Résumé Help

One of the early steps in preparing for a job search is the development of a high quality résumé that represents your skills, experience, and educational attainments. Your résumé, usually a concise one-pager, is the document that will either attract an employer to call you in for an interview or will block you from having that opportunity. Without an interview, of course, there is no possibility that you will get a job.

Preparing to Write Your Résumé

Before beginning your résumé, review your education, work experience, interests, extracurricular activities, travel, foreign language ability, military service, memberships, and community service in order to determine what to include. Carefully consider what you have accomplished and the skills you have developed through your experience. Employers are particularly interested in examples of leadership, self-motivation, and communication skills.

Gathering and organizing this diverse information can be daunting. However, if you make a practice of noting this information as it occurs and keeping this information in one place, future résumés and applications will be much easier to complete. The Kuder Career Planning System gives you the opportunity to record and organize that information within the Résumé Builder area. You can create a résumé that has the following sections:

- Work Experience
- Education
- Activities/Affiliations
- Awards/Honors
- Skills
- References

It is very easy to enter and edit the information and to keep the career portfolio updated. If you create and label your initial résumé as a Master Résumé, you can add all of the information you might need in the future to create a résumé. Once you have begun your portfolio, the information you store there is available to you at any time, from anywhere you have Internet access, as long as you remember your User Name and Password. You can continue to update and add information throughout your life. When you are ready to create a new résumé or fill out an application for educational opportunities or financial aid, that information will be available and neatly organized for you.

Creating Your Résumé

To begin a new résumé using the *Kuder Career Planning System*, simply click on Add New Résumé from the Résumé Builder main page. Begin by completing the following fields:

- **Résumé Title** - Give your new résumé a unique name.

- **Objective** - Type in a brief, clearly worded statement of what you want to do, where you want to do it, and your skills that are relevant for the desired position. Your objective should be customized to each type of position for which you apply.
- **Status** - Choose between Private or Public.
  - Choosing **Private** means you will need to print the résumé in order for someone to view it. To do so, click on "Printable View" at the top of the page.
  - Choosing **Public** allows you to send a link to the résumé via e-mail to prospective employers or others wishing to view the résumé by clicking on "Send Résumé" at the top of the page.
- **Résumé Format** - There are two basic résumé formats. Choose the one that will best highlight your strengths.
  - The **chronological** résumé stresses continuity of employment. It is especially effective if your work history is related to your career goals and you can show increasing responsibility. Items under each heading are presented in reverse chronological order, beginning with the most recent dates or the most relevant experience. Include dates of employment, names and addresses of employers, job titles, and brief descriptions of your responsibilities and accomplishments in each instance. For an example of a chronological résumé, click here.
  - The **functional** résumé is arranged according to skills and/or job function experience (such as Organization, Research, Management, Communications, etc.). All experiences that show proficiency in a specific skill are grouped together, minimizing or not mentioning names of past employers or dates. This format can be useful for persons with considerable volunteer (rather than paid) experience, career changers, and recent college graduates with limited employment who wish to emphasize skills they have acquired in schooling. For an example of a functional résumé, click here
- **Résumé Style** - Choose a style that best expresses your personality. While the Kuder system offers you a great deal of flexibility in choosing which items will be included in your résumé and in which style that information will be presented, you may wish to customize the résumé further or create your own unique style. In order to do this, select and copy the information from your résumé and paste it into word processing or desktop publishing software to edit it further.
  - The **basic** résumé style has the least amount of formatting. It is suitable for copying into another program for additional editing as described above or for use as an electronic résumé which can be submitted in print form or on diskette to be scanned into a searchable database or included in or attached to an e-mail message.
  - The **contemporary**, **elegant**, and **professional** styles are all suitable for printing. Simply choose the style you prefer. **PLEASE NOTE**: In order to print a résumé that can be given to potential employers, you may need to change your browser's default setting so that it does not print the web page header and footer information. Changing this setting is usually done through the browser's Page Setup dialogue.

When you have completed the required information, click "Save" to save your résumé. If you do not wish to save this résumé, click on the "Cancel" button.

Begin to build the body of your résumé by adding content in the appropriate fields. Use the information you collected during your preparation stage, as described above. If you do not have information for a particular category, that category will not appear on your final résumé.

