Constructing a Parseable Resume

✪ **Computers do not appreciate style or cleverness.** Quirky, clever resumes will not be processed correctly.

★ Typically one will have two versions of a resume: one for sending directly to a human being, and one for sending everywhere else (job board, corporate application portal, etc.). Everything that follows is about the resume that gets sent to ***non-humans***.

✪ **Tips for successful resume parsing:**

1. **A resume will process best when in Microsoft™ Word format.** If not using Word, save the file as a plain text file with a .txt extension. A resume will not parse properly, if at all, in file types such as HTML, PDF, RTF, JPG, TIFF, or any other image based file.

2. **Looks are deceiving.** Plain is good. Fancy is bad. Therefore:

   a) Do not use document Headers or Footers. Do not put *anything* into Headers or Footers, ***especially*** contact information.

   b) Do not use graphics. At best, graphics (clip art, photos, logos, anything that is a .bmp or .gif or .jpg or .png, etc.) will be ignored. At worst, the graphics will be turned into a huge mass of garbage characters.

   c) Do not use "tables" to organize content. Tables do not parse, so the content will lose structure and be disjointed.

   d) Do not use "fields" in Microsoft Word.

3. **Do not mix different font types or font sizes for data, and never try to add visual space to a word by adding space between the letters.** The word then becomes nothing more a series of individual characters.

4. **Capitalization does matter.** Do not use all caps unless there is a good reason to do so such as for section headers.

5. **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT:** Change the font size to 8 point or less and see if it still reads correctly. Now, save the resume as plain text ("."txt"), and see if it still reads correctly. Resume systems do NOT read resumes directly. They first convert the resumes into plain text, and then they read and process that plain text.

   So, ALWAYS save a copy of the resume as plain text, open that plain text document, and then make sure it still reads like it should, with no funky formatting problems. There may be surprises….

6. **The job seeker's contact info comes first.** That's "first" as in "first", not "first" as in "right after the pretty logo".

   Contact info should never be placed on just one or two lines.

WRONG:

Robert H. Smith • 13003 Myrtlea Lane • Houston, Texas 77099 • 713.562.7009

RIGHT:

Robert H. Smith
13003 Myrtlea Lane
Houston, Texas 77099
713-562-7009
smithy@soupandmore.com

7. **Use common header terms to start resume sections, and put them on separate lines.** There is one exception to this rule: contact info. Contact info does *not* need a header. Everything else gets a header.

The job objective section should start with a header that says

JOB OBJECTIVE

The Work History section should start with a header that says

WORK EXPERIENCE

The education section should start with a header that says

EDUCATION

If one attended college, omit High School data -- and regardless of education level, telling about Junior High experience is always a bad idea.

IMPORTANT: Do not use strange, unusual, or overly long headers. For instance, never use a header like "COMMUNITY INFUSION". *Is that a new type of instant coffee, or is it something important?*

8. **NEVER use "columns" or "tables" for formatting anything.** (related to 2. c. above, but important enough that it deserves a second mention) (And by the way, if it's not important, it should not be on your resume.)

WRONG:

Jan. 2003 – Present	Superb Products, Inc. Parts Manager.
	Reduced parts inventory by 10% while eliminating most out-of-stocks.
Mar. 2000 – Dec. 2002	Doug's Truck Sales, Inc. Repairman.
	Fixed trucks and managed the parts inventory.

Here's how the computer may read that:

Jan. 2003 – Present
Mar. 2000 – Dec. 2002
Superb Products, Inc.   Parts Manager.
Reduced parts inventory by 10% while eliminating most out-of-stocks.
Doug's Truck Sales, Inc.   Repairman.
Fixed trucks and managed the parts inventory.

RIGHT: (uses tabs instead of columns or tables):

```
Jan. 2003 – Present
     Superb Products, Inc.   Parts Manager.
     Reduced parts inventory by 10% while eliminating most out-of-stocks.

Mar. 2000 – Dec. 2002
     Doug's Truck Sales, Inc.   Repairman.
     Fixed trucks and managed the parts inventory.
```

And never, ever use newspaper column format, like this:

WRONG:
```
REFERENCES
Bill Smith                        Jane Dough
Customer Service Manager          Store Manager
Dillard's Department Stores       Fredo's Groceries, Inc.
713-888-0998                      765-999-9988
```

RIGHT:
```
REFERENCES

Bill Smith
Customer Service Manager
Dillard's Department Stores
713-888-0998

Jane Dough
Store Manager
Fredo's Groceries, Inc.
765-999-9988
```

9. **Keep like data in like order.** Each job listed should be described in the same order. If one job is described as…

    ```
    [Dates] [Position title] [Company][City], [State]
    [Description]
    ```

    …then all of the other jobs should be written in the same style.

10. **Do not combine sections.** It is important to never combine several topics or sections into a single section.

