



# WRITING CENTER

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## Common Résumé Errors

Just about everyone will have to compose a résumé at some point in his or her professional life. However, few people ever receive information or instruction on how to compile this kind of document effectively. Below, you will find some mistakes that many résumé-writers make and strategies for avoiding and repairing them.

**Résumé Mistake #1: Assuming that there is only one correct format or layout for a résumé.** Of course, there are some “rules” of résumé-writing that all applicants should follow. However, the best résumés are those that are built around the applicant’s specific credentials, and can take many forms.

Remember:

- Most résumés will be organized in one of two ways: chronological or skills.
- There are two basic ways of arranging your résumé on the page: indented and two-margin. Mix and match these within your résumé to keep it visually interesting and emphasize important information.
- Create labels for each section that are recognizable and tailored to your strong points.
  - Add relevant categories as needed. Common categories include *Education*, *Experience*, *Computer Skills*, and *Foreign Languages*.
  - Combine headings so that you have at least 2 or 3 substantive items under each one.
  - If you have many points under a heading (more than 7 or so), create subheadings within it.
  - Avoid putting major categories together (for example, by creating a heading for *Education and Work Experience*).

**Résumé Mistake #2: Including a Career Objective at the beginning of every résumé ...**

Many people begin their résumés with a Career Objective or similar statement. Although these might help the writer focus, they are only necessary in certain circumstances, and may not be advisable in others. It is very difficult to write a good Career Objective, and a statement of this sort that is poorly worded or overly vague can hurt your employment prospects.

Remember:

- A Career Objective can be helpful if the job for which you’re applying doesn’t seem to relate clearly to your education or previous work experience.
- You may also want to include a Career Objective if your school or department provides employers with résumés from a number of students with different majors.

- In other cases, include a Career Objective only if you can write one that is powerful and effective.
- If you decide to include a Career Objective, it's a good idea to customize it with the name of the company to which you are applying.

### **Résumé Mistake #3: Promising that your “References are Available upon Request” ...**

Although many job seekers assume that this is a generous strategy, promising the employer further information without giving them too much to read, there is no reason to include this statement. Employers will assume that your references are available to them.

Remember:

- Always include complete references upfront if your potential employer requests them.
- If the employer does not specifically request references with the résumé, you may omit this category.
- **BONUS JOB-HUNTING ADVICE:** Don't forget to bring reference information with you to the interview (even if you included it on the résumé)! Very often, employers will not consult references until they are seriously considering an applicant. Be prepared to provide them with all necessary contact information. Also, some applications will ask whether or not they have your permission to contact your past and current employers. If you are looking for a job without your current employer's knowledge, it is not unusual (and generally not a major problem) to ask that your prospective employer not contact your current job.

### **Résumé Mistake #4: Cramming all of your information onto a single page ...**

One page is often enough. However, if you have extensive credentials, use two pages. Employers will make the effort to turn the page if the story you tell about your skills and experience is compelling and relevant to the job. More information allows you to be more persuasive.

Remember:

- If you have looked at your résumé carefully and eliminated everything that is non-essential but still need more room, don't hesitate to use a second page.
- Use your space economically. Don't take advantage of a potential employer's good nature by padding your résumé with tangential information (no matter how interesting you might be ...).
- Your résumé must be visually inviting as well as informative. Don't use fonts that are too small to read comfortably or too large to seem professional. Also, consider your margins carefully.