20 COMMON RESUME ERRORS

1. SPELLING MISTAKES
   - Proofread
   - Spell check doesn't think (see=sea, knot=not)
   - Typos reflect poor quality of work
2. MENTION COMPUTER SKILLS (if you have 'em)
   - State your abilities using major software (Word, Excel, etc)
   - Especially important for administrative positions
3. PERSONAL STATISTICS ARE NOT COOL
   - Too much filler; not enough substance
   - Never list interests unless relevant
4. USING CURRENT PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT TO FAX & E-MAIL RESUME
   - "So if I hire you, you'll waste my money, too"
5. PICTURES ARE FOR HOLLYWOOD
   - Models and movie stars only
6. NEVER SAY "I"
   - Start sentences with an action verb
   - ACTIONS = RESULTS
7. JOB TITLES WITH NO ~~MEETING~~ MEANING
   - Tech I, Tech II instead of systems analyst
8. BE HONEST. TOTALLY.
   - The hiring employer knows both the industry and the job
   - Never overplay, exaggerate, imply
9. BEING GENERAL WON'T CUT IT
   - Address the position posted
   - Customize, tailor the resume
   - Be specific – offer facts on both your accomplishments and your skills
10. CUTESY FORMAT CAN SINK YOUR SHIP
    - Graphic fonts look childish
    - Fancy designs do not always impress – no gimmicks
    - Designer papers, borders, graphics often a negative influence
11. FORGET THE OVERUSED PHRASES
    - Stay clear of generic or broad phrases like "hard worker," "team player," and "excellent communication skills"
    - No tag lines – "references upon request" "Resume of . . . "

12. TOO MUCH INFORMATION
    - Skills should match what the employer is looking for
13. WHO YOU GONNA CALL?
    - Don't leave off phone number – home number only
    - Have voice mail or answering machine with professional message
14. FORMAT, FORMAT, FORMAT
    - Typewritten resume, computer laser printed, "crisp"
    - Font 12 or 13
15. NO COVER LETTER
16. NEGATIVES DON'T SELL
    - Keep it positive – don't mention layoff, termination, company bankrupt
17. CAREER OBJECTIVES
    - State career objective and desired position clearly
18. HIGH SCHOOL DOESN'T MATTER
19. DON'T LEAVE OFF CREDENTIALS
    - Clearly emphasize special credentials
20. NEVER MENTION SALARY

THE FORMULA FOR THE PERFECT RESUME

- Strong ACTIONS = RESULTS content
- One page
- Professional layout
- Easy to read
- Quantify skills and actions

OTHER TIPS

- Have someone proof your resume
- Send to Steve
- Ask you current field supervisor to take a look at it
- Keep on disc so it can be changed easily
- Pick a style that feels right for you – stick with it
- Take risks, set high goals, know your value

RESUME STYLES

1. CHRONOLOGICAL – organized by dates of employment
2. FUNCTIONAL – focuses on what you did
3. COMBINATION – combines employer information & employee skills

COMPONENTS OF RESUME

1. CAREER OBJECTIVE
2. EDUCATION
3. SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS
4. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE/WORK EXPERIENCE

OPTIONAL HEADINGS:

1. COMPUTER SKILLS
2. HONORS/AWARDS
3. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES
4. RELATED TRAINING

SUCCESS IS NOT THE RESULT OF SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION.

YOU MUST SET YOURSELF ON FIRE.

Reggie Leach

Select the Correct Format Style for You

Chronological

Name
Address
Phone

CAREER OBJECTIVE: _____

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Current/Last Job, Company, City, State, Dates

-
-
-
-

Next Job, Company, City, State, Dates

-
-

Next Job, Company, City, State, Dates

-
-

EDUCATION

Optional headings: Computer Skills, Awards/Honors, E-Mail Address

Functional

Name
Address
Phone

CAREER OBJECTIVE: _____

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Skill Area

-
-

Skill Area

-
-

Skill Area

-
-

WORK HISTORY

Current/Last Job, Company, City, State, Dates
Previous Job, Company, City, State, Dates
Previous Job, Company, City, State, Dates

EDUCATION

Evelyn Counselor
21135 32nd Avenue South
Columbus, Ohio 66666
(201) 555-0111

Career Objective: Case Manager

Summary of Qualifications

Broad exposure to numerous counseling issues working with diverse clientele. Able to make accurate diagnoses and assessments and provide comfortable environment where individuals make changes. Use eclectic therapeutic approach plus outreach and community referrals to aid individuals either in therapy or in crisis environments. Committed to helping individuals change and improve the quality of their lives.

