

HOW TO WRITE

Better Résumés

FOURTH EDITION

Adele Lewis and Gary Joseph Grappo

- Approximately 150 sample résumés show you how to individualize yours to fit your career goals

- Making best use of computers and word processing to prepare a sparkling résumé

- Self-marketing tips and techniques for landing a job—whether you're a beginner or an experienced pro

OVER
 $\frac{1}{2}$ MILLION
COPIES
SOLD

BARRON'S

How to Write Better Résumés

FOURTH EDITION

by

Adele Lewis

Former President and Founder,
Career Blazers Agency, Inc.
New York City

and

Gary Joseph Grappo

Director of Personnel Training and Development
for a Major International Airline
New York City
Former President and Founder,
CareerEdge Job Fairs
Miami



BARRON'S EDUCATIONAL SERIES, INC.

© Copyright 1993 by Barron's Educational Series, Inc.
Prior editions © Copyright 1989, 1983, 1977; material from
Better Résumés for Sales & Marketing Personnel © Copyright 1985
by Barron's Educational Series, Inc.

All rights reserved.
No part of this book may be reproduced
in any form, by photostat, microfilm, xerography,
or any other means, or incorporated into any
information retrieval system, electronic or
mechanical, without the written permission
of the copyright owner.

All inquiries should be addressed to:
Barron's Educational Series, Inc.
250 Wireless Boulevard
Hauppauge, NY 11788

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 92-33503

International Standard Book No. 0-8120-1556-8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lewis, Adele Beatrice. 1927-1990
How to write better résumés / by Adele Lewis, Gary
Joseph Grappo.—4th ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-8120-1556-8
1. Résumés (Employment) I. Grappo, Gary Joseph. II. Title.
HF5383.L48 1993
650.14-dc20

92-33503
CIP
AC

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
3456 100 987654

INTRODUCTION

If you are reading these words in a bookstore or library, trying to decide whether this book is worth your time and money, let us help you decide. We assume that, having turned to this page, you are interested in improving or changing your position. We also assume you know that a powerful, effective resume is one essential tool toward accomplishing that goal.

Probably you want to continue working in your current career area; or you are changing career fields but know precisely in what new area you want to apply past career interests, skills, and achievements. From these assumptions we frame our entire universe of prospective readers, and we welcome you among them. This book will show you how to apply your skills to finding the job that satisfies you most.

In looking for a job, you should always aim for the very best and try to avoid settling for less. Be sure, however, that you maintain an open and realistic attitude, evaluating each opportunity with a flexible, far-sighted view. It is also our belief that you should take the job where you'll be happiest. Every job has psychological fringe benefits, and these, in the long run, can more than counter what might be viewed as a slight initial salary deficiency. If you are happy in your job, you'll do better work (and conversely, if you do better work, you'll be happy). Soon you will receive tangible recognition of that work. The contentment in your work will spill out into other areas of your life and is, therefore, an important and vital job asset. May this book ultimately bring you happiness.

We wish to thank all our clients, both job seekers and recruiters, who were so generous with their time and their suggestions. We are very grateful to William Lewis, President of Career Blazers Personnel Services, Inc., for his continual support and for keeping us supplied with an excellent staff of researchers and résumés. And, lastly, special thanks to Diane DeGeorgis for her continual patience in typing and retyping the manuscript.

CONTENTS

	Introduction	v
1	The Art of Job Hunting	1
	The Skill or Art of Job Hunting—A 4-Step Career Strategy	2
2	Contents and Style of a Résumé	5
	Résumé Styles	6
	The Chronological (Historical) Résumé	6
	The Functional Résumé	7
	The Imaginative-Creative Résumé	8
3	Putting Yourself on Paper	9
	Identifying Information	9
	Job Objective or Career Goal	11
	Employment History	11
	Educational History	13
	Professional Societies and Publications	14
	Personal Information	14
	References	14
	Photographs	15
	Reasons for Leaving Past Jobs	15
	Salaries, Past and Present	15
	Résumé Appearance	16
	Giving Your Résumé “Eye Appeal”	17
	Reproduction	17
	The Use of Computers	18
4	Organizing Your Thoughts	19
	Résumé Workspace	19
	Action Words	24
	Sample Layouts	26

