

20-POINT RÉSUMÉ REVIEW CHECKLIST

Easily Transform Your Résumé With
This Point-by-Point Guide From A
Professional Résumé Writer



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1. Is the reader of your résumé able, at no more than a glance, to determine exactly how and where (the type and level of position you are seeking) you would fit in their company? Yes No

EXPLANATION: Your résumé MUST have a clear target/focus. Well focused resumes get results; unfocused resumes do NOT. Don't be afraid to be specific. It isn't enough to simply toss out all your qualifications and hope that one will "stick". Readers give your résumé only a few seconds at most before making the decision to screen it out or screen it in (for more thorough review). In those few seconds, they need to come away with a clear understanding of your focus and how you would fit and add value within their organization. The focus should be crystal clear from a no more than a glance (usually through the profile), and every word and element in the body of the résumé should support this focus.

2. Does your résumé include a summary or profile section rather than an objective section? Yes No

EXPLANATION: Résumés are about conveying to the reader what you *offer* to them. Conversely, an objective statement conveys what you *want* from them. In most cases, including an objective statement is an outdated technique. You should replace it with a summary/profile that promotes your personal branding and value proposition. There is no need to include BOTH an objective and a summary. If it is well written, your profile should set the focus for the résumé.

3. Is your summary specific and does it differentiate you? Yes No

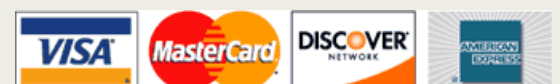
EXPLANATION: Including a profile/summary is a good thing, but you need to be careful not to make the mistake of including one that is so generic that it could apply to anyone that does the type of work you do. Your profile should emphasize your differentiators and distinguishing qualifications rather than just the baseline qualifications that are common and expected in your profession. Having read your profile, the reader should come away with a clear idea of exactly how you would fit in the company and how you will add value. Additionally, it isn't enough to tell a reader that you have certain abilities or traits; you must show them through examples of past achievements. Prove impact! Forget about clichés and jargon. Soft skills are often important, but even those should be backed up by specific accomplishments that illustrate them.

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4. Is your brand and value proposition clear?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: Like your focus, your value proposition and personal brand (essentially, what makes you different and unique) should be conveyed to the reader within moments of picking up your résumé. Branding is truly one of THE most important factors to ensure a résumé stands out. Most résumés are terribly generic and cookie-cutter. They are boring, read like a job description, and all look the same. There is obvious competitive advantage won by a candidate who truly understands his or her value and is able to communicate in a clear and compelling way the proposed return-on-investment (ROI) he or she is offering to an employer. This is what you want to strive for with your résumé.

5. Is your résumé written in the implied first person and does it exclude personal pronouns?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: Using personal pronouns in your résumé leaves a very poor first impression. Personal pronouns (e.g., I, me, my) leave the reader with the impression that you are self-centered rather than employer-focused. Although your résumé should be written in the implied first person, you need to leave the pronouns out and word your résumé in a way that indicates your understanding of the employer's needs.

You also shouldn't use third-person perspective in your résumé. Each sentence should imply "I" without actually using the pronoun. In other words, the sentence "Delivers improved bottom-line results..." is incorrect because it implies "she" or "he." Instead, write using the implied first-person perspective "Deliver improved bottom-line results..."

6. Is your emphasis on accomplishments rather than on responsibilities?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: You won't get hired for what you KNOW how to do, you will get hired for what you DO with what you KNOW how to do. Many people make the mistake of selling features (responsibilities) rather than benefits (achievements/results) in their résumé. It is very important to place the emphasis on achievements, quantifying results whenever possible. Avoid writing your résumé so that it sounds like a job description. Your job duties and responsibilities don't do anything to differentiate you. They are just baseline qualifications that all your competition will have.

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7. Have you included lots of results and benefits?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: Just telling the reader that you have achievements isn't very effective unless you present them in terms of the results and benefits they have produced for past employers. Always try to think in terms of the "so what" of your achievement. What did you improve, save, increase, enhance, etc? What impact did the work you do have on the companies? If you think about it for just a minute, you'll realize that at the root, every single job is designed to solve a problem, save money, make money, or improve efficiency. This is where so many résumés fail. It is crucial that you understand and be able to communicate the impact and ROI of your performance. Whenever you can do so, you should use numbers to illustrate your results (dollar figures, percentages, raw numbers, etc.), but even if you are unable to quantify achievements, the emphasis should still be on the results and benefits of your work.