Professional Experience

Counseling

- Good exposure dealing one-on-one with a diverse population and wide range of clientele from teenagers to older adults.
- Maintained a case load of clients, effectively assisting individuals with depression, anger, loss, marital problems, suicide, domestic violence, chemical abuse, child abuse, personality disorders. Very low no-show rates.
- Counseled, 225 hours, individuals calling rape crisis line, providing acute intervention.
- Manned drop-in medical clinic for DSHS, homeless, welfare, low income individuals offering counseling, referrals, interventions and outreach.
- Provided anger management counseling for men involved in domestic violence.

Outreach

- Worked with Child Protective Services issuing child abuse reports on clients.
- Taught illiterate adults basic reading and writing skills over two year period.
- Coordinated office administration, budgeting, organized work flow and schedules, supervised staff, trained employees on computer system usage for governmental agency over five year period.

Work History

Counselor Volunteer, Neighborhood Clinic, Columbus, March, 1995–Present

Intern, Catholic Community Services, Columbus, September, 1994–August 1995

Literacy Tutor, County Multiservice Center, Nov. 1992–Dec. 1994

Counselor Volunteer, Mental Health Institute, Angeline's Day Center for Women, Rape Relief, October, 1989–August, 1991

Office Administrator, Metro, Columbus, OH, September, 1983–September, 1988

Education

Master of Arts, Psychology, Antioch University, 1995
Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, University of Ohio, Columbus, 1991

Dorothy Adams
1 Main Street
City, NY 11111
(201) 555-0111

Career Objective: Computer Programmer

Summary of Qualifications

Ten years computer programming experience within the business engineering and finance divisions for a manufacturer. Strengths lie in project management, technical support, systems/process analysis, and communications skills. Proven track record of troubleshooting, enhancing systems, reengineering processes to increase efficiency while providing substantial cost savings. Received three special recognition awards in the last four years.

Professional Experience

Computer Programmer, Ford Computer Services, Detroit, MI, 1985–Present

- Programmed both business engineering and finance computing systems in a mainframe environment including enhancing code, troubleshooting, modifying systems, testing processes and procedures, and documentation.
- Key team member on a complete mainframe system overhaul streamlining thirteen corporate finance/accounting systems into one system. Two year conversion resulted in $12 million dollars in savings, eliminated twelve positions, increased efficiency and eliminated 80% of previous system problems.
- Served as technical troubleshooter/system programmer support to interdepartmental technical personnel. Resolved data complications, user errors, and miscoding.
- Responsible for database downloads and system backups. Ensured maximum productivity and efficiency.
- Created new graphs, charts, data flow illustrations and policy/procedural documentation plus comprehensive reports used in business analysis, and long term strategic planning.

Computer and Technical Skills

Programming Languages: COBOL/COBOL II, JCL, Mark IV
Platforms: Mainframe, LAN, PCs and Macintosh
Machines: IBM 3390/MVS (JES2/JES3)
Software: TSO/ISPF, Syncsort, Librarian, Rumba, Maestro, Word, Windows, PageMaker

Awards

Special Recognition Award, Finance Department, 1993
Appreciation Certificate, Finance Department, 1994
Special Recognition Award, Computer Programming Department, 1996

Education

Bachelor Degree, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 1983
Programming Certificate, Ford Computer Training, 1985

References

Employers can be influenced *a great deal* by what your references say. You need to select people familiar with your work, not personal or family friends. I recommend that you choose three people (no less) or no more than four. Call and ask their permission to be a reference *before* you use their name. In selecting and adding references to make a positive impression on the employer, follow these guidelines.

