

"The ultimate resume writer's handbook!"

— John Noble Associate Director of Career Services
Harvard University

RESUMES that KNOCK 'EM DEAD

- **Every resume in this book produced a real job!**
- **The very best resumes and cover letters for all jobs!**
- **Easy-to-follow steps to make any resume knock 'em dead!**

Martin John Yate

Author of the premier job interview book, Knock 'em Dead with Great Answers to Tough Interview Questions

RESUMES *that* KNOCK *'em* DEAD

by Martin Yate

MARTIN YATE is one of today's foremost career authorities with over one million copies of his books in print. Mr. Yate is also a syndicated feature writer and employment/management lecturer and special training consultant to the employment services industry. He has served as Director of Personnel for Bell Industries Computer Memory Division and as Director of Training for the Dunhill Personnel System, one of the largest personnel services organizations in the country. He was born and educated in England.

In *Resumes that Knock 'em Dead*, Yate provides authoritative advice on the troublesome—but essential—task of composing a resume. The book is the result of over a year's worth of planning and research, in addition to countless hours of interviews with some of the nation's top personnel, management, and employment specialists.

Resumes that Knock 'em Dead is Martin Yate's fifth book. His other titles include: *Knock 'em Dead with Great Answers to Tough Interview Questions*; *Cover Letters that Knock 'em Dead*; *Hiring the Best: How to Staff Your Department Right the First Time*; and *Keeping the Best: Building a Super-competitive Workforce*.

Acknowledgments

It is only fair to say that any book is teamwork, and this one more than most.

I would like to thank three people especially: Donna Carnavale; my editor, Eric Blume, who continues his inestimable contributions in this, our third book together; and Jeff Hunter, a man with a superior talent, and the president of First Impressions, a truly top-notch resume-writing firm.

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Hiring the Best: A Manager's Guide to Effective Interviewing

Keeping the Best: Building a Super-competitive Workforce

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This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information with regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional advice. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a qualified professional person should be sought.

— From a *Declaration of Principles* jointly adopted by a Committee of the American Bar Association and a Committee of Publishers and Associations.

Contents

Introduction / 5

Chapter One:

The Marks of a Great Resume / 6

Why you need a resume, what it will mean to the person who eventually reads it, and what this book will do to help you put together one that gets the attention you deserve.

Chapter Two:

Three Ways to Sum Yourself Up / 9

The chronological, functional, and combination resumes: what they are and who should use which.

Chapter Three:

The Basic Ingredients / 13

What must always go in, what can never go in, and what may be appropriate depending on your background.

Chapter Four:

Resumes That Knock 'em Dead / 28

Assembling the raw materials, determining where you want to go, and showing how your experience will meet the employer's needs.

Chapter Five:

Writing the Basic Resume / 35

Getting it all down on paper, using the action verbs that make your resume sparkle and shine, and the all-important checklist you must consult before you can say you're done.

Chapter Six:

The Final Product / 49

How to choose a word processing service, what to expect from a professional typesetter, and how to select the best paper, reproduction method, and typeface for your resume.

Chapter Seven:

Cover Letters / 54

The "rules of the road" for making your letter more than just another piece of mail, the best way to personalize your cover letter, and an invaluable list of sample phrases for use in a wide variety of situations. Also: The Executive Briefing and The Broadcast Letter.

Chapter Eight:

What Do You Do With It? / 66

9 Sources for interview leads. Why want ads shouldn't be your only source for employment needs. How to do the research, and following up on the best leads.

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Chapter Six:

The Final Product / 49

How to choose a word processing service, what to expect from a professional typesetter, and how to select the best paper, reproduction method, and typeface for your resume.

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Chapter Eight:

What Do You Do With It? / 66

9 Sources for interview leads. Why want ads shouldn't be your only source for employment needs. How to do the research, and following up on the best leads.

Chapter Nine: The Resumes / 71

Based on real resumes that got real jobs for real people. Which jobs? In alphabetical order:

