

# 5 Fatal Resume Mistakes to Avoid



Are you currently exploring the job market and wondering why you aren't scoring any interviews or perpetually being offered the wrong opportunities?

If either scenario is true, you may be inadvertently making one or more of the most common mistakes job seekers make when posting/sending their resumes:

**1. Misspellings and grammatical errors:** When hiring managers and recruiters spot misspellings or grammatical errors, the resume in question is often thrown directly into the trash. *Errors make it appear that you don't pay attention to detail or care how you come across to others.*

Review each and every word included in your resume and ask a trusted friend or family member to offer suggestions for revision. You may also think about hiring a professional proofreader for an hour or two.

**Résumé Proofing Checklist** (See attached) for further guidance.

**2. Failing to keyword optimize your resume:** In today's Internet-centric world, it is important you understand the importance of keyword optimizing your resume. Browse a handful of job descriptions posted on Monster, Craigslist, and other job search sites and make note of the common words showcased. E.g. in an Accounts Payable Clerk position, keywords and phrases could include "accounts payable," "business-to-business," "expense report," and "proficient in Excel."

Resumes without keywords addressing specific jobs tend not to appear in database searches. Be strategic when writing your resume.

**3. Offering too much information:** Share the most important details of your work experience and reveal the exact reasons you are valuable. Think deeply about the job you are trying to obtain, and list the experiences/successes that make you stand out above your competition.

**4. Posting an outdated resume:** Make sure your resume is always current. Your attention to detail is automatically questioned when your resume doesn't include your latest positions and accomplishments. Because you never know what is around the corner or when opportunity may knock, it is best practice to schedule a day each month or two to make changes and updates.

**5. Not quantifying your accomplishments:** If you list a specific accomplishment within your resume, you should be able to back it up with data or details. For example, if you list that you "increased revenue significantly" or "increased sales," it is recommended that you indicate by how much (in dollars (\$) or by percentages (%)). Some of this information is not available to you because it might be proprietary. .

Beyond fine-tuning your resume, it is important you leverage your cover letter as the ultimate selling tool. Share what makes you unique, how you'll be an asset, and how your experiences/successes will enable you to excel at your job.

While a resume is somewhat a one-dimensional tool for sharing your work experience, your cover letter provides an opportunity to uncover the dynamic you. Rather than reiterating your resume, the cover letter should convey your personality, confidence level, and collaborative spirit. Take time to develop a well-rounded and inspiring self-portrait — you may be surprised at the opportunities that come your way!



## Résumé Proofing Checklist

### Proofreading Your Resume

#### Spelling Mistakes

- Don't use words with which you aren't familiar.
- Use a Dictionary / Thesaurus as you write.
- Perform a spell check on your finished resume.
- Carefully read every word (out loud) in your resume. If you write "from" instead of "form," your spell check will be unable to detect your mistake.
- Have a friend or two proofread your resume for you.

#### Punctuation Mistakes

- Check for periods at the end of all full sentences.
- Be consistent in your use of punctuation.
- Always put periods and commas within quotation marks (i.e., Won awards including the "John H. Malcolm Memorial Service Award.")
- Avoid using exclamation points.

#### Grammatical Mistakes

- Do not switch tenses within your resume - be sure they are consistent for each job you list. The duties you currently perform should be in present tense (i.e., write reports), but ones you may have performed at past jobs should be in past tense (i.e., wrote reports).
- Capitalize all proper nouns.

- When expressing numbers, write out all numbers between one and nine (i.e., one, five, seven), but use numerals for all numbers 10 and above (i.e., 10, 25, 108).
- If you begin a sentence with a numeral, spell out that numeral (i.e., Eleven service awards won while employed.).
- Make sure your date formats are consistent (i.e., 11/22/05 or November 22, 2008, or 11.22.08. Choose one and stick with it.).

## Choose Your Words Carefully

- Be on the lookout for the following easily confused words: accept (to receive), except (to exclude), all right (correct), alright (this is not a word), affect (to bring about change), effect (result), personal (private), personnel (staff members), role (a character assigned or a function), roll (to revolve).
- Use action words (i.e., wrote reports, increased revenues, directed staff).

## Other Potential Mistakes

- Check dates of all prior employment.
- Check your City, State and Zip and phone number - are they still current and correct?
- Check the number of returns separating your categories: are they consistent?
- Check abbreviation of state names. All state abbreviations are two letters - no periods. For example, New York is abbreviated NY, California is CA, and Florida is FL. Look up other state abbreviations.

## Design Is Important

- Don't overcrowd your resume; allow for plenty of white space.
- Keep your resume to one page (in you are a recent grad or have minimum experience; *seasoned workers with more than 5 – 15 years experience use two pages*).
- Keep the number of fonts you use to a minimum -- two at the most.
- Use a font that is easy to read (no smaller than 12 pts). Do not justify the lines of type on your resume. Allow the right side of the page to "rag."
- Do not overuse capitalization, italics, underlines, or other emphasizing features, and use **BOLD** sparingly.
- Make sure your name, city/state and sip, phone number and email address appear on your resume and all correspondence, preferably at the top of the page. Do not identify contact info, i.e. **Email, Cell** we have all come to know and recognize these for what they are.
- Make certain your contact information is on each page, including references and cover letter; become aware of how to send a cover letter electronically,
- If you print your resume use white paper and a good-quality printer - only print on one side of the paper.

## What To Omit

- **Omit salary history.**
- **Omit sex, age, race, marital status, or other similar personal information.**
- **Omit: Reference available upon request**

**F Y I** – I have seen résumés where the writer is trying so hard to cram everything onto 1 page they have reduced the left and right margins to 1/4 inch. This does not work because the text seems crowded and often doesn't print completely. Also be cautious about *Justify* it will align text on both right and left but add spaces between words (this FYI is justified). To summarize: There is no right or wrong way to align text. Use the alignment that makes the most sense for the design and that effectively communicates your message.