8. Does your résumé tell CAR stories of success?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: One of the biggest improvements you can make, to distinguish your résumé from others, is to focus on your CAR statements. Remember that an achievement has three parts - the challenge faced, the actions you took, and the results of your action (CAR). Overall, readers will be most interested in your results, and these should be the focus of the document, but all three parts are important. The reader needs to know about your challenges to place your achievements in context. What challenges have you faced? What did you do to meet these challenges? How did this benefit your employers? Succinctly tell the "story" behind each position, demonstrating to the reader that you have the ability to solve problems, fulfill goals, and meet challenges.

9. Does each sentence of your résumé call out results?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: Front load your achievement statements with the results followed by the action that produced them. In other words, you should structure your sentences so that you lead with the result: "Increased sales 87% by" "Saved company \$8 million annually by..." "Improved customer relationships as evidenced by..." These are all simple examples, but they illustrate the point.

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10. Have you used action verbs appropriately?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: Using verbs liberally in your résumé is the best way to convey what you have accomplished (increased, saved, improved, etc.). But, try not to use the same verbs repeatedly. You SHOULD begin each achievement statement with a verb, but use a thesaurus and find synonyms for ones you find yourself repeating.

Be careful to apply a parallel structure in your sentences and bullet points (nouns should be paralleled by nouns, verbs by verbs, adjectives by adjectives, and so on). In other words, if one achievement statement or bullet begins with a past tense verb, they should all begin with a past tense verb. If one begins with a noun, they should all begin with a noun. This is probably one of the most common grammatical errors. But, common or not, it is an error and details like this really matter.

11. Have you used keywords liberally throughout your résumé?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: Keywords are the words that someone would use to search through a database of résumés in order to find a person with your qualifications – or to find a person seeking the type of job you are targeting. Keywords are most commonly nouns or noun phrases. While it is crucial that you include the correct keywords throughout your résumé, some database systems weight keywords in the first third of your résumé more heavily, so your profile/summary should be especially rich with keywords. If you were searching a database for résumés of people qualified to do the type of work you are seeking (and in the type of industry if you are targeting an industry), what words would you enter as search terms? You need to make sure all the relevant keywords are included in your résumé.

12. Have you included your education appropriately?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: A common error made by experienced professionals is overemphasis of education. Do your degrees really have more relevance than your experience? If the answer is no, your education section should be at the bottom (end) of the résumé. By listing education at the beginning of the résumé, you leave the immediate impression of a more entry-level, less-experienced candidate.

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13. Have you included only relevant information?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: Is your résumé meant to be used for the U.S. job market? Assuming it is, it should not include a photo, your birth date, mention of unrelated hobbies or interests, info about your family, info that reveals your religion, or any other personal data. Including such data in a résumé meant for the U.S. market may actually eliminate you from consideration, as hiring decision-makers may be concerned about discrimination suits.

14. Have you been strategic about how far back in your work history you document on your résumé?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: While the decision about how far back to date your résumé really depends on the individual circumstances, generally it is about optimal to go back approximately 15-20 years. If experience earlier than that is still relevant, you can always summarize it in a couple of sentences without the use of dates. Your résumé is a marketing piece – an advertisement – it is not an autobiography. You don't need to and shouldn't try to include everything. On the other hand, you don't want to cut it off too recently and leave the reader thinking you either have less experience than you have or are hiding something.

15. Is your résumé design attractive, unique, and eye-catching?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: In a very real sense, the design and structure that you choose for your résumé are very strategic decisions. They should be as unique to you as your content is. Design elements should be used creatively to create page balance and to draw the eye to areas of emphasis.

You should never use a template to create a résumé. Your résumé should be uniquely designed to set you apart from other candidates and to emphasize your unique selling points. If you use a template (or a format that looks like a template), you ensure that your résumé will simply blend in with all the rest.

16. Are all of the wording and design details of your résumé consistent?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: Check every detail of your design. Inconsistencies look messy and detract from the quality, professional image that your résumé must present.