- ✔ Pick people you've worked with—former bosses, department heads, clients—that were pleased with your work. Exclude mentioning any boss who will give you anything but a rave review.
- ✔ Select current references. If they are 8 to 10 years old, they are too outdated to be of much value, and employers may wonder if you're hiding bad performance at more recent jobs.
- ✔ Obtain correct address, phone number, and identify the relationship, for example, former supervisor, major client, and so on.
- ✔ Mail the person your current resumé with a thank-you note that points out some of the key points they'll likely be questioned about. This is a good refresher and will produce a better endorsement when the person's called.
- ✔ Obtain letters from departing bosses and performance appraisals to use in future job interviews.
- ✔ References are usually brought into the interview and presented then. Unless you are specifically asked to mail them in the ad, don't bother to add them when you respond. They'll just clutter up your package, and most employers don't look at references until after the interview as they finalize their decision to hire (or not hire) you.

Influenced
Interpreted
Lectured
Mediated
Moderated
Motivated
Negotiated
Persuaded
Promoted
Publicized
Reconciled
Recruited
Spoke
Stipulated
Taught
Translated
Wrote

RESEARCH SKILLS

Accumulated
Calculated
Catalogued
Clarified
Collected
Critiqued
Designed
Diagnosed
Evaluated
Examined
Extracted
Identified
Inspected
Interpreted
Interviewed
Investigated
Organized
Reviewed
Summarized
Surveyed
Systematized

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Assembled
Built
Calculated
Computed
Constructed
Designed
Devised
Engineered
Fabricated
Formulated
Maintained
Operated
Overhauled
Programmed
Remodeled
Repaired
Solved
Surveyed
Trained
Troubleshooter
Upgraded

Action Verbs

MANAGEMENT SKILLS	
Accomplished	Hired
Activated	Implemented
Adjusted	Improved
Administered	Incorporated
Advised	Increased
Analyzed	Initiated
Assigned	Interviewed
Attained	Invented
Chaired	Investigated
Conceptualized	Led
Conducted	Managed
Consolidated	Negotiated
Contracted	Organized
Coordinated	Oversaw
Decreased	Planned
Delegated	Presided
Designed	Prioritized
Developed	Produced
Devised	Recommended
Directed	Recruited
Established	Reorganized
Evaluated	Reviewed
Executed	Scheduled
Facilitated	Strengthened
Formulated	Supervised

COMMUNICATION SKILLS	
Addressed	Directed
Arbitrated	Drafted
Arranged	Edited
Authored	Educated
Collaborated	Enlisted
Corresponded	Explained
Developed	Formulated

TEACHING SKILLS

Adapted
Advised
Clarified
Coached
Communicated
Coordinated
Developed
Educated
Enabled
Encouraged
Evaluated
Explained
Facilitated
Guided
Informed
Initiated
Instructed
Persuaded
Researched
Simulated
Trained

FINANCIAL SKILLS

Administered
Allocated
Analyzed
Appraised
Audited
Balanced
Budgeted
Calculated
Computed
Developed
Forecasted
Managed
Marketed
Planned
Prepared
Projected
Researched

CREATIVE SKILLS

Acted
Advertised
Conceptualized
Created
Demonstrated
Designed
Developed
Directed
Established
Founded
Illustrated
Instituted
Integrated
Introduced
Invented
Marketed
Originated
Performed
Planned
Presented

Produced
Recommended
Revitalized
Shaped
Sold

HELPING SKILLS

Assessed
Assisted
Clarified
Coached
Counseled
Demonstrated
Diagnosed
Educated
Effected
Expedited
Facilitated
Familiarized
Guided
Referred
Rehabilitated
Represented
Served

ADMINISTRATIVE OR DETAIL SKILLS

Approved
Arranged
Calculated
Catalogued
Changed
Classified
Collected
Compiled
Computerized
Dispatched
Executed
Formulated
Generated
Implemented
Informed
Inspected
Maintained
Manipulated
Modified
Monitored
Operated
Organized
Prepared
Processed
Purchased
Recorded
Retrieved
Screened
Specified
Synthesized
Systematized
Tabulated
Validated

Chapter 9

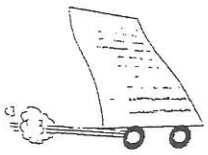
The 15-Minute Cover Letter, Plus Tips on How and When to Use It

This chapter provides advice on writing cover letters and includes various samples. I've tried to keep this basic, with an emphasis on letters that are sent after you have made some sort of personal contact with an employer. That's because letters—just like resumes—won't get you a job offer.

