

Resume Writing - When You Must Use a Paper Resume

As much as we would like it to, old fashioned paper has not yet gone away totally. Until it does, paper quality, color and handling still matter for those times when you need to submit a hardcopy resume and cover letter.

Your objective when submitting hardcopy is twofold:

1. Convey a professional image.
2. Make your documents be noticeable from the heap.

Weight

A decent weight paper (± 30 pound) imprinted with non-smudging laser ink (and not from a near-empty cartridge) should accomplish both of these objectives.

Color

Brilliant white is most prudent, but if you insist on using a different color, try not to go beyond very light off-white colors. Days of parchment color paper and shades of darkish gray are long-gone.

Handling

Though you are not a model submitting an 8x10 headshot, treat your resume with equal care. If you are mailing it, use a large envelope; do not fold it. If you are personally handing it to the interviewer, make sure you always have a separate folder with several unfolded, crisp copies. Mail / offer at least two copies, because it will reduce the chances of your good quality documents being photocopied and circulated with poorer quality.

And if you are a model submitting a comp card or an 8x10 headshot with your resume imprinted on the back, use a cardboard insert and mark the envelope - "Photo - Do Not Bend."

Fastening

Longstanding advice has always been never to staple, but we are seeing this as less of an issue nowadays. If you mail a two page resume unfastened, there is a good chance that the receiver will staple the pages together before dropping it in the recruiter's inbox.

Consider using a premium, corrosion-resistant or vinyl-coated paper clip in lieu of stapling resumes that exceed a single page.

Do not clip or staple your cover letter to the resume.

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Non-electronic resumes and cover letters should not be too ostentatious, unless of course you are applying to an unusual challenge like Ben & Jerry's 1995, "Yo. I'm Your CEO!" contest, for those of us who remember the novelty search where applicants were instructed to submit a 100 word essay along with the lid of their favorite Ben & Jerry's flavor. Over 20,000 applicants submitted aspiring CEO essays, some even written on sheet cakes.