5	The Cover Letter	31
	Types of Cover Letters	34
	Response to an Ad	35
	Direct Mail Letter	36
	Letter to Employment Agencies	36
	Letter to Colleague or Friend	37
	Sample Cover Letters	37
6	Where Do You Find Work?	65
	Look Around You	65
	Classified Ads	66
	Private Employment Agencies	67
	State and Government Employment Agencies	69
	Government Jobs	69
	Chamber of Commerce	70
	Temporary Services	70
	Volunteer Work	72
	Job Fairs	73
	Work-Study Programs	73
	Direct Mail Campaign	74
7	Following Through	77
	Keeping a Record	77
	Sample Follow-Up Notes	79
8	Winning Interview Techniques	85
	Positive Attitude	86
	Dress Like a Winner	87
	Upon Arriving at the Interview	87
	Listening Is Important	88
	Asking Questions Is Important Too	88
	Questions They Will Ask You	89
	Salary Negotiation	91
9	Sample Résumés	93
10	Which Job Do I Take?	277
	Index	280

1

THE ART OF JOB HUNTING

Whether you're unemployed, just starting out, or simply looking for greener pastures, your job hunt can be either a triumphant experience or a complete catastrophe. From our long experience with dealing with a variety of job seekers, we've come to realize there is a definite skill to the looking for and getting of jobs. We call this skill *self-marketing*, the ability to sell one's self. For those lucky few who intuitively possess self-marketing skills, job hunting is an exhilarating, rewarding experience. Conversely, for those not possessing this skill, job hunting can be a depressing, traumatic task. Fortunately, learning to sell one's self can be mastered. It is rarely innate, never offered as part of an educational curriculum, and hardly ever recognized as an independent skill. It requires lots of thought, a dedication to assume new, *positive* attitudes, self-discipline, and lots of perseverance before it can be mastered. Once acquired, self-marketing skills will stay with you for the rest of your life and serve as a tremendous source of security in a variety of situations. You are always selling something, a thought, an idea, and in a job search, you are selling the benefits of hiring you over the competition. Self-selling skills are even important after you get a job, to help keep it.

Part of being a good salesperson means you must always maintain a cheerful, optimistic, and *positive* attitude. Keep in mind, always, that you will get a job, and it really doesn't matter if it's this week or next month. When you consider that you spend more than 70,000 hours of your life on the job, doesn't it make sense to be generous with the time allotted to secure one?

Give up all *negative* attitudes such as "I can't; it's impossible," as well as those negative presuppositions about the job market: "It's not what you know; it's who you know," "No one over forty stands a chance of getting a good job," "You have to have the exact experience they're looking for," "They never hire anyone who's been fired," "Large employment gaps are the kiss of death," "It's impossible to change careers."

Anyone involved in recruiting will tell you that there is no validity to these beliefs. At our companies, we are constantly placing people over age 40 in excellent positions in prestigious companies. We continually have job listings for persons interested in changing fields or careers. If it were true—"It's not what you know but who you know"—

there would be no employment agencies, executive search firms, and no ads in the paper. Our placement files prove that “exact” experience is rarely a requirement. Employers are flexible, and although initially they might ask for certain qualifications, they tend to lose their rigidity and hire the person who best convinces them that he or she is right for the job.

People involved in hiring are relatively sophisticated; they don’t automatically prejudge anyone who has been fired. They are aware that a person fired from a particular position at a different company might be extremely valuable to their company. They realize that since changing jobs is such a stressful experience, many people are willing to stay in intolerable situations rather than face the great unknown. Company A’s loss may very likely be Company B’s gain.

It is true that large gaps in employment history may require additional effort in job hunting. However, those people who remain confident and true to themselves as well as others will ultimately meet with success.

People are constantly changing careers. A person with a scientific background has excellent prospects for a career in technical sales. We’ve seen engineers become salespersons, teachers metamorphosed into publishers’ reps, copywriters filling slots in marketing areas.

Dwelling on the negative has no validity. Every negative thought or disadvantage can be overcome. A positive attitude yields positive results. Being negative gets you nowhere. To be successful, you must focus on the positive aspects of your work history and accentuate the positive skills you have acquired. Most importantly you must believe you can, and you will.

Looking for a job requires a great deal of effort, much insight, the necessity of developing a high frustration tolerance, and a strong determination not to become discouraged and negative. Our vast experience in helping people find jobs tells us that a negative attitude is a luxury no job seeker can afford. This has become one of our favorite mottoes, and we believe every job seeker should incorporate it into his or her personal philosophy.

