

YOUR RESUME: Common Errors to Avoid

www.citadel.edu/career_services/ResumeSamples.htm

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The Citadel

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As you create your resume, avoid the following common errors. Additional resources are provided on our website at www.citadel.edu/career_services/ResumeSamples.htm. Mistakes on a resume can be costly! Ultimately it is your responsibility to make your resume error free.

- 1. INCORRECT CONTACT INFORMATION.** If your mailing address, phone or cell number, and/or email address are listed incorrectly whether due to a typographical error or a change since you provided your resume to an employer, you will miss out on potential opportunities. This is the only way for employers to reach you. If your information changes after submitting an application, be sure to follow-up with the employer to provide them with an updated resume.
- 2. INAPPROPRIATE OR MISSING OBJECTIVE STATEMENT.** Be sure to include an objective statement that is appropriate to your resume's current purpose. The objective you used as a junior for internships is no longer appropriate for use in searching for full-time jobs during your senior year. Include an objective to inform employers as to the type(s) of position(s) you seek. Many employers with whom the Career Center works prefer to see an objective on a resume so that they understand what exactly the candidate seeks in terms of employment. They do not want to guess or to figure out where the individual may fit within their firm; they typically do not have time for this and want to determine if the individual will be a fit with the type of work they wish to perform. Need help deciding what you want to do? Use the online career interest profile called *FOCUS* at www.citadel.edu/career_services/FOCUS.htm and the resources within *What Can I Do With This Major?* at http://www.citadel.edu/career_services/UT/majors/default.html.
- 3. USE OF POOR RESUME TEMPLATES.** While resume templates may appear to make the process of setting up a resume easy, they do not always provide the best quality style resume. Many templates limit your use of the page and often force an unnecessary second page. They keep the information in set blocks, use font sizes that are too small to read, and limit the ability to edit. Instead, start with a blank page, begin typing, and use the features of the software to arrange your page; use the tab key, change the default margins (top/bottom/left/right), center your contact information, use italics and/or bold to help various pieces stand out, etc. (If you indicate having skills in *Microsoft Word*, your resume is the first opportunity to demonstrate them to an employer. What better way to show them than to take a blank page and turn it into something they want to read)!
- 4. MISSPELLINGS.** Using spell check on your computer will not catch all incorrectly spelled words; especially when the misspelling is an actual word that has simply been "mistyped". Carefully review your resume to ensure there are no spelling errors present.
 - Pluralize the sections titled "Interests" and "Skills", as you will be listing more than one under both.
 - Do not include an "s" at the end of "Experience".
 - Thoroughly review the spelling of "Activities"; this tends to be a word that many mistype.
- 5. INCONSISTENT USE OF PUNCTUATION MARKS.** If you use a period at the end of your Objective, also include one at the end of each bulleted statement on your resume. The same applies if you choose not to use a period. Either method is fine, but be consistent with what you choose.
- 6. INCONSISTENT USE OF LOCATION AND TIMEFRAME ABBREVIATIONS.** If you list your current address as Charleston, SC use this same format for your permanent/home address and all locations listed within your Experience and other related sections. Do not alternate between Charleston SC and the use of a comma in between. Choose one format and stick with it.

If you indicate a timeframe of November 2009 – January 2010 on one experience, do not use the format of 8/09-5/10 on another experience. Choose one format and stick with it. The months may also be abbreviated using the first 3 letters, i.e., Jun for June, Aug for August, May for May (not much choice here), etc.
- 7. FAILURE TO CAPITALIZE TIMEFRAMES.** Whether you use a month, a specific semester (i.e. Fall), or "Present", capitalize the first letter.
- 8. INCORRECT VERB TENSE.** Be certain that you use past tense for actions that have already taken place and are no longer occurring; use present tense for actions taking place now.
- 9. MISUSE OF SAMPLE RESUMES.** When using a sample resume, only repeat specific content that reflects your experience. For example, do not reference having an **Academic Portfolio** (www.citadel.edu/career_services/Resumes/AcademicPortfolios.pdf) on your resume if you do not have one. Or, if listed skills

do not apply to you, do not use them on your resume. Remember, you need to own what is listed on your resume and be able to demonstrate the skills and describe the experiences in an interview.

