

# CAREER COACH

## RÉSUMÉ BUILDING

# Remodel Your Résumé



***Follow these tips to give your résumé curb appeal***

**by Ray Harkins**

**Along with your insurance policies and estate plan, you also should review your résumé periodically—** especially after any big changes that may affect its content. Unfortunately, far too many people only consider these crucial documents when they're needed most.

Updates to your résumé should include significant new skills and formal training, and gradually exclude older details and less-relevant experience. In addition to new career information, your résumé also should be updated to reflect changes in the way hiring managers read and process them.

Today's HR managers are busier than ever and may spend only seconds looking at your résumé. An outdated résumé format jumps out to a hiring manager like an avocado-colored stove

to a home buyer. Thankfully, a few simple changes can go a long way toward modernizing an old-fashioned résumé.

### **Objective statement**

Any résumé format containing a section titled "Objective" reeks of obsolescence. The objective statement of years past was prominently positioned near the top of a résumé and read something like, "To obtain a position with a fast-growing organization that utilizes my skills ..."

Anyone reading your résumé knows you're looking for a job. Don't waste prime real estate with something no one is going to read. Instead, a "Professional profile" or "Summary" section with two to three concise sentences about who you are and the value you can add to the right organization makes much better use of that space.

### **Contact information**

Contact information still is a necessary element of any résumé. But today, email and LinkedIn page addresses are far more useful than your home mailing address. Be sure to include both, and add them as hyperlinks instead of plain text so someone can quickly

click them to contact or learn more about you.

## References available upon request

Picture a wood-paneled basement family room with mauve-colored shag carpeting and a large fern in the corner. Planting the phrase “references available upon request” at the end of your résumé is worse than that.

It’s understood that any serious applicant, if requested by a potential employer, would provide references. There is no need to waste space on this hackneyed expression. Modernize that 1980s résumé by deleting this cliché.

## Proficient in Microsoft Office

Twenty years ago, highlighting your ability to use a word processing or email program may have been significant. But today, basic computer skills are fully expected for most professional positions and citing them on a résumé no longer carries weight.

If your skills extend beyond the basics to include the use of advanced database or spreadsheet capabilities, programming or industry-specific software, then including these details on your résumé likely is valuable. When deciding whether to include an item, ask yourself: “Does this detail add value to me as a potential candidate?”

## Hobbies and interests

Should you list your hobbies on your résumé? It depends. If your hobbies are duct tape art, Sasquatch hunting or playing Farmville, the answer definitely is “No.” Enjoy your quirky weekend activities, but don’t include them on your résumé. They add no value and may even alienate you from the pool of viable candidates.

If your hobbies include walking, gardening and attending theater,

you probably don’t want to include those either. At best, they provide a conversation starter at the beginning of an interview, but they likely won’t add value to the overall picture of you as a potential employee.

On the other hand, activities such as coaching sports, teaching and volunteering in leadership roles do add value and suggest that you possess additional people skills that complement your technical abilities.

Competing in marathons or climbing mountains might suggest an inner fortitude or perseverance, and again, add value to the picture of who you are. But the rule of thumb for including hobbies and interests is: If in doubt, leave it out.

## Some things never change

Like hardwood floors and high ceilings, certain features of a home always look good. Résumés are no different. Hiring managers often subject résumés to a series of screening processes before selecting a small percentage of candidates to interview. Red flags such as misspelled words, poor grammar and incorrect punctuation likely will cause your résumé to get cut early in the screening process.

Excessive wordiness and complicated formatting also may lead an employer to pass on your résumé. Rather, your résumé should be rich with highlights but light on detail. Bullet-pointing two or three items per job position typically is sufficient and offers a better reading experience than a dense paragraph of information.

Remember this: Just as the purpose of an open house isn’t to secure a sale but an offer, the purpose of a résumé isn’t to land a job but an interview. Assuming you possess the required skills and experience, a clear and modern-looking résumé has a much better chance of landing you an interview than a wordy one with an antiquated format. **QP**

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