



Don't Make These 8 Killer Resume Mistakes





A resume is the foundation of most job applications. It's your sales pitch in print—your primary marketing document—for how you can solve problems and help employers.

Your resume may be the first place an employer ever sees your name. The contents of your resume may be all a hiring manager has to decide whether they want to interview you.

A bad resume—one riddled with mistakes, fluff, and inconsequential information—can sink even the most qualified candidate.

Here are the most common resume mistakes people make:





MISTAKE #1

A generic objective statement

The best way to get an employer to skip over your resume is to start it off with a bland objective statement, like:

“My goal is to attain a rewarding position at [insert company name here].”

This kind of thoughtless, cookie-cutter copy adds nothing to your resume. (Of course you want a job at the company... that’s why you’re applying! More importantly, it takes up valuable real-estate from more important information, like why you have the experience and skills needed for the job.

You don’t have to include an objective statement in your resume. But if you do, make sure it speaks to [your vision, skillset, and passion](#) for the job at hand.





MISTAKE #2

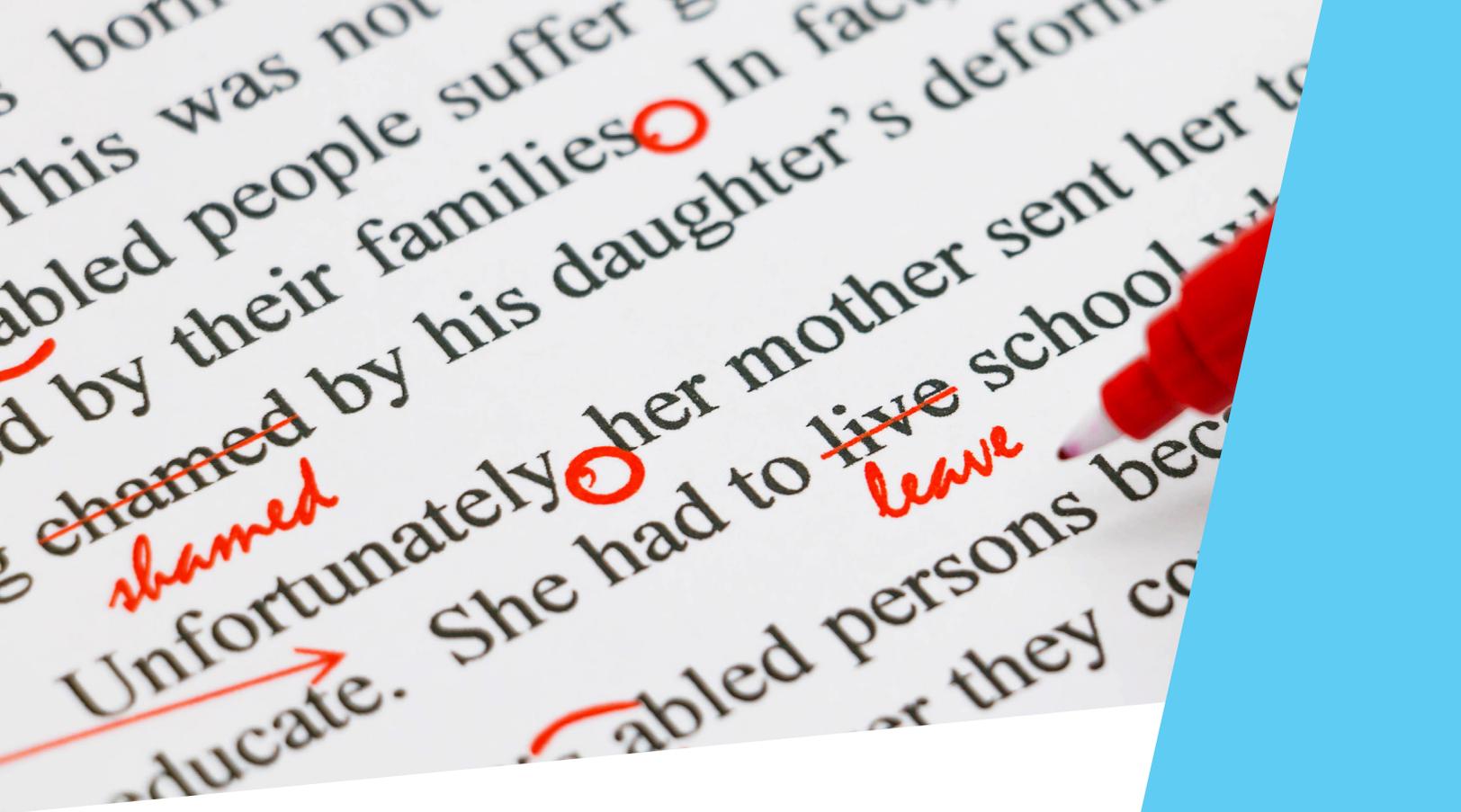
No quantifiable achievements

This is the most frequent mistake seen in resumes—candidates focus on their previous job responsibilities, not their achievements.

Itemizing your past job responsibilities tells the employer nothing about how well you actually did your job. And it makes reading your resume about as interesting as reading the phone book!

To capture the employer's attention, you must convert your work history into quantifiable accomplishments. Including specific numbers in your resume shows real achievement and helps you stand out from the pack.