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17. Have you used white space strategically and effectively?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: It isn't just about having enough white space; it is about how you have applied it. This is a really common problem area. White space must be used strategically. When a résumé has too little or inappropriately placed white space, it appears "crowded" or "unbalanced" and leaves the immediate impression that it will be difficult and time consuming to read. Unfortunately, these résumés are often skipped over for the next, easier to read résumé. White space is tricky. You want to make sure there is enough of it, but you also want to make sure you have used it in strategic ways – to draw the reader along in the way you want them to read the résumé.

18. Is your résumé no more than 2 or at the very most, 3 pages?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: Page length of a résumé is an area of confusion to many people. The most important factor is that you use only as many pages necessary to convince the reader that you are an ideal candidate. Every word and element must have a purpose.

Two pages are generally expected and acceptable for an experienced candidate, and in some cases, three pages may be justified. The ability to present your qualifications on two or three pages demonstrates your ability to communicate clearly and focus on the relevant. If your writing is concise and your achievements compelling, and three pages are required to present your key qualifying skills and achievements, use three pages. Just remember that with each page you reduce the chances that the résumé will be read thoroughly.

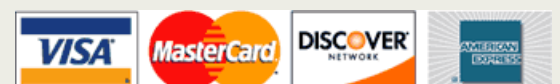
While there are always exceptions to the rule, more than three pages are rarely necessary or effective. Likewise, while a one-page summary or biography may be an effective tool when networking, or as a "leave behind" at interviews, for most professionals, it is usually an ineffective replacement for a well-written, more thorough résumé. There is such a thing as being too succinct. A certain depth of information is expected from experienced candidates. If your résumé does not have this depth, it may impact credibility. It can take some work to strike the appropriate balance.

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19. Have you edited your résumé so that it includes no extraneous words?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: You should edit your résumé to be crisp and concise. Utilize a telegraphic writing style with minimal use of articles such as a, an, the, and by. If a word isn't necessary for clarification or to support your objective, remove it.

20. Is your résumé completely free of errors?

Yes No

EXPLANATION: There is no room for compromise here. Every résumé MUST be meticulously proofed and error free. Errors seriously detract from the quality, detail-focused image that an executive candidate must exude. You should proof your résumé carefully. Then, even once you think it is perfect, have someone else proof it.

THE VERDICT: Is your résumé ready to go to market? How did it rate on this assessment? This is not the time to settle for "okay" or "good enough." Job openings are rarely in such plentiful supply that you can afford to lose even one opportunity.

Good jobs are at a premium and the competition for those jobs is fierce. Now—more than ever—it is critical that you differentiate yourself from your competition in the job market. A powerful resume is essential. It is worth your time and effort to make absolutely certain that your résumé is extraordinary and will get you the results you want. This assessment will help you do just that.

But if you are unsure about your résumé and aren't confident in your ability to transform it, ask yourself: are you really willing to gamble with your career and your financial security? In today's competitive job market, which approach do you think will be most likely to open doors, generate interviews, and land the job you want? Your self-written resume or a professionally written resume? If our professionally written resume gets you back to work just a few days sooner than you would have achieved on your own, you immediately begin reaping returns on your investment. We think the answer is obvious! Your career is worth it! If you agree, just click through now to book your project:

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~ About The Author ~



A leading expert on career marketing strategy, Michelle Dumas is a professional résumé writer, personal branding, and job search coach with multiple certifications. Michelle is the founder and executive director of Distinctive Career Services, LLC. She works with clients worldwide, delivering powerful, results-generating career marketing tools, resources, and strategies.

With more than two decades of experience in the résumé writing and job search field, Michelle has worked with thousands of professionals, managers, and executives, providing them with everything they need to open the right doors, achieve competitive advantage in the job market, and win jobs that are more personally, professionally, and financially rewarding. Michelle is the author of *Secrets of a Successful Job Search: 7 Simple Steps to Land the Job You Want in Half the Time* and has been a contributor to more than ten additional top-selling books on résumé writing and job searching topics.

For free articles, tips, and other resources or to learn more about working with Michelle or Distinctive Career Services, LLC, visit <https://www.distinctiveweb.com/> or <https://www.executiveresumewriting.services/>

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