email addresses

You know that email address you thought was hilarious when you created it during your junior year of high school? Chances are, hiring managers won't get as much of a kick out of it as you did back then. "For goodness sake, use a professional email," says Leanne E. King, president and CEO of SeeKing HR. A good rule of thumb for this one is to incorporate some variation of your first and last name.

10. Misspelling your email address

one of the most common mistakes employers encounter is an incorrect email address. With email being one of the most prominent points of contact in today's digital age, it's crucial you get this one right.

11. Listing multiple phone numbers

It is not necessary to list all your contact numbers, King says. To keep it simple, include your primary line, but be sure the one you do provide works and has a professional voicemail greeting in case you're not around to answer an important call.

12. Getting too personal

A big no-no on your resume is including information on your hobbies or interests. But that said, sometimes sharing unique things about yourself can be the differentiator between you and another qualified candidate. The trick here is to be sure the info you choose to include can translate to employable attributes. For example, it can be helpful to share that you coach little league, but not that the Yankees are your favorite team.

Your Qualifications

13. Burying (or omitting) your accomplishments

Employers do care about your education, but most are more concerned with how you've used your degree since you earned it. For that reason, Sherman suggests leading with your experience and accomplishments and then moving on to listing your credentials.

14. Being too modest

No one likes a show-boater but you don't have to sell yourself short. Your resume is your chance to make a great first impression to prospective employers, so don't hesitate to share any achievements or awards.

15. Including irrelevant experience

Your Qualifications (cont)

If you list every responsibility you've had in every position you've ever held, you will appear to lack direction. Pay attention to the job for which you're applying and what that specific position will require of you. If some of your experience doesn't fit in with the position, you shouldn't clutter your resume with it, Sherman asserts.

16. Appearing uncommitted

A common red flag is listing a handful jobs that lasted less than 1-2 years, especially in a row. "One might be expected," says Jonathan Poston, founder of Yiveo.com, "but more than that and you'll be labelled a jumper." If your work experience looks like this, try to work in a way to explain the constant shifting, such as relocation, salary upgrade or something equally relevant.

17. Misrepresenting gaps in employment

You should never fudge your dates of employment to duqguise any gaps during which you weren't working. Remember that these things can easily be verified through HR. It's much better to explain the absence than it is to be deemed a liar!

18. Digging too far into the past

There's no hard-and-fast rule for how far back you should dig into your work history, although many professionals suggest capping it off at the last ten years. Employers don't need to know about every summer job you held through high school or that you waited tables during college last decade.

19. Overlooking your volunteer work

"This is a social world, so include your volunteer efforts especially when they speak to critical skills or experience required for the position," King says. Whether you've volunteered at a local church, coached children's sports or worked on the administrative side of local fundraiser, highlight that in your resume! It can speak not only to your experience, but also to your character and willingness to do more than is asked of you.

20. Omitting your ongoing education

Current college students often wonder about this one. Rather than simply listing the high school you attended, applicants should list the college they are enrolled in and the expected graduation date. The same applies for college graduates currently pursuing post-graduate education.

21. Listing generic skills

It is crucial to be clear and concise when listing your qualifications. This might require doing a bit of research on relevant industry lingo in order to ensure you're speaking the right language! Resumes that list 'Internet,' as a skill," are not credable. Instead, consider saying something like, "ample experience with web-based research," or "proficient in website maintenance."

Layout

22. Crowding the page

In the midst of flaunting your accomplishments and qualifications, it's also important to leave some white space on your resume, King says. This makes it appear more inviting and interviewers often like to make notes in the margins.

23. Using bright colors

It's only natural to want to catch an employer's eye in the midst of dozens of resumes, but using signature colors should be avoided, according to Vistine. You want to be sure your resume doesn't look amateur and that your experience and qualifications can speak for themselves.

24. Adding too many bells & whistles

Just because you have access to clipart or Photoshop doesn't mean you have to use it when building your resume. "Some folks get too creative and end up making their resumes look like the cover of a fashion magazine," Sherman says. Once again, let your experience do the talking. A flashy-looking resume may indicate that you're overcompensating for a lack of qualifications.

25. Inconsistent font usage

Pick a font that is professional and easy to read and stick with it. If your font varies throughout your resume, that can be distracting or possibly viewed as sloppy by prospective employers. A good rule of thumb is to use a font with serifs if your resume will be read in print, while sans-serif is ideal for web-based viewing.

26. Irregular formatting

Clear and consistent formatting speaks volumes about process and professional presence, King says. This can include making sure your section headers all match (same font size, all underlined, etc.) and maintaining consistency with the style of bullet points you use throughout. Staying on top of this will give your resume a more polished look.