10. **TIMEFRAME GAPS.** Avoid leaving timeframes within your experience unaccounted for as this will leave employers wondering what you were doing.
11. **MISUSE OF LISTED SKILL SETS.** Be able to provide examples of OR demonstrate all skills listed on your resume. In an interview, you may be asked to demonstrate your listed Spanish-speaking skills. Or, if you indicated you possess MS Word skills on your resume, be sure that your resume reveals them (i.e. columns should line up, spacing should be just right, margins should not be left on the default, bullets should be consistent, etc.).
12. **INCONSISTENT USE OF FONT STYLES.** Use the same font style throughout your resume. Using more than one may detract from the appearance and make it more difficult for scanning eyes to easily view. Also use the same size font throughout the body of your resume (Objective on down) for the same reasons. The font size for your name should be the largest font you use (18-22 point font) and the font for your contact information may be smaller than or the same as what is used for the body of your resume, but not so small that it is difficult to read. Avoid using a font smaller than 10 point. Keep in mind that if it is too small and cannot be read, then you may miss being contacted for an interview.
13. **USING A SMALL FONT SIZE FOR YOUR NAME.** To make your name stand out, bold it and use between a size 18 and 22 point font.
14. **INCONSISTENT FORMATTING (EXPERIENCE/LEADERSHIP SECTIONS).** The typical format for the Experience (and Leadership) section lists your Title, Firm Name, City, State, and Timeframe, followed by bulleted descriptions of your responsibilities/roles that begin with an action verb. There may be some variations to this depending upon spacing issues. Be sure to use the same format throughout the section.
15. **USING THE DEFAULT FOR MARGINS.** Adjust your top/bottom and left/right margins from the default set up so that you are able to get maximum use of the page. Using .7 all the way around is a good middle of the road setting. However, some may need to extend to a 1" margin around and others may need to decrease to .6 or .5 at the lowest without the page appearing to be crammed. If your page appears crammed, it may mean that you need to use a second page and re-adjust the margins so that both pages do not appear underused.
16. **INCONSISTENT ORDERING OF EVENTS.** Most undergraduates and graduate students will use a Reverse-Chronological Format for their resume. This format lists the most current experiences first, followed by each prior one. Apply this to the Experience, Leadership, and any other section where timeframes are provided. However, in some cases, this format may hide specific positions or roles held that are directly related to the objective and thus should be listed first, followed by the remainder in reverse-chronological format. For example, if you seek a public accounting position and held an internship with a public accounting firm two years ago, list it first followed by what you are most currently doing and go backwards in time from there.
17. **INCONSISTENT SIZING OF BULLETS.** When using bullets to list your responsibilities, skills, etc. within your resume, make sure they are all the same size.
18. **USE OF "I" AND "MY" STATEMENTS.** Avoid using "I" and "My" statements on a resume. Instead lead with an action verb to describe your role or responsibility.
19. **INCLUDING REFERENCES ON RESUME.** Provide references on a separate page with a header (name and contact information) that matches your resume header for a professional look. If an employer requests your references upfront with your resume, provide them as instructed. However, if they are not requested upfront and you were to include them directly on your resume, you may never know when they are being contacted because the employer does not need to ask you for them; he/she already has them. Additionally, for use with *The Gate*, also upload your references on a separate page so that they do not appear on the resume you elect to be in the Resume Book for employers to view.
20. **USING PARAGRAPH FORMAT.** As employers review resumes, they spend about 15-30 seconds glancing over them from top to bottom. They look for key terms that refer to the skill sets they seek in a candidate. A resume that is written in paragraph format is much more difficult to quickly scan and thus may not make it through the first round of review by an employer. The candidate could be the most qualified, but there is an appeal factor that must be taken into account when developing your resume. If a resume is not appealing to read, it may cost you an interview. Using bullets and columns make scanning easier.
21. **POOR QUALITY PRINTED RESUMES.** Use a laser printer vs. inkjet to provide a better quality printed resume.
22. **EXCESSIVE USE OF HIGHLIGHTING METHODS.** Use bold, italics, and underlining to help various pieces of your resume stand out. However, do not go overboard using any of these highlighting methods to excess.