

RESUME WRITING: THE DO'S AND DON'TS

DO

- Do keep it **short**: one, or at the most, two pages.
- Keep it consistent. Use the same font and size throughout.
- Print it out properly (no fading or strange photocopy lines!)
- Do use a **chronological** format: for employment, list your most recent or present job first; for education, list the most recent school you attended or the school you are currently attending, and continue in reverse chronological order.
- Do place your **name, address, telephone number and email address** somewhere at the top of the first page of your résumé where the reader will notice it.
- Do make sure that if your résumé is two pages, **your name and the page number "2"** is somewhere at the top of the second page, e.g.: John Smith 2/2 ("2/2" means that this is the second of two pages).
- Do use **strong, action verbs** instead of weak, passive verbs. For example, instead of stating, "I was given responsibility of looking after children in an after-school program," state "I supervised children in an after-school program."
- Do use **implied pronouns** (understood by the reader although they are not stated) all the time. For example, instead of listing as a skill, "I am proficient in three languages," simply put down, "proficient in three languages."
- Do include your **summer and/or part-time jobs** if you are in still in school. Students often think that waiting on tables, manning a cash register, or babysitting are unimportant jobs which have nothing to do with their career goals; but these jobs show that you have had work experience and that you are able and willing to work, even during your vacation.
- Do include a **cover letter** with your résumé which is custom-made for each individual application (see handout on cover letters for more information).
- Do be sure to have someone else **proof-read** your résumé and cover letter for spelling, grammar and syntax errors, and to tell you if the résumé has visual appeal.
- Do **follow up** on your application by calling soon after to ask whether a decision has been made and/or if you can come in for an interview. Use your judgement, however: don't call the day after you have sent in your résumé (normally five days to a week is sufficient), never call more than twice, and never ever call if you have been told not to (this is usually specified in the ads for the job in question)

DON'T

- Don't use too many different formats, styles or fonts in your résumé. **More than two fonts or styles looks busy**, and can distract the reader from the actual information.
- Don't **squeeze everything together** on the page just to make it all fit. Readers like clusters of information with clean spaces between them, and may not read something which looks crowded.
- Don't list information which is **not relevant** to the kind of position you are seeking. For example, the fact that you like going to movies in your spare time is only relevant if you are applying for a job as a movie critic; otherwise, leave it out.
- Don't provide information which you **by law** do not have to provide, like your age, your weight, your measurements, your marital status, your photograph, your present or past salary or whether or not you are physically or mentally challenged.
- Don't provide information about your **former employers** or other referees, such as their names, addresses, or telephone numbers. Ask past employers or people who you wish to use as references first before giving out any information about them, and then only provide this information if it is **specifically requested**.
- Don't include your **Social Insurance number**. It is very important that you do not do this.
- Don't provide the name and telephone number of your present employer **if he or she does not know that you are seeking other employment!** (Amazingly, applicants make this mistake all the time).
- Don't include an explanation of **why you left your past employment**: it's unnecessary and, more often than not, will lose you the job for which you are applying.
- Don't use **too many big words** to say what you mean. Most of us--including employers--prefer straightforward and concise descriptions over loquacious and grandiloquent (wordy) ones!
- Don't use **complete sentences**.
- Don't think that your **résumé alone** will get you in the door! Always try to arrange for an interview, because that's where you can make a real impression on a prospective employer. (See handout on job interviews for more information)