III — Writing Tips

The CareerBuilder Network offers this collection of wisdom for fine-tuning a resume into a winner:

Keep it concise. Employers have lots to do, so don't make the mistake of asking them to read through an unnecessarily long resume. A long, wordy resume will put off someone who is already short on time. Resumes should be one page, if possible, and two if absolutely necessary to describe relevant work experience. A two-page resume is no advantage if it's full of information that isn't reasonably applicable to the position you're applying for. Use the space only if you need it to fully disclose your accomplishments.

Make your words count. Your use of language is extremely important; you need to sell yourself to an employer quickly and efficiently. Address your potential employer's needs with a clearly written, compelling resume.

Avoid large paragraphs (over six or seven lines). Resumes are often scanned by hiring managers. If you provide small, digestible pieces of information you stand a better chance of having your resume actually read. Use action verbs such as "developed," "managed," and "designed" to emphasize your accomplishments. Don't use declarative sentences like "I developed the..." or "I assisted in..."; leave out the "I." Avoid passive constructions, such as "was responsible for managing." It's not only more efficient to say "Managed," it's stronger and more active.

Make the most of your experience. Potential employers need to know what you have accomplished to have an idea of what you can do for them. Don't be vague. Describe things that can be measured objectively. Telling someone that you "improved warehouse efficiency" doesn't say much. Telling them that you "cut requisition costs by 20%, saving the company $3800 for the fiscal year" does. Employers will feel more comfortable hiring you if they can verify your accomplishments.

Be honest. There is a difference between making the most of your experience and exaggerating or falsifying it. A falsified resume can be easily spotted by an employer (if not immediately then during the interview process), and if it doesn't prevent you from getting the job, it can cost you the job later on.

Don't neglect appearance. Your resume is the first impression you'll make on a potential employer, and a successful resume depends on more than what you say; how you say it counts as well.

Check your resume for proper grammar and correct spelling — evidence of good communication skills and attention to detail. Nothing can ruin your chances of getting a job faster than submitting a resume filled with easily preventable mistakes.

Make your resume easy on the eyes. Use normal margins (1" on the top and bottom, 1.25" on the sides) and don't cram your text onto the page. Allow for some breathing room between the different sections. Avoid unusual or exotic font styles; use simple fonts with a professional look. Use standard, non-textured, fine-grained paper in white or ivory. Keep in mind that textured and dark-colored paper may not copy well when the employer makes copies to pass around to other participants in the hiring process. If you need to copy your resume, make sure your copies are clean and clear. Even the best-looking resume can be ruined by a poor copier. Use only copiers maintained for professional copying.

Target, target, target. Emphasize what you can do for an employer. Be specific. If you are going after more than one job opening, customize your resume

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accordingly. It helps to tailor your resume for a specific position. Remember to only include the experience that is relevant to the job.

Eliminate superfluous details. Unnecessary details can take up a lot of valuable space on your resume. Don't mention personal characteristics such as age, height, and marital status. This is information that employers may not legally solicit from you, and they would probably be more comfortable if you don't volunteer it yourself. List your hobbies and interests only if you can relate them to the position you're applying for. If you need room to describe your work experience, avoid this altogether. The phrase "References available upon request" should be left off if you need room to describe your work experience. Most employers assume you have references they may contact, and will request them if there's a need to do so.

Avoid the "Objective" statement. Your objective should be clearly articulated in your cover letter. If you do include an objective, be specific. Vague statements, such as "Looking to utilize my marketing skills" or "seeking a rewarding position" add nothing to a resume and may in fact make you appear insincere.

III — Activity

1. Keep each of the above writing tips in mind as you embellish and revise the draft of your resume. Resume-writing is a painstaking process. Take your time! Remember, for your resume to set you apart from other job or college applicants, it needs to come as close to perfection as possible. If you haven't done so already, type and format your resume on a computer.

2. On a separate sheet of paper, create an evaluation checksheet that lists the writing tips described in this section down the left hand side (e.g. "Keep it concise," "Make your words count," etc.) and lists the categories included on your resume (e.g. *Honors & Awards*, *Work History*, etc.) across the top. Make two checksheets – one for yourself and one for a classmate.

3. Using a scale of 1-5, you and a classmate should both evaluate your resume according to how well each section meets the criteria listed on the left. If, for example, your *Volunteer Experiences* section is too wordy it might receive a low score on "Keep it concise."

4. Based on your own and your classmate's evaluation, do one last revision of your resume.

5. Bravo! Hopefully, your new resume is a reflection of your unique assets and marketable skills. May it open doors to your future!