

Five Biggest Resume Mistakes You Can Fix Yourself

A career consultant can diagnose and overhaul a troubled resume. But you can check off the basics yourself.

Mistake #1. "The mystery applicant." No contact information.

Fix: List a daytime phone number and email address, right at the top of the page. Create a professional-sounding message for your answering device.

Mistake #2. "The scrunchie." Loads of detail crammed together in eight-point type.

Fix: Add lots of white space, avoid tiny type and use bullet points instead of long paragraphs. If you've got a story to tell, most reviewers will happily turn to a second page.

Mistake #3: "List of tasks and duties." Obituary of a boring employee.

Fix: Sell yourself by focusing on accomplishments. Demonstrate the impact of your achievements. Describe actions, not obligations.

Mistake #4: "The expressionist." Sets off alarm bells.

Fix: Choose chronological rather than functional form, especially if you use traditional job-hunting sources: HR departments, recruiters, and advertisements. Off the beaten path, use a sales letter or network your way to in-person presentations.

Mistake #5: "Creative language." Spelling, grammar and punctuation errors.

Proof-read and ask a friend to help. Computerized spelling and grammar checks won't catch everything. A carefully-prepared resume will stand out more than you can imagine.

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