- **Work Experience** - Provide information about your work experience, including full-time, part-time, summer, volunteer, and internship experiences. Describe accomplishments and specific tasks rather than "responsibilities." Emphasize transferable skills, especially as they relate to the employer who will read your résumé. Begin phrases with "action" verbs such as organized, planned, led, advised. Omit personal pronouns and be positive and concise.
- **Education** - List educational institutions you have attended. If you are completing a postsecondary degree, you may not wish to include high school information.
- **Activities/Affiliations** - List extracurricular activities if they are relevant to work, describing them in the same style as work experience. Include examples of leadership, offices held, and program planning involvement. Include information about any memberships in professional organizations or fraternities, mentioning offices, titles, special duties, and achievements.
- **Awards/Honors** - Describe any awards or honors you have earned.
- **Skills** - If you plan to complete a functional résumé, this area is vital; it is optional for a chronological résumé. List specific skills such as Management Skills, Organizational Skills, and Leadership Abilities; then provide specific evidence indicating how you have developed and used those skills.
- **References** - You should obtain permission from three to five former employers or faculty members to use their names as references. The people you select should be able to tell about your capabilities as an employee or about your achievements as a student. Keep records of the names, titles, addresses, and phone numbers of persons you select in the final section of the Résumé Edit area. Include these references on your Master Résumé so that you can access this information easily. You may not want to print your reference list on résumés you create for potential employers. If you do not include information in the résumé section, the sentence "References available upon request." will print at the bottom of your résumé. Then, if a potential employer asks for your references, you can provide those on a separate sheet of paper. An easy way to create a page with your references is to create a résumé titled "References." Do not include an objective, and select the same style as the résumé you plan to submit to an employer. Then, simply complete the "References" section at the bottom of the Résumé Edit form. Click here to see an example.

As you complete the information in the Résumé Edit form, you may wish to click periodically on the link called "Printable View" at the top of the page to see how your résumé looks as you complete the information. Modify the content as necessary so that it accurately and attractively portrays your strengths and skills.

Résumé Tips

Besides the fact that your résumé must represent strong skills and experience for the position, it should have the following characteristics:

- Look attractive and be totally accurate in spelling, punctuation, and format.
- Adequately state your skills and experience and how these relate to the position for which you are applying.
- Indicate, if possible, positive outcomes that the organization will have as a result of your use of your skills and experience on its behalf.
- Avoid use of the pronoun "I."
- Omit information such as your weight, description of a disability, or number of children that might exclude you from an interview or raise unwanted questions.
- Have some characteristics that will set it apart from other résumés. (Print on high-quality, lightly colored paper and use good formatting.)
- Not be more than two pages in length and usually only one for a recent graduate.
- Be printed on a laser printer, using high quality bond paper that matches the quality and color of paper you use for your cover letter, envelope, and references list.

Sending Your Résumé

If you wish to send a link to your résumé via e-mail to prospective employers or others wishing to view the résumé, be sure to select **Public** for the status; then click on "Send Résumé" at the top of the page. In addition to the required subject line, you can add your own message that will be e-mailed with the standard message and link.

If you plan to submit your résumé on paper, remember to select your preferred résumé style, then click on "Printable View" at the top of the page. Modify your browser settings so that the header and footer information will not print, then select "Print" from your browser menu.

A short, well-written cover letter should accompany your printed résumé. The cover letter has two purposes: to get the recipient to read your résumé and to elicit a response that will lead to an interview. While a well-written letter will not guarantee you a position, a poorly written letter could eliminate you as a candidate, regardless of your qualifications. The following guidelines will help you write a good cover letter:

- Send both a letter and a résumé whenever you apply for either an advertised or unadvertised position.
- Address the letter to a specific person by name and title. If you do not have that information, call the company's Human Resource Development office or use its web site to try to get this information.
- In the first paragraph, mention the position for which you are applying, who referred you, how you learned of the position, and/or why you are interested in working for the company.
- Briefly refer to the qualifications and experience that you have for the position. State that you are enclosing a résumé that describes your skills and experience in more detail.
- Emphasize what you can do for the employer rather than how the job would benefit you.
- Include one or more phone numbers and, if you have one, an e-mail address where you can be reached.

- Make each cover letter look original and tailored to a specific position, even if you are using a template.
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Use good business form. Errors in any one of these may erase your opportunity for an interview.
- Print each cover letter on standard size bond stationery that matches that of your résumé.
- Try to trigger reader interest. Make your first sentence count!

Excerpted and adapted from *Take Hold of Your Future, 5th Edition*, by JoAnn Harris-Bowlsbey, Ed.D.