Writing a simple cover letter is pretty simple. Once you know how it's done, you should be able to write one in about 15 minutes or so.

Cover Letters

It is not appropriate to send a resume to someone without explaining why. It is traditional to provide a letter along with your resume—a cover letter. Depending on the circumstances, the letter would explain your situation and would ask the recipient for some specific action, consideration, or response.



Entire books discuss the art of writing cover letters. Some authors go into great detail on how to construct "powerful" cover letters. Some suggest that a cover letter can replace a resume by providing information specifically targeted to the person receiving it. While these ideas have merit, my objective here is to give you a simple, quick review of cover letter basics that will meet most needs.

Only Two Groups of People Will Receive Your Cover Letters

If you think about it, you will send a resume and cover letter to two groups of people only:

- People you know.
- People you don't know.

While I realize this sounds simple, it's true. And this observation makes it easier to understand how you might structure your letters to each group. But before I show you some useful and effective cover letters, let's first review some basics regarding writing cover letters in general.

Quick Tip

While many situations require writing a formal letter, a simple note will do in many instances (for example, when you know the person you are writing to). Additional information on informal notes will appear in the next chapter.

Seven Quick Tips for Writing a Superior Cover Letter

No matter who you are writing to, virtually every good cover letter should follow these guidelines:

1. Write to Someone in Particular

Never send a cover letter "To whom it may concern" or use some other impersonal opening. We all get enough junk mail, and if you don't send your letter to someone by name, it will be treated like junk mail.

2. Make Absolutely No Errors

One way to offend people quickly is to misspell their names or use incorrect titles. If you have any question, call and verify the correct spelling of the name and other details before you send the letter. Also, review your letters carefully to be sure they contain no typographical, grammar, or other errors.

3. Personalize Your Content

I've never been impressed by form letters, and you should not use them. Those computer-generated letters that automatically insert a name never fool anyone, and I find cover letters done in this way offensive. While some resume and cover letter books recommend that you send out lots of these "broadcast letters" to people you don't know, I suggest that doing so wastes time and money.

If you can't personalize your letter in some way, don't send it.

4. Present a Good Appearance

Your contacts with prospective employers should always be professional, so buy good quality stationery and matching envelopes. Use papers and envelopes that match or complement your resume paper. The standard paper size is typically used, but you can also use the smaller Monarch-size paper with matching envelopes. For colors, I prefer a white, ivory, or light beige.

Quick Alert

Cover letters are rarely handwritten anymore, and employers expect them to be word processed or typed (without error!), with excellent print quality.

Use a standard letter format that complements your resume type and format. Most word-processing software provides templates or "wizards" to automate your letter's format and design. I used such templates to create the formats for the sample letters in this chapter. And don't forget the envelope! It should be done carefully, without abbreviations or errors.

5. Provide a Friendly Opening

Begin your letter with a reminder of any prior contacts and the reason for your correspondence now. The examples later in this chapter will give you some ideas on how this can be handled.

6. Target Your Skills and Experiences

To do this well, you must know something about the organization or person with whom you are dealing. Present any relevant background that may be of particular interest to the person you are writing.

7. Close with an Action Statement

Don't close your letter without clearly identifying what you will do next. I do not recommend that you leave it up to the employer to contact you, since that doesn't guarantee a response. Close on a positive note and let the employer know you desire further contact.

Quick Tip

Using a few simple techniques, it is possible to make the acquaintance of all sorts of people. That's why I say that it wastes time and money to send your resume or cover letter to strangers—it is relatively easy to make direct contact. Section Six provides details on how to make contact with people you don't know, and I recommend that you learn more about this.

