

## Five Easy Ways to Improve Your Résumé

By Mary Lorenz, CareerBuilder.com writer

Ah, the wisdom of teen movies. Remember in “Clueless” when Cher and Dionne gave Miss Geist a makeover in the faculty lounge? All it took was a few minor adjustments to turn the disheveled teacher into “not a total Betty, but a vast improvement.” The same principle can be applied to your résumé.

Look at your résumé: Would you still be compelled to read it if it wasn't your own, or would the vast array of typos, unusual fonts, long sentences and obscure language turn you away? While your résumé may not be a full-on Monet (meaning, up close, it's a big old mess), it may simply need some minor tweaking in order to get noticed. Take these five small steps to see big results.

### 1. Spell check... the old-fashioned way.

Spelling and grammar errors can be the kiss of death for résumés: They show employers that you don't pay attention to detail. Computer spell-check programs don't always pick up these errors, so make sure you proofread it yourself before handing it in. For insurance and a fresh perspective, have a friend look it over, too.

### 2. Put it in reverse chronological order.

Organize your résumé to reflect your most recent job at the top and include dates of employment. Employers tend to prefer these over functional résumés, which can be great if you're switching career paths, but otherwise make it difficult to determine when you worked where and can hide employment gaps.

### 3. Simplify your language.

Keep your sentences short and don't worry about fragments.

Leave out personal pronouns like “I,” “my” and “me.” Saying, “I performed” this or “I demonstrated” that is redundant. Who else would you be talking about if not yourself?

Omit the articles “a,” “an” and “the.” Instead of “Coordinated the special events for the alumni association,” simplify it to say, “Coordinated alumni association special events.”

Take out terms like “assisted in,” “participated in,” and “helped with.” If you assisted in managing client accounts, simply say, “Managed client accounts.” You can explain later what this role entailed.

Change passive statements to active verbs. Saying “Coordinated client meetings” instead of “Ensured client meetings were coordinated” adds punch and clarity to a job description.

Exclude words like “responsibilities” and “duties” under job listings. Your résumé should focus on accomplishments, not tasks.

### 4. Eliminate clutter.

Format your résumé for consistency and easy reading.

Bold, italicize or underline important headlines (just don't do all three at once – that's overkill).

Create a bulleted list – not a paragraph formation – for job descriptions

Use a standard font like 11 point Times New Roman or Arial. Fancier fonts are not only harder to read, but they may become garbled in an e-mail format.

Combine series' of short, odd jobs into one listing. (For example: “1999-2002 Barista – Village Café, Starbucks, Seattle’s Best...”)

5. Read it aloud.

Reading your résumé aloud will help you identify areas that need improvement or clarification. If something doesn't sound right to you, it won't sound right to a hiring manager.

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