    WRONG:
    ```
    PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS, COMMUNITY SERVICE, AWARDS, TRAINING
    ```

    RIGHT:
    ```
    PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS
    I was involved with….

    COMMUNITY SERVICE
    Chairman, United Way Campaign for Greater Okowekofobee County

    AWARDS
    President's Quarterly Salesmanship Award, 2004

    TRAINING
    YMCA CPR Training for Frogs and Small Reptiles, Level I, 2002
    ```

11. **Always end company names with common company name words.**

A *human* knows that J.M. Huber is an employer company name. Unfortunately, the computer probably does not know that. The solution is to always end a company name with a company word like "Inc." or "Co." or "Company" or "LLC" or "LLP" or "GmbH". So, write J.M. Huber as J.M. Huber, Inc. or J.M. Huber Co. You are not applying for a job at J.M. Huber, so they will not care.

This rule applies to big and little companies alike. If one worked for IBM, write IBM, Inc. "Procter & Gamble" should be written as Procter & Gamble, Inc. "Enron" should be written as Enron, Inc. (or better yet, as "Major Energy Trading Company").

12. **Use blank lines between sections/paragraphs, but do not use blank lines within paragraphs.**

13. **Always separate each WORK HISTORY job and each EDUCATION school record with a blank line, but do not put blank lines within logical paragraphs.** "Blank line" means an actual blank line placed there by your word processor program, not just visual spacing that looks like a blank line but really is not. Also, never use tables or the space bar to move to the next line. Always use the Enter key.

WRONG:

```
Systems Integrator / Senior Systems Administrator (Contract)

May 02 – Jun 02
Ablest Technologies
Integrated Criminal Justice Info Systems, Maricopa County AZ

Provided Enterprise Systems Security and Audit needs analysis, methodology, education, product
research and recommendations for Department of Public Safety, ICJIS, and Homeland Security.
Systems Integrator / Senior Systems Administrator (Contract)  Nov 01 – Mar 02
SRA International
Internal Revenue Service, Enterprise Systems Management Center, Austin TX & Washington DC
Provided security process and methodology, product analysis, and product implementation to comply
with Treasury and IRS data security policies.
```

RIGHT:

```
Systems Integrator / Senior Systems Administrator (Contract)
May 02 – Jun 02
Ablest Technologies
Integrated Criminal Justice Info Systems, Maricopa County AZ
Provided Enterprise Systems Security and Audit needs analysis, methodology, education, product
research and recommendations for Department of Public Safety, ICJIS, and Homeland Security.

Systems Integrator / Senior Systems Administrator (Contract)
Nov 01 – Mar 02
SRA International
Internal Revenue Service, Enterprise Systems Management Center, Austin TX & Washington DC
Provided security process and methodology, product analysis, and product implementation to comply
with Treasury and IRS data security policies.
```

14. **Omit page numbers.** Page numbers will probably show up as garbage text in the resume, right in the middle of important data.

15. **Put skills into WORK HISTORY descriptions.** The system matches skills to the job dates and compute total years of experience for each skill and the date each skill was last used. *That is extremely important information.* If skills are in a separate SKILLS section, make certain to put those same skills into the individual job position history descriptions.

    ```
    NOTE:  Do NOT put skills in work history sections under separate headers inside each
    job.  Just list the skills as part of the narrative.
    ```

16. **Always include both START and END dates on work history.** For current job, always include the start date. Do not use all-number dates, rather written out month and four-digit years such as June 2014.

17. **Do not nest data or omit company names on consecutive positions.** If three different positions were held for ABC Company, treat each position as if it were a separate, standalone position.

18. **Do not put any explanatory or descriptive text until AFTER having set forth ALL the basic facts.**

    ```
    RIGHT:

    May 2000 – Nov 2003
    Chief Technology Officer, Plaza Technology Solutions, LLC.
    As CTO of PTS, I was responsible for ensuring that no snow cone was left behind.  Plaza is a $500
    million VC-funded venture that provides best of breed accounting and POS solutions directly to
    companies who sell snow cones.  PTS received its second round of capital in March of this year.
    ```

19. **Do not put employer street addresses, or supervisor or reference information, into a work history.** Put the city and state after the employer name, but NEVER put any other employer info (such as street address, postal code, phone numbers, supervisor names, etc.). That level of detail should be reserved for references.

20. **Do not put references on a resume.** DON'T DO IT! References are unnecessary unless asked for by a HUMAN. Why? Because…

    - …if someone wants to hire you, they will ask you at that time to submit references.
    - …one will call previous employers and check references regardless of whether given them.
    - …it is rude to the references to send their contact information to 10,000 places.
    - …chances increase that job seeker information and reference information gets confused.
    - …resumes live in data banks and on the internet for long lengths of time; references may go stale.

    If absolutely necessary, one may simply state, as the last line of the resume, "References available upon request." And if you really, really want, send a separate references document. But in any case, only send references to a HUMAN, never to a machine.