

8 Mistakes You Might Not Know You Are Making In Your Job Search

“I still don’t have a job,” Julia groaned, handing me her resume. “What am I doing wrong?”

I quickly scanned her resume. The font was tiny, and it was a weird font that I had rarely seen on a resume. Her resume was over two pages long.

“Well, for one thing, I can barely read it. You have so much crammed onto this page,” I said, grabbing my red pen to edit it. “If I don’t want to read it, I doubt employers will.”

“But I have so many activities,” she protested. “I want them to know about all of them. And I picked that font because I want [my resume](#) to stand out.”

Julia had listed activities going back to high school. We worked on several drafts of her resume, finally getting it down to one page, and a 10 point readable font (I recommend Times Roman or Garamond). We focused on skills and activities that would relate to corporate law, the practice area she is seeking.

Julia’s mistake was to make the page so crowded that no one would be able to determine if he had the right qualifications—a definite [job search](#) don’t. Crowded resumes that are hard to read don’t get read. Focus on experience that relates directly to the job. Create different versions of [your resume](#) if you are looking in more than one area.

It’s the little things that count. Here are seven other classic but easily fixable mistakes:

2. Not including a cover letter: I’m often asked, “Do I need to include a cover letter if they don’t ask for one?” Yes, it’s a good idea to include at least a brief one, highlighting the specific experience you have that matches the job description.

3. Not sending a thank you note within 24 hours of the interview: I know you thanked the interviewer in person. Sending a thank you note right away helps too. They will know that you are really interested in the job.

4. Not saving your resume and cover letter as a PDF: If you save your documents as a PDF file and send them to the employer, everything will look as it did when you wrote it — there won’t be any weird spacing or squiggly lines that you didn’t intend to show up. Don’t forget to email your documents to yourself first, to make sure everything looks okay.

5. Not writing about what you can offer them, instead of what they can offer you: If you write “I think this internship will offer me good training,” you are not telling them why they should hire you. For

Julia, who is interested in corporate law, it might be better to write “I have taken several upper level securities courses, and last year interned at a corporate law firm.”

6. Having a cover letter that is too wordy: Just as Julia’s resume was too long, many times [cover letters](#) are dense, with long paragraphs that are nearly impossible to read. Interviewers will be scanning [your cover letter](#), looking quickly for highlights. Try not to have any paragraph that is more than ten lines long. Also, watch out for too many commas. If a sentence is long, break it up into two sentences. The idea is to have shorter, focused sentences.

7. Including generic personality traits: “I am a hard worker.” Great. Good to know. But vague and unsubstantiated. “I worked fifteen hours a week throughout school, while maintaining an “A” average.” Much better.

8. Talking too much or too little during the interview: If you are generally talkative or nervous during the interview, don’t forget to pause and give the interviewer a chance to respond. It’s okay if there is a moment of silence between questions. If you are shy, think of examples of what you have achieved ahead of time, so you will always have something to say.

Minor, easily fixable [job search](#) mistakes like these can make a big difference.

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