MISTAKE #3

Typos and spelling errors

No employer will believe that you have “immaculate attention to detail” if your resume is littered with typos!

Even a single mistake can be enough for your resume to land in the “no” pile. The reason is simple: if you’re not attentive to your own resume, why would an employer trust you to be attentive to their needs?

Using a spell checker certainly helps, but it isn’t a cure all for typos. [Look out for homophones](#) (common examples: your/you’re, its/it’s, affect/effect) and other grammar issues that your spell check won’t catch.

Try reading your resume aloud to catch mistakes or, better yet, ask someone else to proofread your resume.



MISTAKE #4

Old and irrelevant experience

Too often people use their resume as a comprehensive professional biography -- a list of every job or educational experience they've ever had. Big mistake!

Your resume should be [customized around the specific job for which you're applying](#). That means you're curating your work and educational experience, highlighting the skills and accomplishments that are most relevant to the job at hand.

Generally, you want to limit your resume to work experiences in the last 10 years. Only include jobs beyond this threshold if they are directly relevant to the job for which you're applying.

When it comes to education, you only need to include the name and graduation date for your undergraduate degree (and graduate degree, if applicable). Listing your high school, or the Italian college you spent a semester at, is not going to land you a job.

Why should you avoid including more information? First, adding fluff buries your strongest selling points beneath information that the hiring manager simply doesn't care about. Second, it can create the impression that you lack substance and are trying to inflate a paltry professional background.



Present a clear case
Focus your resume on
your most relevant skills



MISTAKE #5

Unconventional design and formatting

Many job seekers, in an attempt to catch the hiring manager's eye, create innovative and visually stunning resumes. The internet is filled with examples of these [unconventional](#) and [out-of-the-box](#) formats.

Unless you are looking for a job in the creative or design sector, an unconventional resume format may do more harm than good.

On the initial review of your resume, employers are trying to quickly ascertain your relevant skills and abilities. Even the most beautiful resume will be ignored if it isn't clear that you can do the job. And if your design makes it more difficult to assess your skills at a glance then you've defeated the entire purpose of a resume!

This issue is compounded if you are applying through an applicant tracking system (ATS). Most of these programs are designed to parse data from resumes but they can be easily confused by unconventional formatting. If the ATS can't scan your resume for keywords, you'll never get through the initial screening process.



Keep it simple
A clean, direct format is usually the best approach





MISTAKE #6

Font that is hard to read

Here's another design-related issue that sinks a lot of resumes: the font style and size makes them difficult to read. If the reviewer is straining their eyes when reading your resume, you're not likely to get a call back.

Many words have been written about the [best fonts to use in your resume](#). In general, however, there's just one overriding rule to keep in mind: you want to make your resume easy to read and scan.

When selecting a typeface, choose something that is clean, professional, and conservative. Avoid overly ornate type. When in doubt, choose one of the standard fonts from your word processor.

When it comes to text size, [12-point font is best](#). Don't ever go smaller than 10-point as the document will become difficult to scan.





MISTAKE #7

Not including contact information

This one seems obvious but you'd be surprised at how many people don't include their phone number or email address in their resume.

If you want an employer to follow-up and offer you an interview, you have to make it easy for them. Don't assume that a hiring manager will dig through their inbox to find your email... they won't!

Put the vital contact information right in front of them! At the minimum that means including your phone number and email address in the header or footer of your resume. Adding your postal mailing address is nice, but not necessary.

If you want to go all out, include the URL to your LinkedIn profile.





MISTAKE #8

Using more than two pages

There's a lot of debate about [whether resumes should be one page or two pages](#). (There are pros and cons on both sides).

However, it is universally acknowledged that a standard job resume should never be more than two pages. Why? Because more than two pages means you've included a lot of fluff that no one wants read.

An overly long resume can tell employers that you're not focused in your career or job search, or that your career lacks a directional narrative. At the very least, it's a signal that you're not customizing your resume around the employer's specific needs.

Remember each resume you send should be focused around the needs of the specific employer. You do not need to include an exhaustive list of every job, project, or responsibility you've ever had. ([That's what LinkedIn is for!](#))

Instead, focus on the most potent, most relevant experiences. Quality is always better than quantity!

About Mac Prichard

Mac Prichard, founder and publisher of [Mac's List](#), has been connecting people to rewarding work for decades. As a transplant to Portland, Oregon in the early 1990s, Mac learned the secrets to finding work in a competitive market. He has since become a recognized expert on job hunting and career management. Mac writes for [Mac's List](#), hosts a weekly podcast, [Find Your Dream Job](#), and is the author of [Land Your Dream Job in Portland \(and Beyond\)](#) and [Land Your Dream Job Anywhere](#).

About Mac's List

Since 2001, Mac's List has been Oregon's premier job search resource, an online community connecting thousands of passionate and talented people to meaningful work opportunities in the Pacific Northwest. A registered B Corp, Mac's List is an organization with a social mission: to give people the tools and knowledge they need to conduct effective job searches. We do this through our [job board](#), a [blog](#), a [podcast](#), and [online courses](#) all dedicated to the nuts and bolts of job hunting and career management. More than 80,000 people a month connect with Mac's List.

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