

Résumé Computer Tips

The following is a brief collection of computer tips for helping you to develop your résumé while using Word. The following tips will enable you to create a unique and easy to read résumé.

Florida Institute
of Technology
Career
Management
Services



150 W. University Blvd
Melbourne, FL 32901

Phone: 321-674-8102

Fax: 321-674-8065

E-mail: career@fit.edu

www.fit.edu/career



Do Not Use Templates or "Resume Wizards"

Templates may seem like a really easy and quick way to put together a resume however, the people who designed the templates were not experts in writing resumes, so the styles they have chosen may not be the best choice for you. Some of the structural elements of the page may be difficult to change - especially if you have a different type of data than the resume calls for - and the layout may not be appropriate for your level of education and experience.

Use Standard Fonts

Traditional fonts ensure a professional look, and if you make changes on another computer, it is more likely to have that font or be able to recognize it. Fonts found on almost any computer and fit the look of a traditional resume include: Times New Roman, Arial, Bookman, Garamond, CG Times. Avoid Courier or other fonts that look like a typewriter was used.

Emphasize Specific Information

Your resume will be easier to read if you consistently emphasize specific information. Each type of information should stand out from everything else. However, you will want to avoid using too many special tricks so that your resume becomes difficult to read. Employers will take about 15 seconds to find your name, section headings, employer / organization names, job titles, and degree names. Here are several things which help make items stand out:

Bold

Useful for your name, section headings, employers, and college names. Just highlight what you want in bold and click on the button with the B on it. (NOTE: The buttons are located on bars running across the top of your screen).

All Caps

Another option for your name, section headings, employer/organization names and college names. Just hit the "Caps Lock" key on your keyboard. Example: WORK EXPERIENCE

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Italics

When used alone on things like your degree and job titles, this is a nice choice. It is also nice used in conjunction with many of the ideas above. Just click on the "I" button on the formatting toolbar.

Use Bullets

When you are describing your work or leadership experience, the statements will be easier to follow if you use bullets.

- At the beginning of each statement, click on the bullet button (it has three dots going down the left, and a line next to each dot).
- To enter a new statement, just hit the "Enter" key once. Another bullet should appear.
- When you are done, you can either hit "Enter" twice or click on the bullet button again to turn it off.
- Small circles or squares are best-asterisks (*) and other shapes don't look very professional.

Bullets are also handy for using in a list, like skills, courses, honors or activities.



Length

Typically, you can add a page for every five to ten years after college. Styles and accepted practices for resumes change. It used to be appropriate to send in a resume of two or more pages. This is no longer the case. Resumes should be concise, well organized and easy to navigate. Current business practices dictate that it is inappropriate or poor etiquette for recent college graduates to submit a resume over one page. If your resume is running onto the second page, here are some things to try that may help.

Format

Follow conventional resume formatting techniques:

Margins

Most Word documents open automatically to a 1.0 inch margin on the top and bottom and a 1.25 inch margin on the left and right. Generally, you will want to at least shrink the left and right margins to 1.0 inch so the spacing is equal around all four edges. In some cases, you may need to change your margin size to .7 inch or .8 inch. Try to avoid using margins smaller than .5 inch, as this can often make it seem like you are trying to crowd information onto your resume. To change the size of your margins, go to File and click Page Setup. Use the up and down arrows to change the size of your top, bottom, left and right margins.

Spacing

Make sure you are single-spacing, rather than double-spacing. Adding a blank space between entries and headings can help the reader more easily identify the different sections and listings in your resume.

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Columns

For lists, try using two columns instead of one. Type everything in one long column and hit "Enter." Then highlight only the items in the list (not the blank line below) and click on the column button (it looks like a tiny newspaper). Highlight the number of columns you want and click!

Font Size

The body of your resume text can be in a font size as small as 10 point. Most word processing programs utilize 12 point as the default font size. Your name should be larger than the remainder of your resume - using a font size of 14 or 16 point works well.

A Note About Scannable Resumes

More and more companies are using computers to catalogue job applicants' resumes. Electronic scanners enter resumes into computer databases by making an optical image of each document and digitizing it into information computers can understand. Computers do not read like people, so scanners can't read resumes that feature ornate script, small font sizes, gray resume paper, and italicized words and shading. An effective, scannable resume assists computers by using a plain, easy to read format. Your resume should be printed in black ink on white paper in a 10 point or larger font size. Don't use ornate script, graphics, shading, bold, or underlined words.

Once your resume is sent to an employer, the resume is scanned into a computer database. Employers use software retrieval systems to search the database for candidates with skills that match the job opening's requirements. The search criteria are called "key words," which are nouns or phrases that describe the required skills. To be retrieved from a database, your resume must include these key words.

Choose only the best key words by thinking of how an employer would describe the skills, abilities, and experience needed to fill positions that you would like. Study classified ads for similar positions, ask recruiters what words companies would use to specify qualifications for jobs in your field, or have an employed friend send you a position description. Use the words you have collected when writing your resume. Unlike humans, computers cannot read between the lines of your resume. If you omit important words, the computer will overlook you.

