

Entry Level Careers Examiner

Cover letters and résumés (part 4): Top résumé writing tips

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Following is part of a series about the do's and don'ts of cover letter and résumé writing. These two documents are so important that they can mean the difference between landing a first interview or receiving a generic "we've decided to pursue another candidate" e-mail from an organization (if they communicate with you at all).

Entry-level résumés, particularly if you have not had prior relevant work experience, can be tricky. However, the following are some general "best practices" you should follow.

- 1. List experience chronologically.** "By staying in chronological order, it's easier for a recruiter to see the growth and progress that you have made," said Linda Goodspeed marketing recruiting manager for VistaPrint.
- 2. If your name is difficult to pronounce, include your nickname.** "Many years ago, I was a recruiter helping engineers find new jobs," said Michael Neece, chief strategy officer of PongoResume.com. "I was helping a gentleman who had a first name that was 15 characters in length. We sent out his résumé to 30 companies that were seeking his type of talent, but nobody called to interview him. With his permission, I gave him a short nickname and resent his résumé to the same 30 companies, and six called to interview him."
- 3. Remove any experience not directly related to the position for which you are applying.** Four years of working at Victoria's Secret does nothing for me if you're applying for an entry-level public relations position, even if you worked your way up to supervisor level. Instead, supplement any gaps with volunteer experience, leadership within campus organizations, etc. And, be sure to customize your résumé for each potential employer.
- 4. State accomplishments using action verbs.** Examples of action verbs include "increased," "reduced" and "expanded."
- 5. Use the correct tense.** "Be sure to write in the present tense when explaining your current job and in the past tense when explaining former positions," said Julie Dardano, vice president of Hollister. "Have someone proofread your work before sending, just to be safe."