by Katharine Hansen, Ph.D.

Here are the keys to successfully preparing and writing a strong and focused job-search resume. Following these simple rules and guidelines (key do's and don'ts) should help job-seekers achieve success in this important phase of job-hunting.

- **Do** read our detailed Frequently Asked Questions About Resumes: The Complete Job-Search Resume FAQ if you have questions about resume writing and preparation.

- And **do** review some of the many no-cost professional resume samples we have published here: Sample Job-Seeker Resumes for Job-Seekers in Various Professions. It never hurts to see what a strong resume looks like before tackling your own.

- **Do** consider a bulleted style to make your resume as reader-friendly as possible.

- **Don't** get overwrought about the old "one-page resume rule." It's good to keep your resume to one page, if possible, but if you have a lot of experience, two pages may be more appropriate. If your resume spills beyond one page, but you have less than a half a page of material for the second page, it may be best to condense to one page.

- But preferably **don't** go beyond two pages with your resume -- even if you are an executive job-seeker; resumes are trending shorter these days. (Academics, doctors, researchers, and others who use CVs rather than resumes do not have to pay attention to the page-length rule.)

- **Do** consider a resume design that doesn't look like everyone else's. Many job-seekers use Microsoft Word resume templates. There's nothing wrong with them, per se, but your resume won't look distinctive if you use one; it will look like the resume of everyone else who used a Word template. These templates can also be a bit inflexible to work with.

- **Don't** use justified text blocks; they put odd little spaces between words. Instead, make your type flush left.

- **Don't** ever lie on your resume.

- **Do** include ways to contact you -- Website address/URL (if available), city and state only (no street address), a single phone number (no second/third number, no fax number), and a single email address. While job-seekers were once advised to include as much contact information as possible, the emerging trend is for for minimal contact information, in part because of identity theft.

- **Do** give your resume as sharp a focus as possible. Given that employers screen resumes for as few as 6 seconds, you need a way to show the employer at a glance what you want to do and what you're good at.

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- **Don't** use personal pronouns (I, my, me) in a resume.

- **Do** list your job information in order of importance to the reader. In listing your jobs, what's generally most important is your title/position. So list in this preferred order: Title/position, name of employer, city/state of employer, dates of employment.

- **Don't** leave out the locations of your past jobs (city and state). This information is expected, but many job-seekers unwittingly omit it.

- **Do** list your jobs in reverse chronological order.

- **Don't** mix noun and verb phrases when describing your jobs. Preferably, use concrete action verbs consistently.

- **Do** avoid the verb, "Work" because it's a weak verb. Everyone works. Be more specific. "Collaborate(d)" is often a good substitute.

- **Do** think in terms of accomplishments when preparing your resume. Accomplishments are so much more meaningful to prospective employers than run-of-the-mill litanies of job responsibilities.

- **Don't** use expressions like "Duties included," "Responsibilities included," or "Responsible for." That's job-description language, not accomplishments-oriented resume language that sells.

- **Do** emphasize [transferable skills,](#) especially if you don't have much experience or seek to change careers.

- **Do** quantify whenever possible. Use numbers to tell employers how many people you supervised, by what percentage you increased sales, how much money you saved, how many products you represented, etc.

- **Don't** emphasize older experience on your resume. Include your jobs that are more than 15 years old, but list them in bare-bones fashion (title, employer, location) with or without dates of employment. You may want to title this section Previous Professional Experience.

- **Don't** emphasize skills and job activities you don't want to do in the future, even if they represent great strengths for you. In fact, you may not even want to mention these activities. Why describe how great your clerical skills are if you don't want to do clerical work in the future?

- **Do** remember that education also follows the principle about presenting information in the order of importance to the reader; thus the preferred order for listing your education is: Name of degree (spelled out: Bachelor of _____) in name of major, name of university, city/state of university, graduation year (unless you graduated more than about 15 years ago), followed by peripheral information, such as minor and GPA. If you haven't graduated yet, list your grad year anyway. Simply by virtue of the fact that the date's in the future, the employer will know you don't have the degree yet. If you're uncomfortable listing your future grad date, you can say, for example, "expected May 2014."

- **Don't** list high school (unless you're still a teenager)!

- **Don't** include on your resume your height, weight, age, date of birth, place of birth, marital status, sex, ethnicity/race, health, social security number (except on an international resume), reasons for leaving previous job(s), names of former supervisors, specific street addresses or phone numbers of former employers, picture of yourself, salary information, the title "Resume," or any information that could be perceived as controversial, such as religion, church affiliations, or political affiliations.