Accountant	Legal Secretary
Accounting Customer Service Specialist	Major Account Executive
Accounting Clerk	Manufacturing Systems Engineer
Accounts Payable Supervisor	Marketing Analyst
Administrative Assistant	Mechanical Engineer
Admissions Representative	Medical Equipment Salesperson
Applications Management Specialist	Medical Goods Sales Manager
Applications Programmer/Analyst	Microcomputer Support Analyst
Assistant Manager Trainee	Neonatal Support/Nurse
Associate(Legal)	Occupational Therapist
Automobile Salesperson	Office Administrator
Automotive Management Specialist	Office Manager
Bank Teller	Operating Room Services Specialist
Bank Wire Transfer Clerk	Operations Management Specialist
Banking Portfolio Manager	Order Processing Manager
Bookkeeper	Paralegal
Broadcast Management Professional	Payroll/Accounts Payable Supervisor
Buyer	Personnel Administrator
Capital Equipment Salesperson	Personnel Assistant
Chemical Salesperson	Physical Therapist
Claims Representative	Plastics Engineer
Compensation/EEO Specialist	Process Control Engineer
Commercial Lender	Product Development Engineer
Computer Operator	Project Leader
Credit/Collections Clerk	Programmer Analyst
Credit/Loan Supervisor	Public Relations/Media Spokesperson
Credit Manager	Publishing/Marketing Professional
Customer Service Manager	Quality Control Manager
Data Processing Consultant	Real Estate Professional
Data Processing Supervisor	Real Estate Sales Manager
Database Administrator	Receptionist
Dietitian	Records Manager
Director of Development	Research Scientist
Director of Medical Records	Sales Manager
Electrical Design Engineer	Sales Support/Administration Specialist
Electrician	Salesperson
Engineering Secretary	Senior Executive Secretary
Executive Assistant	Senior Payroll Clerk
Fabric Salesperson	Senior Systems Programmer
Field Sales Manager	Software Engineer
Financial Executive Secretary	Staff Accountant/Real Estate
Food and Beverage Director	Store Manager
Food Product Manager	Systems Programmer
Food Service Salesperson	Systems Team Leader
Health Care Professional	Technical Services Manager
Health Care Sales Manager	Telecommunications Analyst
High Tech Sales Manager	Textile Designer/Stylist
High Tech Salesperson	Ultrasound/Nuclear Medicine Technician
Hospital Pharmacist	Underwriting Typist
Inventory Control Buyer	Veterinary Intern
Junior Accounting Clerk	Visual Merchandising Specialist
Law Clerk	Wholesale Electrical Sales
Lease Accountant	Word Processing Specialist
Legal Office Manager	Word Processing Supervisor

Appendix / 195

Resumes for Special Situations; Off The Beaten Track; For More Help...; Sample Questionnaire

Introduction

Most of the books on writing resumes haven't changed to accommodate today's dynamic work environment. That is the reason for this book: To help "now" people get the very best jobs!

Look at the other resume books on the market; they are full of resume examples with dates going back to what seems, to most job seekers, like the Bronze Age. They use job titles that no longer exist and techniques that no longer work—techniques that in many instances can be downright damaging to your job hunt.

This book is unique in two very important ways.

First, you'll get to read real resumes from real people. Each of the resumes in this book is based on a "genuine article" that worked wonders for its writer. Included are resumes from today's, and tomorrow's, in-demand jobs, as defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and confirmed by the professionals on the front lines: Corporate recruiters and other employment industry professionals across the country. The odds are that you are already working in one of these jobs, or wishing you were.

Also included in the "real-life" section of this book is a selection of resumes from people with special challenges. These reflect the pressures and needs of a modern, professionally-oriented society struggling into the information age. Like the resume that got a six-dollar-an-hour factory worker a \$70,000 a year job; or the one that helped a recovering alcoholic and drug-abuser get back on her feet again. There are winning resumes of people recovering from serious emotional challenges, mental problems, re-entering society after jail, starting over after divorce, changing careers, and even one for a teenage trick cyclist looking for advertising, film, and endorsement work. And what's more, these examples have proved themselves effective in every corner of the nation; the writers landed both interviews and jobs.

Second, I explain the ins and outs of putting a resume together as painlessly as possible. I'll show you the three best ways to look at your background and present your resume. Then I'll show you all the available options for inclusion. Why certain things should be in your resume, how they should look, and why other things should never appear. Wherever industry experts disagree, I'll give you both sides of the argument, and my reasoned solution to the dispute. That way, you can make a prudent decision about your unique background, based on possession of all the facts and the best advice going. In addition, you will see the infinite variety of styles and approaches that can be used within my guidelines, to help you create a truly individual resume.

These two unique concepts, the numerous resume examples, and the nuts-and-bolts sections about resume production and distribution give you everything needed to create a distinctive, professional resume: one that will Knock 'em Dead.

Chapter One: The Marks of a Great Resume

Who needs a resume?

Everyone. Certainly you do, unless you are so well known that your reputation is already common knowledge to all potential employers. If that were the case you probably wouldn't be reading this book in the first place.

Anyone, in any job, can be viewed more favorably than his or her competition - if he or she is better organized and prepared, which is what a good resume demonstrates. It's a staunch friend who only speaks well of you and can gain you entrance into undreamed of opportunities.

