

Tips to avoid resume mistake updated on Jan 2025

Please, be original. Don't make these common mistakes.

Mistake: Incorrect Contact Information

Correct: I once worked with a student whose resume seemed incredibly strong, but he wasn't getting any bites from employers. So one day, I jokingly asked him if the phone number he'd listed on his resume was correct. It wasn't. Once he changed it, he started getting the calls he'd been expecting. Moral of the story: Double-check even the most minute, taken-for-granted details -- sooner rather than later.

Mistake: Listing a personal web site that contains inappropriate content.

Correct: See listing your personal web site URL on your resume.

Mistake: Using really small fonts

Correct: Employers are typically reading many resumes, and are taking less than half a minute to read one. Really small fonts are hard to read and don't photocopy as well. (That applies to your address block as well.) What's too small? Generally don't go smaller than a 10 point, but notice that all font styles aren't sized equally. For example, a 10 point Arial font is smaller than a 10 point Antique Olive.

Mistake: Really wide margins with content squeezed in the middle.

Correct: Your margins should be at least one half inch. You really don't need more than one inch. Lots of students ask if their resumes have "enough white space." An employer isn't reading white space. Employers are reading your content, and you want it to be easy to see.

Mistake: Long wordy descriptions in your objective and elsewhere.

Correct: You don't need complete sentences in your resume. Concise, understandable phrases are sufficient. Look at the examples in resume formats and samples. Ask for a Career Services advisor's assistance in editing your resume through walk-in advising.

Mistake: Typos (a small mistake in a typed or printed text)

Correct: You have one chance to make a first impression. In many cases, your resume, or your resume plus a cover letter, are the only things an employer has to base an impression of you. The resume is a critical document for presenting yourself. The view is that if you would make a mistake on your resume, you'll probably make a lot more mistakes on the job. It's easy to miss your own typos. Use spellchecks, but remember it won't catch every error. Frightening example: If you leave the first "I" out of "public relations," spellcheck is not going to let you know. Get the idea? Ask friends to proofread.

Mistake: Using too complicated a format; getting too creative.

Correct: The employer typically spends about 15 to 30 seconds reading your resume. Keep the layout simple and clean (like the examples in resume formats and samples). Avoid too many layers of indentation. Stick with one font size for the document; only make your name larger. Don't mix font types.

Mistake: Using a unique, creative layout or style to stand out from the crowd.

Correct: The best way to stand out from the crowd is with high quality content and a clearly written, neat, error-free document. Employers are looking for content, not fancy or dangerously creative layout. Don't stand out for the wrong reason.

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