THE SKILL OR ART OF JOB HUNTING—A 4-STEP CAREER STRATEGY

Step I is to first start your job hunt with a little research. Make sure your salary requirements are in line with those currently offered. The classified section of your local newspaper offers a wealth of such information. A few calls to appropriate search firms is another simple method of learning a great deal about market conditions.

You know exactly the kind of job you’re looking for. You are qualified (both education and work history). And your salary expectations are realistic. You are well on your way.

Step II is your résumé. You know there are jobs available. You must now let the world know you are ready, willing, and available. You want to put your credentials on display and broadcast the fact that you are up for hire. Your résumé is the best possible vehicle for this information. It must look good, be easy to read and—most important—it must create interest in its product: You. After all, you are the greatest product you will ever sell. To be successful, your résumé must totally and instantly convince the reader that you are, indeed, a person of substance and should be interviewed. Chapter 2 will show you in a logical, step-by-step approach just how this can be accomplished.

Step III follows with how to most effectively circulate your résumé. Chapter 5 gives you a crash course in cover letters that gets the reader's attention and maximizes the impact of your résumé so as to prompt interviews. Chapter 6 discusses networking and job sources for effective career strategy.

Step IV is changing an interview into an offer. Chapter 8 discusses the skills of self-marketing at an interview. We learn the necessary ingredients of effective self-selling, tell you how to handle multiple interviews, and give you proper techniques for salary negotiations. You'll learn how to control the interview and, finally how to convert that interview into a solid job offer. We are convinced that once these basic skills have been mastered, you will find job hunting to be a positive, uplifting experience.

Go for it!

2

CONTENTS AND STYLE OF A RESUME

There was a time when job seekers could simply visit a potential employer and be interviewed, but that time has long since passed. In this complex world where distance, time, and sheer numbers mitigate against personal involvement, the résumé has become the most essential ingredient in both the job search and hiring process. As such, your résumé must represent you in the clearest, most forceful manner possible. It must represent you when you are not there to speak for yourself. In essence, your résumé becomes an embodiment of you, and will serve as your representative. The success of your job campaign is completely dependent on the effectiveness of your résumé. A good résumé results in interviews; an inferior one is simply discarded.

Employers tell us it is not unusual for them to receive hundreds of résumés each day. Under these circumstances, no more than ten or twenty seconds is given to scan each résumé before allowing time for a thorough read-through. If a résumé is more than two pages long, it will be immediately rejected, as will those that appear cluttered and don't invite easy reading. Spelling or grammatical mistakes are never tolerated. In order to warrant a thorough read-through, your résumé must show *immediately* that you have the ability to organize information and present it in a clear, concise manner. You must instantly communicate to the reader that you know where you are going with your career, and that you have just the right background to make you a valuable staff addition.

But let's begin with the basics. Every résumé must identify and describe the writer. It must include:

- Your name, address, and telephone number
- A description of your educational history
- A description of your work history
- Work-related honors or citations
- Publications you may have been featured in

It may also include:

- A summary of qualifications
- Your job objective or career goal
- A capsule description of your work history
- Memberships in any professional organizations
- Foreign languages you may know

- Information on hobbies only if they relate in some way or show personal success, such as an award or outstanding achievement
- Military service, if any
- Security clearance, if any (technical sales)
- Willingness to travel or relocate

It should **not** include the following information:

- Reasons for leaving past jobs
- Past salaries or present salary requirements
- Personal data—age, height, weight, marital status, number of children
- Health status
- Names of spouse or children
- A photograph of yourself
- Names and addresses of references

RESUME STYLES

Although every résumé should contain a brief, concise summary of your work history and educational background, the style or approach differs in the arrangement of this data. Though there are several résumé styles, we believe the chronological is the most effective, and we strongly recommend that you choose this approach in writing your résumé. We will, however, discuss others as well and evaluate each style.

Despite minor variations, there are basically three different résumé styles or approaches.

- Chronological (Historical)
- Functional
- Imaginative, Creative, or Informal

We'll discuss each, with consideration of their usefulness.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL (HISTORICAL) RESUME

As the name applies, this style presents the information in chronological sequence. The succession of facts must be presented in **reverse** chronological order, starting with the present or most recent experience and moving backward in time.