Now, no resume ever gets carefully read unless a manager is trying to solve a problem. That problem may be finding a quicker way to manufacture silicon chips. It may be getting the telephone calls answered, now that the receptionist has left. As disparate as these examples might seem, both are still concerned with problem solving. And invariably, the problem that needs a solution is the same: Productivity. The simple question, "How on earth are we going to get things done quicker/cheaper/more efficiently without a _____?"

Resumes that get acted upon are those that demonstrate the writer's potential as a problem-solver.

Your resume must speak loudly and clearly of your value as a potential employee. And the value must be spoken in a few brief seconds, because in the business world, that's all the attention a resume will get. The resume takes you only the first few paces toward that new job. It gets your foot in the door, and because you can't be there to answer questions, it has to stand on its own.

A resume's emphasis is on what has happened in your business life, what actions you took to make those things happen, and what supportive personal characteristics you brought to the job. It is about how you contributed to solving a business' problems. It has nothing to do with generalizations or personal opinions.

The resume itself came about as a solution to a problem: How does a manager avoid interviewing every applicant who applies for a job? Can you imagine what would happen to a business if everyone who applied for a job was given even a cursory ten-minute interview? The company would simply grind to a halt, then topple into bankruptcy. The solution: Come up with a way to get a glimpse of applicants' potential before having to meet them face-to-face. The resume appeared and evolved into an important screening and time-saving tool.

While that solved one problem for the employer, it created another for the job applicant: "Considering that my background isn't perfect, how do I write a resume that shows off my best potential?" The first attempt to answer that question is how the gentle art of resume writing came into being.

In the world of recreational reading, resumes are pretty far down on the list. They are usually deadly dull and offer little competition to murder mysteries, tales of international intrigue, and love stories.

Nevertheless, resumes are a required part of every manager's daily reading, and exactly because they are usually deadly dull, are generally avoided. To combat this deep-seated avoidance, there is a general rule that will help your resume get read and acted upon in the quickest possible time: It needs to be short and long. Short on words, but long on facts and an energy that reflects the real you.

Good resume writing focuses attention on your strengths and shows you as a potential powerhouse of an employee. At the same time, it draws attention away from those areas that lack definition or vigor. You can do this even if you are changing your entire career direction, or starting your life over for other reasons, and I'll show you how.

There is a hidden benefit, too, in the resume writing process: It focuses your attention and helps you prepare for job interviews. In a very real sense, putting a resume together is the foundation of succeeding at the job interview. Preparation for one is preparation for the other.

For example, the interviewer's command to "tell me about yourself" is one of those tough interview demands that almost all of us have difficulty answering satisfactorily. Were you totally satisfied with your response last time it came up? I doubt it. You can only answer it well if you have taken the time to analyze and package all your strengths and weaknesses in an organized fashion. It is the only way you will ever learn to speak fluidly about your background and skills in a fashion guaranteed to impress the interviewer. So, why not kill two birds with one stone—prepare for the interview by preparing a resume that will open all the right doors for you.

Interestingly enough, the majority of interviewers accept the contents of a resume as fact. Additionally, a good number of interviewers base all their questions on the resume content: This means that in a very real way you can plan and guide the course of the majority of your interviews by preparing an effective resume.

Those without resumes are forced to reveal their history on a job application form, which does not always allow the perfect representation of skills, and which gives the interviewer no flattering starting point from which to base the interview questions.

In addition to helping you get your foot in the door and easing the course of the interview, your resume will be your last and most powerful advocate. After all the interviewing of all the candidates is done, how do you think the interviewers review and evaluate all the contenders? They go over their notes, application forms, and the resumes supplied by the job candidates. You will want to make it something powerful and positive.

Finally, the preparation of a good resume has the broad, intangible benefit of personal discovery. You may find, as you answer some of the questions in Chapter Four, that your experience is deeper than you imagined, that your contributions to previous employers were more important than you thought. You may look on your career direction in a new light. And you may see your value as a solid employee increase. You will gain confidence that will be important for not only a good performance at the interview, but your attitude toward the rest of your career.

No sane person will tell you that resume writing is fun, but I will show you the tricks of the trade, developed over the years by executive recruiters and professional resume writers, that make the process easier.

What makes this book truly different is that the resume examples in it are all real resumes from real people, resumes that recently landed them real jobs in "in-demand" professions. They were all sent to me by employment specialists from around the nation. For example, the healthcare examples were screened initially by professional healthcare recruiters, those in data processing by computer recruiters. And these are the pros on the firing line, who know what works and what doesn't in today's business marketplace.

