

Resume Critique Checklist

by Kim Isaacs

Resumes normally get less than a 15-second glance at the first screening. If someone has asked you to review his resume and you want to help him ensure it gets read -- or want to know if your own is up to par -- be sure you can answer yes to the following questions:

First Impression

- Does the resume look original and not based on a template?
- Is the resume inviting to read, with clear sections and ample white space?
- Does the design look professional rather than like a simple typing job?
- Is a qualifications summary included so the reader immediately knows the applicant's value proposition?
- Is the length and overall appearance of the resume appropriate given the career level and objective?

Appearance

- Does the resume provide a visually pleasing, polished presentation?
- Is the font appropriate for the career level and industry?
- Are there design elements such as bullets, bolding and lines to guide readers' eyes through the document and highlight important content?
- Is there a good balance between text and white space?
- Are margins even on all sides?
- Are design elements like spacing and font size used consistently throughout the document?
- If the resume is longer than a page, does the second page contain a heading? Is the page break formatted correctly?

Resume Sections

- Are all resume sections clearly labeled?
- Are sections placed in the best order to highlight the applicant's strongest credentials?
- Is the work history listed in reverse chronological order (most recent job first)?

Career Goal

- Is the career objective included toward the top of the resume in a headline, objective or qualifications summary?
- Is the resume targeted to a specific career goal and not trying to be a one-size-fits-all document?
- If this is a resume for career change, is the current objective clearly stated, along with supporting details showing how past experience is relevant to the new goal?

Accomplishments

- Does the resume include a solid listing of career accomplishments?
- Are accomplishments quantified by using numbers, percentages, dollar amounts or other concrete measures of success?
- Do accomplishment statements begin with strong, varied action verbs?
- Are accomplishments separated from responsibilities?

Relevance

- Is the information relevant to hiring managers' needs?
- Does the resume's content support the career goal?
- Is the resume keyword-rich, packed with appropriate buzzwords and industry acronyms?
- Is applicable additional information, such as awards and affiliations, included, while personal information, like marital status, age and nationality unrelated to the job target, omitted?

Writing Style

- Is the resume written in an implied first-person voice with personal pronouns, such as I, me and my, avoided?
- Is the content flow logical and easy to understand?
- Is the resume as perfect as possible, with no careless typos or spelling, grammar or syntax errors?