

To ensure your résumé gets proper attention, avoid these 10 all-too-common blunders:

1. Not bothering with a cover letter.

Cover letters are so important to the application process that many hiring managers automatically reject résumés that arrive without them. Make the most of your cover letter by expanding on a few of your qualifications, explaining any gaps in employment or providing other information that will entice the employer to read your résumé.

2. Giving your résumé format a little "flair."

Unusual fonts or fluorescent pink paper will certainly make your résumé stand out -- in a bad way. Keep your résumé looking professional by sticking with standard white or cream-colored paper, black type and a common font like Arial or Times New Roman.

3. Going long.

Since your high school job scooping ice cream probably isn't relevant to your career anymore, it shouldn't be included on your résumé. Your résumé shouldn't be longer than two pages so only include your most recent and relevant work history.

4. Focusing on duties, not accomplishments.

Instead of writing a list of job duties on your résumé, demonstrate how each duty contributed to your company's bottom line. For example, anyone can plan the company fund-raiser, but if you note that your fund-raiser brought in 50 percent more money than the previous year's event, the hiring manager will be take notice.

5. Having a selfish objective.

Employers are trying to determine whether you're a good fit for their organizations, so everything on your résumé should point to your experience. A summary of qualifications that conveniently displays your accomplishments and background is far more effective than a generic objective statement ("To gain experience in...").

6. Being too generic.

Always customize your résumé and cover letter for each job and employer to which you apply. This way, you can tailor your materials to show how you will be a perfect fit for the position.

7. Guesstimating your dates and titles.

With the proliferation of background checks, any "upgrades" you give your titles or stretching of employment dates to cover gaps will likely get caught -- and eliminate you from consideration.

8. Tell everyone why you left.

Never put anything negative on your résumé. If you left the position due to a layoff or you were fired, bring it up only if asked.

9. Include lots of personal information.

It's fine if you enjoy fly fishing on Sunday afternoons, but unless your hobby relates to your career, it doesn't belong on your résumé. The same goes for your height, weight, religious affiliation, sexual orientation or any other facts that could potentially be used against you.

10. Assume spell-check is good enough.

Spell-checkers can pick up many typos -- but they won't catch everything (manger vs. manager, for example). Always proofread your résumé several times, and ask a friend to give it a final review.