RESUMES THAT KNOCK 'EM DEAD

You will find everything you need to make resume writing fast, effective, and painless. Just follow my instructions, and in a few hours you'll have a knock-out resume and never have to read another word about the damn things as long as you live. With that in mind, do it once and do it right—you'll generate a top-flight resume without knocking yourself out!

So now, for your delight and edification, we'll review the marks of a great resume: What type of resume is right for you, what always goes in (and why), what always stays out (and why), and what might go in depending on your special circumstances. This is followed by countless resume examples and a "painting-by-numbers" guide that makes resume writing easy for anyone!

With the changing times and circumstances, there are few rigid rules for every situation. So in those instances where there are exceptions, I'll explain them and your choices. The judgment call will be yours. And when you are finished, you will have one of the very best resumes, one that will be sure to knock 'em dead.

Chapter Two: Three Ways to Sum Yourself Up

"Give me a moment of your busy day! Listen to me, I got something to say!" That's what your resume must scream—in a suitably professional manner, of course. *Not* in the manner of the would-be retail clothing executive who had his resume "hand-delivered"... attached to the hand and arm of a store window mannequin.

As it happened, that was only the first surprise in store for the personnel director who received the delivery: The envelope was hand-decorated in gothic script; the cover letter inside was equally decorative (and illegible); the resume writer had glued the four-page resume to fabric, and stitched the whole mess together like a child's book. The crowning glory, however, was yet to come: All the punctuation marks—commas, colons, periods and the like—were small rhinestone settings. Yes, it got noticed, but its success had to depend entirely on the recipient's sense of humor—which in this case was most noticeable in its absence.

Here's the point: trying to do something out of the ordinary with any aspect of your resume is risky business indeed. For every interview door it opens, at least two more will be slammed shut.

The best (and most business-like) bet is to present a logically displayed, eye-appealing resume that will get read. That means grabbing the reader right away—on that first page. And that's one big reason for short, power-packed resumes.

We all have different backgrounds. Some of us have worked for one company only, some of us have worked for eleven companies in as many years. Some of us have changed careers once or twice, some of us have maintained a predictable career path. For some, diversity broadens our potential, and for some concentration deepens it. We each require different vehicles to put our work history in the most exciting light. The goals, though, are constant:

- To show off achievements, attributes, and cumulation of expertise to the best advantage.
- To minimize any possible weaknesses.

Resume experts acknowledge just three essential styles for presenting your credentials to a potential employer: Chronological, Functional, and Combination (Chrono-Functional). Your particular circumstances will determine the right format for you. Just three styles, you say? You will see resume books with up to fifteen varieties of resume style. Such volumes are, alas, merely filling up space; in the final analysis, each additional style such books mention is a tiny variation on the above three.

The Chronological Resume

This is the most common and readily accepted form of presentation. It's what most of us think of when we think of resumes—a chronological listing of job titles and responsibilities. It starts with the current or most recent employment, then works backwards to your first job (or ten years into the past—whichever comes first).

This format is good for demonstrating your growth in a single profession. It is suitable for anyone with practical work experience who hasn't suffered too many job changes or prolonged periods of unemployment. It is not suitable if you are just out of school or if you are changing careers. The format would then draw attention to your weaknesses (i.e., your lack of specific experience in a field) rather than your strengths.

The exact content of every resume naturally varies depending on individual circumstances. A chronological resume usually incorporates six basic components.

- *Contact Information*
- *A Job Objective*
- *A Career Objective*
- *A Career Summary*
- *Education*
- *A Description of Work History*

This last item is the distinguishing characteristic of the chronological resume, because it ties your job responsibilities and achievements to specific employers, job titles, and dates.

There are also some optional categories determined by the space available to you and the unique aspects of your background. You will see these in Chapter Three.

The Functional Resume

This format focuses on the professional skills you have developed over the years, rather than when, where or how you acquired them. It de-emphasizes dates, sometimes to the point of exclusion. By the same token, job titles and employers play a minor part with this type of resume. The attention is always focused on the skill rather than the context or time of its acquisition.

In many ways, the content of the functional resume is similar to the chronological type. Only the approach is different. It is a case not so much of what you say, but of how you say it.

This functional format is suited to a number of different personal circumstances, specifically those of:

- Mature professionals with a storehouse of expertise and jobs;
- Entry-level types whose track records do not justify a chronological resume;
- Career-changers who want to focus on skills rather than credentials;

THREE WAYS TO SUM YOURSELF UP

- People whose careers have been stagnant or in ebb, who want to give focus to the skills that can get a career under way again, rather than on the history in which it was becalmed in the first place;
- Military personnel embarking on a civilian career;
- Those returning to the workplace after a long absence;
- People closer to retirement than to the onset of their careers.

