

When writing your résumé, there are four important rules:

1. *One size does NOT fit all!*
2. *There is more than one type of résumé.*
3. *There are certain formulas employers expect you to follow.*
4. *Ms. Manners says...Résumé Etiquette.*

Rule 1: One size does NOT fit all.

How many times have you or your colleagues printed 30 copies of the same résumé in preparation for the job search? STOP! Would you turn in the same paper for each of your different classes? Probably not. Employers are fickle and picky, and rightly so—they're working for the same people we are: the clients. It is important to appeal to employers' needs, which may require different versions of the résumé for different employers. When you are working with a client, the number one rule most of us have memorized by now is, "Start where the client is." Start where your prospective employer is! Pay attention to the needs and goals of the employer—sound familiar? Yes, needs assessments skills continue to come in handy.

"So, how do I do that?" you might ask. Well, employers, like clients, drop certain clues to us. For example, the nature of the agency usually gives you an idea of the client's presenting issue, as would the same information give you an idea of the employer's needs. So, one of the first things you should do is research the agency. Look for Web sites for the agency itself and its funding sources. Look at the agency's ad in the yellow pages. Drive by the building and get a feel for the area. Like clients, employers tell us their needs through their verbal communication. Read the job posting carefully (and save it for future reference, when preparing for the interview)—this is your résumé recipe. Employers usually list needs from most important to least important. Which leads to Rule 2.

Rule 2: There is more than one type of résumé.

Employers are used to seeing the chronological format of the résumé. The chronological résumé's main focus is the "experience" section. This type of résumé lists the jobs/internships/volunteer experience you have or have had in chronological order, starting with the most recent. A chronological résumé is most often used when the experiences you have had meet the employer's requirements and follow a consistent sequence (free of time gaps and frequent field changes).

However, this format is not always appropriate for new social workers just entering the field. Often, a chronological format can do more harm than good in the job search by focusing too much attention on a varied work history, career changes, or inexperience. The solution? The functional format of the résumé places the focus on your skills and experiences in the context of certain categories. For example, you may choose the categories of "Needs Assessment," "Administration," and "Human Relations." Under these categories, you might include internship experience, management of a fundraiser for your school or church, and customer relations experience gained while working in retail. While these experiences may seem different from each other and some may seem unrelated to social work, this format allows you to place these skills in a context for the employer to see how these skills meet the agency's needs. You may even want to choose your categories based on the job posting.

Rule 3: There are certain formulas employers expect you to follow.

Whether you choose the functional or chronological format, there are certain standard pieces of information employers expect to find on your résumé.

Heading:

Objective:

There are varying opinions about whether this section is important. Our suggestion is "better safe than sorry." The objective serves an essential function: getting your résumé to the right person! Often, an organization will be hiring for several positions; without the objective, your résumé may end up in the wrong pile. For your objective, be brief and to the point: include the name of the position and the department where it is located. *Example: A position as a social worker in the oncology department of City Hospital.*

Education:

The education section of a résumé should be placed immediately under your objective, unless you have been out of school and working for a few years. Only list universities where you received degrees. List the most recent university first. This section should include the name of your university, the city and state of your university and the month and year you graduated. Of course, you should also include the degree(s) you received and your GPA (if it is above a 3.0). Include any courses that are related to the job for which you are applying. For example, if you are applying for a position in direct social work, you would want to include your Individual Counseling and Family Therapy course. Use the same information for the next school you list, if you received a degree from another school—for example, an MSW from one university and a BSW from another university.

Skills/Experience:

This section is the heart of your résumé. It is basically the same whether you use a functional or chronological résumé. The way it is worded is the employer's guide for deciding whether or not to interview you. This section lets the employer know what you have done that could be useful in the job they are advertising. The most important words in this section are the action verbs, which make your skills come alive for the employer. Twenty-five commonly used action verbs for social work are:

- Administered
- Assessed
- Charted
- Collaborated
- Conducted
- Coordinated
- Counseled
- Developed
- Diagnosed
- Educated
- Encouraged
- Facilitated
- Helped
- Identified
- Implemented
- Interviewed
- Mediated

- Monitored
- Observed
- Recommended
- Reinforced
- Resolved
- Reviewed
- Scheduled
- Supported

For a more complete sample list of these action verbs, visit *The New Social Worker's* online career center at

<http://www.socialworkjobbank.com/careercenter>

and look under the "Job Search" category. You can also find skills listed using sample job specific task statements on Web sites such as the Occupational Outlook Handbook

(
<http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>

)
and O*NET

(
<http://online.onetcenter.org>

).

Skills should be listed from most important to least important. A simple formula to remember is *STAR*.

The STAR technique is an easy method for making sure you tell employers everything they want to know. Begin with "S" for describing the situation, "T" for task, "A" for action taken and "R" for results. For example, to describe a school social work position, you might say:

Counseled a child with behavior problems in the classroom resulting in a decrease in disciplinary infractions.

Keep in mind that skills can come from unrelated jobs and any volunteer experiences you have had.

Honors/Activities:

Include any honors you received or activities you were involved in during college that were not included in your experience/skills section. Make sure you specify positions held. NEVER include high school!

References:

Never include these on the résumé itself, nor should you include a statement about them. Instead, on a separate piece of paper, use the same heading as on the résumé, and include the references' names, titles, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. If employers want these, they will request them in the job posting. If not, bring the list to the interview, as they might want them at that time. Remember to keep your references informed of your application activities, so they won't be surprised when they are contacted.

Include your name (as it is on your Social Security card), current address, phone numbers (if there's one number where you are more likely to be reached, only include that one), and e-mail address (and Web address, if applicable).

Rule 4: Ms. Manners says...Résumé Etiquette

If including your e-mail address in the heading of your résumé, be sure that it is appropriate and professional, since this may be the way an employer corresponds with you. An employer may be hesitant to interview " // partygirl@internetprovider.com. // '); //]]> This e-mail address is being protected from spam bots, you need JavaScript enabled to view it // " The same goes for Web sites. Make sure, if you give your Web site address, that it contains things you would want an employer to see. Do not give out a work phone number to prospective employers. Even if your employer knows you are looking for a job, a person hiring would not want someone who used time on the clock to look for another job. It is not very professional. Also, answering machine messages at the phone number you give the employer should be courteous and professional.

Finally, be truthful in your résumé. Do not embellish. You will surely be caught in the interview if you did not stick to the truth. Also, it's a good idea to have your current professors or social work colleagues read your résumé. Often, a fresh eye will catch things you might have missed.

Your first step to success is following these four simple but important rules. Stay tuned for next issue's column on interviewing!

Make sure you print your résumé on high quality cotton fiber paper (8.5 x 11). Do not staple or fold your résumé; use a 9 x 12 envelope of the same material as the résumé for mailing. These materials can be purchased at most office supply stores. Ideally, a résumé should not be longer

than one page. Rare exceptions are résumés of people with master's degrees who have abundant relevant experience. If your résumé must go over one page, then it must completely fill two pages. If you only need a small part of the second page, then you can probably condense the two pages to one.

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