

DESIGN & PRESENTATION |

The 2 Page vs 1 Page Debate

The idea that your resume **MUST** be one page and no more is an antiquated myth. The length of your resume should reflect the amount of relevant information needed to effectively communicate your qualifications and potential. In most cases, unless you are an executive-level candidate, your resume should be no more than 2 pages, otherwise you risk losing the attention of your reader. But also be wary of cramming 2 pages worth of information into your document if it isn't entirely necessary. In other words, you don't want a quarter page of actual professional experience, followed by an entire page of just volunteer activities and memberships.

Avoid Overuse of Formatting Elements

Bolds, italics, caps, and underlines should be used conservatively, and reserved for introductory or key information, such as job titles, company names, and lines that denote new sections of information, such as *Key Accomplishments*, or **ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE**. Also be wary of cramming your document full of bullet points, and making it difficult to read. Very long job descriptions might benefit from a more split format, where you start with a paragraph-style summary followed by bulleted key points or highlights of your role. And only use bullets for sets of information including 2 or more points.

Create With the User Experience in Mind

I like to approach resume writing using basic design and user experience principles. And by "User Experience", I'm referring to the actual experience someone goes through while reading through your document. Is the branding message clear throughout? Are their eyes tempted to jump unnaturally throughout the page because you have too many bolds or italics? Are they skimming too liberally through the information because it's overly wordy, or too information heavy? Put yourself in their shoes and think about 1) how they will experience reading your resume, and 2) what conclusion will they be left with after reading it.

Color Is Sometimes Okay, When Used Appropriately

Color can be used to add a little extra visual oomph to the resume, when used conservatively and appropriately. The same way you might think about what colors to use for a logo or a website, think about what colors jibe well with your industry or target market. If you're in financial services wherein a more conservative approach is typically appropriate, it won't do you well to have a resume busting with bright colors. But if you're a creative, or in another field, perhaps presenting your name in a not-overpowering color can help it stand out. Additionally, you can experiment with different values of grays for your name, headlines, contact info and subject headers. Stick to one color scheme, and again, use it conservatively. Body text should always be black.

Avoid Unnecessary Imagery

Unlike a CV, a resume should not typically include a personal photo, as it has a much more formal tone than a CV in that a resume does not address any personal information such as birth date, marital status, nationality, or the like. The only exception might be if you are a non-citizen and have work visa, or require sponsorship, as these are important details. Additionally, avoid adorning your resume with background images, watermarks, or any kind of flashy design that doesn't add to the value of the document. There isn't anything wrong with using a designed template per se (or creating one, if you're a designer), as long as it doesn't distract or detract from the message and the presentation of the information.

Rules for Typography & Sizing

The rule that you shouldn't go below 12 point font in a document is also antiquated, and it's important also to note that point sizes vary slightly between different fonts. In most cases, between 10pt and 11pt font is acceptable, without looking like you're trying to fill space, or conversely, prompting your reader to use a magnifying glass to read your resume. Fonts that generally work well for resumes and translate easily between different operating systems and software versions include:

Arial

Baskerville

Courier

Garamond

Georgia

Helvetica

Palatino

Times New Roman

Trebuchet

Verdana

COMMUNICATION |

Get Me to Read Your Email: Start With a Compelling Subject Line

The idea is to entice your audience to want to open your email and find out more information about you. Write a compelling and original subject line to your email that incorporates your name, the position you are applying to, and 2-3 additional words as a “pre-sell” to compel me to open your email.

Example: *Dana L Leavy – Experienced & Innovative Career Coach*

Get Me to Read Your Resume: Utilize the Body of the Email

Use the body of your email as your cover letter, even if it's a shortened version. Introduce yourself, reiterate what position you are applying to, and then sell yourself in a few sentences as to why you are qualified enough so that they should continue on to read your resume. The idea here is to pique their initial interest and get them to want to continue on and read your resume attachment.

Invite a Response in Your Email or Cover Letter

Instead of closing your cover letter or email with the default “*I look forward to your response at your earliest convenience*”, direct them to the best way to reach you and suggest next steps. Provide information about your availability to interview and start in the role (especially if you are a non-local candidate). Make sure your contact information appears on both your cover letter (or email) and your resume.

Example: *“I would love the opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you in more depth. I am available immediately to interview, and start within two weeks. I can be reached at dana@bklynresumestudio.com or at 617-312-7892. I look forward to discussing next steps.”*

LOGISTICS |

Save Your Resume in the Right File Format

Keep in mind that not all file extensions may be compatible with every computer. The most acceptable formats are Microsoft Word (.doc) or PDF. Be careful of sending an Office XP document (.docx) as it may not open correctly on some computers. Similarly, do not send a text resume (.txt) unless specifically asked, as it is harder to read. You can also paste the resume in the body of the email below your introduction or cover letter, to ensure against any potential problems with an attachment.

Title Your Resume Effectively

When you save your resume file, do not simply name it "resume.doc". There is nothing compelling about that, it lacks professionalism and your audience has to go the extra step to rename it as your name if they want to save it to their hard drive. Name it with your first and last name, and the word "Resume". I advise including "Resume" in there as well because it separates it out from any other documents you might have – a cover letter, recommendations or samples of your work.

Example: *Dana Leavy – Administrative Resume - April2011*

For Additional Tips & Resources Visit www.bklynresumestudio.com