The functional resume does present a major challenge for the writer. Because it focuses so strongly on skills and ability to contribute in a particular direction, you must have an employment objective clearly in mind. When this is achieved, such a resume can be very effective. Without this focus, however, or if you are looking for "a job, any job," this format loses its direction and tends to drift without purpose.

Though a functional resume is a bit more free-form than a chronological one, there are certain essentials that make it work. In addition to contact information and a job and/or career objective, these would include the elements listed below.

- ***A Functional Summary.*** Different skills are needed for different jobs, so the functional summary is where you make the tough decisions to determine what goes in and what stays out. Consider the case of an executive sales secretary bored with her job but challenged by the excitement and money the sales force is enjoying. She will want to emphasize those abilities that lead to success in sales, such as written and verbal communication skills, and time management. On the other hand, she will almost certainly leave out references to her typing and shorthand abilities, because these skills no longer contribute to her new goals.
- ***Dates.*** Strictly speaking, a functional resume needn't give dates. Up until a couple of years ago, you could still sometimes get away with omitting them. That is no longer the case. Today, a resume without dates waves a big red flag at every employer in the land. So, what if your employment history doesn't have all the stability it might? The functional resume is perfect for you, because dates can be de-emphasized by their placement. You put them at the end of the resume, or perhaps on a second page, for example, in a small block of type; and you use year dates omitting the details of day, week, and month. The idea is to force the reader's attention to your skills, not your history.
- ***Education.*** The inclusion of education and other optional categories, determined by the space available to you and the unique aspects of your background. As I pointed out a little earlier, you will see them in Chapter Three.

The Combination Chrono-Functional Resume

For the upwardly mobile professional with a track record, this is becoming the resume of choice. It has all the flexibility and strength that come from combining both the chronological and functional formats. If you have a performance record, and are on a career track and want to pursue it, then this is the strongest resume tool available. This format, in addition to contact information and a job objective, incorporates a number of identifying factors, outlined below.

- *A Career Summary.* The combination resume, more often than not, has some kind of career summary. Here you spotlight a professional with a clear sense of self, a past of solid contributions, and a clear focus on future career growth. The career summary, as you might expect, will include a power-packed description of skills, achievements, and personal traits that fairly scream "Success!"
- *A Description of Functional Skills.* This is where the combination of styles comes into play. Following the summary, the combination resume starts out like a functional resume and highlights achievements in different categories relevant to the job/career goals, without any reference to employers.
- *A Chronological History.* Then it switches to the chronological approach and names companies, dates, titles, duties, and responsibilities. This section can also include further evidence of achievements or special contributions.
- *Education.* Then come the optional categories determined by the space available to you and the unique aspects of your background.

One of these styles is perfect for you. Pick one, and in the next chapter we'll begin to fill it in with the resume basics.

Chapter Three:

The Basic Ingredients

It used to be that there were just a few set rules for writing a great resume. Everything was simple—you did this, you didn't do that. Now, however, many of the jobs for which those rules were made no longer exist—so many of the traditional hard and fast rules no longer apply. New technologies are creating new professions overnight, and, with them, new career opportunities. The content of these new professions and careers is dramatically different from the employment world of a few short years ago. Times and the rules of the game have changed, and these changes require that we adopt a modern and flexible approach to resume writing.

What used to be strictly off-limits in all resumes is now acceptable in many and required in some (the need for technical jargon to explain skills, for example, comes to mind). Elements that were once always included, such as the mug shot, are now frowned upon in almost every instance. And so it goes on; creating a fog of confusion for everyone. What are the rules?

Today, writing a resume can be likened to baking a cake. In most instances, the ingredients are essentially the same. What determines the flavor is the order and quantity in which those ingredients are blended. There are certain ingredients that go in to almost every resume. There are others that rarely or never go in, and there are those special touches that are added (a pinch of this, a dash of that), depending on your personal tastes and requirements.

Sound complicated? It really isn't. This chapter will explain it all. If a certain ingredient must always go in, you will understand why; the same goes for something that should never appear in your resume. In circumstances where the business world holds conflicting views, these views will be explained so that a reasoned judgment can be made. In these instances you will always get my reasoned opinion, based on my extensive experience and contact in the human resources field.

First, let's look at the ingredients that are part of the mix of every successful resume.

What Must Always Go In Name

We start with the obvious, but there are other considerations about your name besides remembering to put it on your resume. Give your first and last name only. It isn't necessary to include your middle name(s). My name is Martin John Yate—it says so on all my books—but my resume says simply Martin Yate, because that is the way I would introduce myself in person. Notice also that it isn't M. J. Yate, because that