

4 TOP RESUME KILLERS

In a recent article on Yahoo.com, professional recruiting managers listed the top 4 reasons they simply throw a resume away, these are besides the obvious spelling and grammar problems they often see.

1. Your Resume Is Badly Formatted
2. Your Resume Is Immature
3. Your Resume Is Too Templated
4. Your Resume Is Sneaky

You may be the perfect fit for a job -- but a hiring manager is never going to find that out if he trashes your resume after a mere glance. Even in this age of online professional networking, a great resume is still the foundation of a successful job search.

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It's common knowledge that spelling errors and grammatical bloopers are trash triggers (and these simple mistakes top many recruiters' lists of resume pet peeves). But is there anything else that job seekers are unwittingly doing wrong? We asked some recruiting managers and career experts about the resume errors that cause them to crumple and toss a resume at first look -- and some of their answers may surprise you.

1. Your Resume Is Badly Formatted

Looks matter. Career expert Abby Kohut lists misaligned indentations and double spaces as a couple of the things that make a resume start to look like it belongs in the garbage. The fix? Use tabs for indents, and search your document for stray double spaces.

Also beware of being too creative. "I don't like it when I receive resumes with funky fonts," says Mona Abdel-Halim, co-founder of the Web-based resume tool Resunate, who echoed other experts we spoke to. "It is not professional and it makes the resume harder to read." When choosing resume fonts, opt ones that are widely used and readable, such as Calibri or Arial, and use no more than two fonts with their associated bold and italic styles.

2. Your Resume Is Immature

Other hiring managers we talked to said they had immediately trashed resumes with pictures on them -- for example, of cartoon character Bart Simpson (in the case of one applicant for a technical writing job) or of a kitten (an applicant for a customer service job). Cute resume additions like these are for kids -- not professionals.

3. Your Resume Is Too Templated

Longtime recruiter Mike Monroe says that unaltered, familiar resume templates from word-processing programs annoy him. "This won't automatically put you in the trash, but it tells me that you have put less thought into your resume than your competition," he says.

Jessica Campbell, an HR manager for talent agency Voices.com, says one of her pet peeves is "when a candidate has used a template resume," but hasn't updated it before sending it. (And if you use Word's

Track Changes feature to edit your resume, make sure to accept all changes in the final version before submitting it.)

To prevent your resume from ending up in the trash for this reason, customize your resume for each job you apply for using the language of the job ad and highlighting your most relevant experience.

"When the resume is not tailored to the position, it shows you don't really understand what the employer is looking for and are just hoping your resume fits some of the criteria," says career expert Heather Huhman, author of *Lies, Damned Lies & Internships: The Truth About Getting from Classroom to Cubicle*. "To avoid this mistake, show the employer how you fit those [criteria] through your previous experience, skills and expertise."

4. Your Resume Is Sneaky

Kohut says she immediately distrusts people whose resumes have no dates on them. "Gaps are not a problem," she says. "The problem is when you try to be deceptive."

David S. Williams, founder and CEO of salary consultancy SpringRaise, agrees, saying that if you are or have been unemployed, don't try to hide it. "You may be doing yourself a disservice because you may be a strong candidate for a position, but you tried to hide your current status," he says.

A better tactic is to be straightforward on your resume, and then use your cover letter to tell the story of your career's progress -- including information about how you maximized your time away from the 9-to-5 routine. And do remember to write a cover letter -- not doing so is another guaranteed way to get your resume thrown into the trash, according to the experts.