Sample Cover Letter: Pre-Interview, for a Specific Job Opening

Comments: This writer called first and arranged an interview, the best approach of all. Note how this new graduate included a specific example of how he saved money for a business by changing its procedures. Though it is not clear from the letter, his experience with lots of people was gained by working as a waiter. Note also how he included skills such as "hard worker" and "deadline pressure" that I reviewed in Chapter 4.

Richard Swanson
113 South Meridian
Greenwich, Connecticut 11721

March 10, XXXX

Mr. William Hines
New England Power and Light Company
604 Waterway Boulevard
Parien, Connecticut 11716

Dear Mr. Hines:

I am following up on the brief chat we had today by phone. After getting the details on the position you have open, I am certain that it is the kind of job I have been looking for. A copy of my resume is enclosed providing more details of my background. I hope you have a chance to review it before we meet next week.

My special interest has long been in the large-volume order processing systems that your organization has developed so well. While in school, I researched the flow of order processing work for a large corporation as part of a class assignment. With some simple and inexpensive procedural changes I recommended, check-processing time was reduced by an average of three days. For the number of checks and dollars involved, this one change resulted in an estimated increase in interest revenues of over $35,000 per year.

While I have recently graduated from business school, I have considerable experience for a person of my age. I have worked in a variety of jobs dealing with large numbers of people and deadline pressures. My studies have also been far more "hands-on" and practical than those of most schools, so I have a good working knowledge of current business systems and procedures. This includes a good understanding of various computer spreadsheet and applications programs, the use of automation, and experience with cutting costs and increasing profits. I am also a hard worker and realize I will need to apply myself to get established in my career.

I am most interested in the position you have available and am excited about the potential it offers. I look forward to seeing you next week. If you need to reach me before then, you can call me at (973) 299–3643 or email me at rswanson@msn.net.

Sincerely,

Richard Swanson

Sample Cover Letter: Pre-Interview, No Specific Job Opening

Comments: This letter indicates that the writer first called and set up an interview as the result of someone else's tip. The writer explains why she is moving to the city and asks for help in making contacts there. While no job opening exists here, she is wise in assuming that there might be one in the future. Even if this is not the case, she asks the employer to think of others who might have a position for someone with her skills. Assuming that the interview goes well and the employer gives her names of others to call, she can then follow up with them.

ANNE MARIE ROAD

February 20, XXXX

Ms. Francine Cook
Park-Halsey Corporation
5413 Armstrong Drive
Minneapolis, Minnesota 56317

Dear Ms. Cook:

When Steve Marks suggested I call you, I had no idea you would be so helpful. I've already followed up with several of the suggestions you made and am now looking forward to meeting with you next Tuesday. The resume I've enclosed is to give you a better sense of my qualifications. Perhaps it will help you think of other organizations that may be interested in my background.

The resume does not say why I've moved to Minneapolis and you may find that of interest. My spouse and I visited the city several years ago and thought it a good place to live. He has obtained a very good position here and, based on that, we decided it was time to commit ourselves to a move.

As you can see from my work experience, I tend to stay on and move up in jobs, so I now want to research the job opportunities here more carefully before making a commitment. Your help in this task is greatly appreciated.

Feel free to contact me at (834) 264-3720 if you have any questions; otherwise, I look forward to meeting with you next Tuesday.

Sincerely,

Anne Marie Road

616 KINGS WAY ROAD
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 54312
(834) 264-3720

Sample Cover Letter: Response to a Want Ad

Comments: Responding to a want ad puts you in direct competition with the many others who will read the same ad, so the odds are not good that this letter would get a response. The fact that the writer does not yet live in the area is another negative. Still, I believe that you should follow up on any legitimate lead you find. In this case, someone who is available to interview right away will likely fill the position. But a chance exists that, with good follow-up, another position will become available. Or the employer might be able to give the writer the names of others to contact.

John Andrews

January 17, XXXX

The Morning Sun
Box N4317
2 Early Drive
Toronto, Ontario R5C 1S3

Re: Receptionist/Bookkeeper Position

As I plan on relocating to Toronto, your advertisement for a Receptionist/Bookkeeper caught my attention. Your ad stated yours is a small office and that is precisely what I am looking for. I like dealing with people, and in a previous position, had over 5,000 customer contacts a month. With that experience, I have learned to handle things quickly and pleasantly.