As with any résumé, start with your name, address, and phone number. It is traditional in some industries to list your education before your work experience. There are no hard and fast rules about this, and certainly if you have a good, solid background of experience but have not completed your degree, then it makes sense to place the education at the end of the résumé instead. Usually, however, your most advanced degree is shown first, followed in reverse order by all other degrees. Again dates should always be used. State the name of the university, city, state, degree earned, and the dates attended. Academic honors would be included in this grouping.

If you have opted to use a career objective or résumé capsule, place it near the top of the first page. Keep it brief and realistic.

Your work history should list each job (in reverse chronological order), specifying your job title, the name of your employer, the address (city and state; number and name of street are not necessary), and a summary of your duties and responsibilities. These summaries should be brief but specific. Always include dates; they can be in vertical columns to the left of the other information, on a line before the description of each job held, or included as an integral part of the paragraph. Generally, placing the dates in a vertical column is preferable, as employers like to be able to determine at a glance the times involved.

The chronological résumé should be brief and take no more than two pages. This type of résumé offers a clear, concise picture of you, and it is probably the easiest to assimilate in a quick reading. Without exception, the chronological format was preferred by the corporate executives we've talked to; they felt it does the best job of indicating an individual's direction, background, accomplishments, and general qualifications.

THE FUNCTIONAL RESUME

As its name implies, the functional résumé emphasizes the writer's qualifications and abilities. This approach rejects a chronological sequence of employment and educational history, and instead provides analyses of particular professional strengths. The employment strengths or skills are the important facts in this style of résumé.

Your work history, volunteer experience, and educational record are fragmented into significant talents, and each skill is listed separately. Because these functions or responsibilities usually have crossed over a number of jobs, the sequence of job history has been sacrificed to emphasize ability. Names of employers and dates are omitted from this section of the résumé, since the expertise has been gained from more than one position.

The functional résumé should be brief, concise, and well structured. It should start with your name, address, and phone number, your job objective, and a résumé summary (if needed). The body of the résumé should consist of four or five paragraphs, each one heading a particular area of expertise or involvement.

The skills paragraphs should be listed in order of importance. We define the most important skill as the function that is most similar to your present career goal or job objective.

Typical headings might be Marketing, Legal Secretarial, Research, Sales Management, and so on. A brief summary of your accomplishments in each category would follow.

Though this type of résumé has gained in popularity over the past few years, very few employers, personnel directors, or managers

approve of this approach. Our employment experts tell us that they become very suspicious of the functional résumé. They feel it is often used to cover up a spotty work record (for example, seven jobs in four years or a long period of unemployment), to exaggerate certain abilities, or to disguise some "whole truth." One corporate executive put it succinctly when he said, "It raises more questions than it answers."

The only situation that lends itself to the functional résumé is one in which you are attempting a career change. In that case, this style résumé may be advantageous because it shows at a glance the kinds of jobs within your capacity. Because most résumé readers feel that résumés lose their effectiveness if dates or names of employers are not shown, you should overcome this by adding a very concise historical (always in reverse chronological order) listing of employers, job titles, and job descriptions with the appropriate dates. This history should follow your description by function.

THE IMAGINATIVE-CREATIVE RESUME

You may feel that an imaginative, highly unusual approach is the ideal thing to shake loose your résumé from the pack. Using artwork, illustrations, cartoons, or a unique format may very well create an impression, but not necessarily a good one.

We have received résumés that were over two feet long, wound up like a scroll; very, very small ones put together to resemble a passport (the print so reduced you would have to use a magnifying glass, if you wanted to read it); résumés in the format of menus, playbills, calendars, stock certificates, and even a summons. True, these résumés caught the eye. They amused and charmed us, but they did not sustain enough interest to become effective. Such résumés are usually difficult to read, unprofessional, and impossible to file. Corporate employers share our opinion that a résumé is a business matter and, accordingly, should be presented in a businesslike, professional manner.

3

PUTTING YOURSELF ON PAPER

When preparing your résumé, always keep in mind the purpose of that résumé—to serve as a personal advertisement, generating enough interest in you to secure an interview. As an effective advertisement, it should be attractive, easy to read, concise, and informative. Because the chronological résumé is the most preferred style, we will use this approach in showing you how to write your résumé.

The information contained in the résumé should be presented in the following order.

- Identifying information
- Summary or résumé capsule (optional)
- Career or job objective (optional)
- Employment history
- Educational history
- Honors or citations, if any
- Publications you may have been featured in
- Membership in professional organizations (optional)
- Military service

Mention of hobbies, knowledge of foreign languages, a willingness to travel or relocate, and other personal information is included only if they are relevant to the position you are applying for. When used, this information should appear near the end of the résumé.

