

THE LETTERSMITH RESUME SERVICE

Phone: 248-828-1699
Fax: (810) 592-8431

web site: www.thelettersmith.com
e-mail: thelettersmith@comcast.net

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) About your Resume Draft

This will answer the most common questions you may have about your resume draft. But please feel free to call me if you have other questions or concerns.

Layout and Format / Readability

1. Your resume has been custom designed for *you*. Everything about your resume (format, layout, fonts, wording, placement of dates, design elements, bold or italic) has been chosen for a reason. Each of these elements work together to form a *strategy* for your resume -- guiding the eye of the reader, emphasizing your strengths, and playing down any weaknesses.
2. I've spent a lot of time making your resume as *concise and crisp* as possible -- editing it down to the essentials. Here are some rules of thumb for resume readability: I like to keep paragraphs under 4-5 lines, and the bullet points under two lines. Anything longer can hinder readability. I also attempt to limit a list of bullets to no more than 4 or 5 in a row. Please keep this in mind if you want to add more detail to your resume.
3. A slight margin shift often occurs in email transmission of attachments, causing a line or two of information to fall onto another page. Please advise me of any alignment problems, and we will attempt to correct them. Because all computers display a little differently, you may need to adjust your margins accordingly.
4. If the headings or your name looks strange, please let us know. We may have used a special font that you do not have on your system. We have taken the precaution of embedding the font into the file, but in some cases we may need to change the typeface.
5. There may be text highlighted in yellow where we need additional information from you. Please do not distribute your resume until this information has been added.

Content

6. Unless you are entry-level, we will have used a Qualifications Summary rather than an Objective in your resume. Objectives are for entry-level candidates only. They tell, "What I want to be when I grow up." A Qualifications Summary is much stronger, and tells "Who I am, and what I can do for your organization." We don't waste space telling the employer what you want *from* them...we tell them what you can do *for* them.
7. Your resume may also include a list of areas of expertise, core competencies, or keywords. This ensures that the reader can see your skills *at a glance*. It is also critical to have these keywords if you're posting your resume to an Internet or employer database.
8. Most likely, I have substantially revised and rewritten your previous resume -- but that does not mean I have changed every word. It's important to capture your unique "voice" in your resume. In order to do that, I may include phrases or words you've written in your older resume or Profile form.

9. Wherever possible, I have edited or rewritten your text for clarity and maximum impact. I have also attempted to tighten the wording to make it more concise. In addition, I have added any additional content and detail that I thought would improve your resume, while eliminating information that won't "sell" or that is irrelevant for your target position.
10. We have emphasized *accomplishments* in your resume rather than duties. In most of our professional-level or executive-level resumes, the accomplishments are bulleted for emphasis, while the duties/responsibilities are *briefly* described in paragraph format.

Remember again that we want to keep your job description paragraph to 4-5 lines, and your accomplishments to 4-5 bullets. This means we've included your TOP accomplishments and duties – not every single thing you have done!

11. Where possible, I have added additional details about your accomplishments, and have quantified the results. In addition, I have attempted to prioritize the information...placing the most significant accomplishments higher on the list. Accomplishments do *not* have to be listed in the order that they occurred. It's better to list them in order of importance.
12. Most of the space in your resume has been devoted to recent positions, with less space used for older positions. Information older than 10-15 years is usually summarized or omitted. Most resumes do not list positions older than 20 years. But there are exceptions to this rule. (For example, executive resumes can sometimes include 20-25 years of employment.) We never list positions from the 70's – as that makes your resume look "dated" and can lead to age discrimination.
13. "References upon request" is rarely used in a modern resume. It's a given. Hobbies are listed only if relevant to the position, and we never list personal information in a U.S. resume. Religious affiliations and activities are always left out – unless you are a clergy member or minister.
14. All decisions to modify or exclude data were in keeping with the guidelines and standards set forth by the Professional Association of Resume Writers (PARW).

Resume Writing Style & Grammar

15. The grammatical style for resumes is different from that of other documents. Words like "a" or "the" (called "articles") may be omitted. This "tight writing" is recognized as the most effective style for resumes. However, sometimes I will include the articles if they are needed to make a sentence more clear.
16. I have begun most sentences of your resume with the strongest verb (action word) possible, and have used the "active voice" rather than the passive voice. For example "Managed \$10.5M budget" instead of "Responsible for budget management." This is a stronger and more effective writing style.
17. Your resume is written in the first person, not the third person. It is YOU talking -- not me or someone else. The "I" is left out, but it is understood. So the phrase "Speak fluent Spanish" is correct, and "Speaks Spanish" would be incorrect. You would never say, "I speaks Spanish."
18. Fragmented sentences are correct in a resume. The subject is left out, so all of the sentences are fragments.

19. Some of our clients are confused about whether sentences should be in the past or present tense (“Manageded three employees” vs. “Manage three employees”).

- If it is a *past* position, I will use the past tense.
- If it is part of your *current* job, then I will use present tense for your job description.
- If it is current but is a *one-time accomplishment or project* that is not a part of your ongoing job description, I will use the past tense.
- Finally, if it is something you do on an *ongoing* basis, I will use the present tense: “Consistently meet project deadlines.” Not “met,” because you presumably still meet deadlines. And not “meets” because you would never say “I meets deadlines.”

20. Commas: Occasionally, a client will ask about our use of commas. In particular, they question what is called the “serial comma” -- the comma that appears before the “and” in a list. You may be surprised to learn that even grammatical experts disagree on whether such a comma should be used. Believe it or not, there’s even a Wikipedia listing about the Great Serial Comma Debate! It states:

*“There is **no consensus** among writers or editors on the use of the serial comma.” The Chicago Manual of Style, Strunk and White’s Elements of Style, and **most authorities on English recommend the use of the serial comma**, while newspapers recommend against it.*
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serial_comma.)

We agree with most authorities. We DO use the comma, because it avoids confusion. Resumes are not newspapers, they are marketing tools. The point of a resume is to be clear, concise, and effective. And for that reason, there’s a second comma in the previous sentence!

Do you have a concern about your resume draft that is not answered above?

Give me a call and we will discuss it. Remember – this is only a draft. If I have misunderstood anything about your background, we’ll fix it. If necessary, we’ll send a second draft for your review. (Please note that our fees include a maximum of two drafts and two sets of revision prior to finalizing.)

Deborah L. Schuster, CPRW
The Lettersmith Resume Service
Phone: 248-828-1699
Fax: 810-592-8431
Email: thelettersmith@comcast.net
Web Site: www.thelettersmith.com