The varied activities in a position combining bookkeeping and reception sound very interesting. I have received formal training in accounting methods and am familiar with accounts receivable, accounts payable, and general ledger posting. I am familiar with several computerized accounting programs and can quickly learn any others that you may be using.

My resume is enclosed for your consideration. Note that I went to school in Toronto and I plan on returning there soon to establish my career. Several members of my family also live there and I have provided their local phone number, should you wish to contact me. Please contact that number as soon as possible, since I plan on being in Toronto in the near future and would like to speak with you about this or future positions with your company. I will call you in the next few weeks to set up an appointment should I not hear from you before then.

Thank you in advance for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

John Andrews

P.S. You can reach me via email at johnandrews@cincore.com or leave a phone message at 587.488.3876.

12 Lake Street
Chicago, Illinois 60631
587.488.3876
johnandrews@cincore.com

Sample Cover Letter: Unsolicited Resume Sent to Obtain an Interview

Comments: This is another example of a person conducting a long-distance job search using names obtained from a professional association, a good thing to do. This letter also explains why he is leaving his old job and includes positive information regarding his references and skills that would not normally be found in a resume. John asks for an interview even though there may not be any jobs open now, and also asks for names of others to contact.

July 10, XXXX

Mr. Paul Resley
Operations Manager
Rollem Trucking Co.
I-70 Freeway Drive
Kansas City, Missouri 78401

Mr. Resley:

I obtained your name from the membership directory of the Affiliated Trucking Association. I have been a member for over 10 years, and I am very active in the Southeast Region. The reason I am writing is to ask for your help. The firm I had been employed with has been bought by a larger corporation. The operations here have been disbanded, leaving me unemployed.

While I like where I live, I know that finding a position at the level of responsibility I seek may require a move. As a center of the transportation business, your city is one I have targeted for special attention. A copy of my resume is enclosed for your use. I'd like you to review it and consider where a person with my background would get a good reception in Kansas City. Perhaps you could think of a specific person for me to contact?

I have specialized in fast-growing organizations or ones that have experienced rapid change. My particular strength is in bringing things under control, then increasing profits. While my resume does not state this, I have excellent references from my former employer and would have stayed if a similar position existed at its new location.

As a member of the association, I hoped that you would provide some special attention to my request for assistance. I plan on coming to Kansas City on a job-hunting trip within the next six weeks. Prior to my trip I will call you for advice on who I might contact for interviews. Even if they have no jobs open for me now, perhaps they will know of someone else who does.

My enclosed resume lists my phone number and other contact information should you want to reach me before I call you. Thanks in advance for your help on this.

Sincerely,

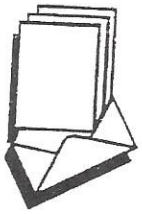
John B. Goode
Treasurer, Southeast Region
Affiliated Trucking Association

John B. Goode

312 Smokie Way Nashville, Tennessee 31201

Sample Cover Letter: No Interview Is Scheduled

947 Cherry Street
Middleville, Ohio 01234



October 22, XXXX

Mr. Alfred E. Newman, President
Alnew Consolidated Stores, Inc.
1 Newman Place
New City, OK 03000

Dear Mr. Newman:

I am interested in the position of national sales director, which you recently advertised in the *Retail Sales and Marketing* newsletter.

I am very familiar with your company's innovative marketing techniques as well as your enlightened policy in promoting and selling environmentally sound merchandise nationwide. I have been active for some time now in environmental protection projects, both as a representative of my current employer and on my own. I recently successfully introduced a new line of kitchen products that exceeds federal standards, is environmentally safe, and is selling well.

The enclosed resume outlines my experience and skills in both sales and marketing in the retail field. I would like to meet with you to discuss how my skills would benefit Alnew Consolidated Stores. I will contact you soon to request an interview for current or future positions and may be reached at (513) 987-6543.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Robin Redding

9