In deciding whether to include a job objective and/or a job summary, consider that your present or most recent job description should be on the first page. If your objective and/or summary are too long, it may be better to shorten both or omit one of them.

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

Always start with your identifying material in a conspicuous position, either flush left (leaving room for the margin) or on the top center (again leave about $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches for the margin). Give your complete name, street address, city, state, zip code, and phone number, complete with area code. If you can be reached at an office, that number should also be listed. The use of the summary, also called résumé capsule, is optional, and mainly used by candidates with at least five years of experience. To be effective, it must include information

indicating that you are indeed qualified for the position sought. Although optional, we have been told by more than one personnel director of an important company that this is the first piece of information they scan. If the summary, essentially a digest of the résumé, sustains their interest, they will continue to read the résumé in its entirety. Similarly, if it is poorly worded, too long or too vague, the candidate will be immediately rejected. The beauty of the summary is that it gives you the power of the functional résumé and, at the same time, excludes all of its disadvantages. Here is your opportunity to combine and build on similar aspects of your background that may have been acquired over a period of many years in a number of different positions.

Suppose one of your accomplishments occurred in an early job. If you were using a straight reverse-chronological style presentation, this important information might not be noticed by the reader. It probably would appear near the bottom of the page or possibly on the second page, and would very likely be missed. The summary allows you to emphasize it at the beginning. It is the space where you can list the highlights or whatever else you might consider your biggest career accomplishment, regardless of when that was.

The summary should consist of one strong sentence, three or four at the most. Those sentences should be enough to highlight the aspects of your background that will most appeal to a potential employer.

Here are some samples of summary paragraphs:

Seventeen years' of sales growth achievement in the medical field, having established strong rapport with professional practitioners.

More than 12 years' involvement in the C language, UNIX area of programming both in Systems and Applications. Thoroughly experienced in designing, implementing, and debugging.

Fifteen years' experience in Nuclear Power Plant Engineering, including start-up, modifications, construction, installation, and testing of ASME Code Class I, II, and III Systems.

We suggest that you write down every skill, responsibility, job duty, and accomplishment that will qualify you for your next position. Think of every problem you had some part in solving, any new idea you contributed which was ultimately used by your employer, any achievements or capabilities you have which would demonstrate or suggest that you can do the job better than anyone else.

Study your list and pare it down to five or six points. Combine those that are similar in function so that you can write a brief narrative that has a convincing tone to it. Be brief. Choose your words carefully.

You may have to write several drafts—shortening sentences, changing a word here and there, deleting unnecessary adjectives or phrases that might be repetitive. Work on it until you have it perfect.

The summary or capsule résumé is the best way of emphasizing solid work background and highlighting specific qualifications to a targeted employer. Although it often involves retyping the résumé for each potential employer, the capsule résumé can be the only part of your résumé that does have to be adjusted to suit different employers' needs.

JOB OBJECTIVE OR CAREER GOAL

As with the summary, the use of a job objective or career goal is strictly optional. It is usually used when an individual has background in more than one area and has preference in a particular direction.

We've seen excellent results with resumes that include objectives as well as those that omit this information. The purpose of the objective is to describe succinctly the position you want by job title, function, and/or industry. The job objective must logically connect with the balance of your résumé. The contents of your résumé must demonstrate that you are indeed qualified for the position you are seeking. You should avoid stating objectives that are too confining; you don't want to cancel out opportunities that might be of interest to you. On the other hand, be careful of clichés "a position that is both rewarding and stimulating;" "a challenging position which offers growth potential." Such statements are meaningless and the reader may infer you either lack direction or are unsure of what your career goals are. The following are clear and concise examples.

A position with management potential in the system software area in a technically advanced environment.

Seeking corporate position where an expertise in editorial design will be employed in communications media for both external and internal circulation.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

The heart of your résumé is the section that describes your experience or employment history. It is important to remember that your résumé must be honest as well as logical. Never put anything in your résumé that is not 100 percent true. Stay with the truth, even if you feel a small exaggeration or distortion might make you more marketable. Any information that is not true can become an insurmountable liability. Employers usually expect that a new employee will require some training, and they are quite willing to provide it. If, however, you claimed certain strengths and are unable to demonstrate those abilities, you can be sure your credibility on all other matters will be questioned.