

PROS AND CONS OF THE TWO-PAGE RESUME:

How to Use the Advantages and Avoid the Traps

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Like many people, you may be wondering if a two-page resume is right for you. Intuitively, it seems a lot easier to write a one-page resume. After all, that could simply encompass a brief listing of your jobs, job titles, and duties and responsibilities, as well as education and training. Unfortunately, such a simple "listing" does little to separate you from the crowd of other applicants vying for the same positions.

Consider the following pros and cons of a two-page resume. Such a resume could serve your goal of making a stellar first impression and landing interviews faster, provided you make good use of the advantages (pros) and avoid the pitfalls (cons).

Pros (Advantages) of a Two-Page Resume

1. Wide Open Spaces

With a two-page resume, you have SPACE to develop and customize an intriguing document containing full-bodied accomplishments in relevant skill areas required for the job. These related accomplishments, that show your branding differentiation, can arise from your current and previous jobs, as well as your community involvement, leadership, education and training, and professional affiliations.

Rule of thumb: the bulk of accomplishments need to be within the most recent 10-12 years. A short reference to earlier accomplishments can be included if they are outstanding or show a common thread of functional skills essential to the applied-for job. Full-bodied accomplishments can be written in the following R-C-C-A-I format:

R – RESULTS (quantified) obtained by solving a CHALLENGE (problem)
C – CONTEXT of the situation (job and job title, scope of responsibility)
C – CHALLENGE (problem that you overcame to produce RESULTS)
I – IMPACT (what the RESULT means for the strategic Big Picture)

This format clearly shows the specifics (proof) that demonstrate you possess the functional skills you claim. Resumes now need to be more than just a laundry list of credentials, job history, and lists of duties and responsibilities you copied and pasted out of your past job descriptions. Your resume is your personal marketing brochure; it has to answer the potential employer's question: "Why should I hire you?"

2. Readability

A two-page resume encourages readable fonts (10-14 point size depending on the font), reasonable margins, and plenty of white space so the eye can "rest" and absorb content between blocks of text. How often have you seen a one-page resume crammed with information so tiny it can barely be read? Rule of thumb: Ask yourself, "How eager would I be to read such a jam-packed resume, especially if there were many more resumes from other qualified candidates?"

Another crucial piece of resume real estate can be accommodated in two pages: the branded Summary or Profile on the top of the first page. Make this meaningful to the employer by summarizing your key qualifications for THIS job and personal branding differentiating factors. An employer, short on time, can scan the Summary to gather an overview and will likely make the decision to read further if the Summary is compelling.

3. Keywords

The inclusion of keywords has become critical for resumes that are now scanned and emailed into resume databases for searches by employers. Keywords are nouns and noun phrases that describe the required and desired skills, credentials, experience, traits, and so on, that an employer may specify for a particular kind of job.

With a two-page resume, you will have room to increase the number of relevant required and desired keywords, and all their permutations. For example, you could say “Bachelor’s Degree”, “BS”, and “Bachelor of Science” to be sure the resume gets a “hit” no matter what keyword search string is used. Incorporate as many required (and desired) keywords as possible on the first page of your resume.

Cons (Pitfalls) of a Two-Page Resume

1. Fluff Factor

Padding the two-page resume with “fluff” just to fill up the space is the most common pitfall. Remember, an employer is most interested in what you have been doing in the last 10-12 years. That should occupy the largest amount of space on your resume. Careful development of the most recent 10-12 years experience and accomplishments, demonstrating your ability to solve problems, deliver results, and get along effectively with a team, will persuade the prospective employer that you could be a valuable (and productive) addition to the team. Your job in the interview is to prove the employer right!

Unfortunately, this kind of accomplishments-based resume development is not easy or straight forward. If you are attempting this on your own, you may not even recognize your own accomplishments or your personal branding edge. The assistance of an objective third party (or perhaps professional resume writer) will help you to identify and articulate the kind of “proof” required to make your case – both on the resume AND in the interview.

2. Overkill

Like a two-page treatise on one’s life, a two-page resume can invite “overkill” and wordiness. This is especially true if the resume is written with dense paragraphs (more than 5 lines long) or “machine-gunned” with multiple bullet points, one right after another.

Your resume, whether one page or two, needs to be:

- Focused and relevant to the sought-after job and target industry
- Well-organized with descriptive headers and white space
- Visually compelling (reserve bullet points for accomplishments)
- Clear, concise and containing quantified accomplishments

Rule of thumb: do not list everything you have ever done in great detail, going back to the dawn of time, if your career history exceeds 15 years. The amount of content should be formatted like an inverse pyramid, with the most recent experience taking up the bulk of the resume space, and then tapering down to very little (or no mention) on the resume the further back in time.

3. Burial Ground

Be careful of burying important information. For example, Education is often presented after Professional Experience. The reader (prospective employer) is forced to go to the second page to determine that information, often a requirement for the job posting. In addition, a keyword search of your resume in a resume database may not get to the bottom half of the second page. Many times, the search string asks for the first 60 keywords and then stops.

What if your MBA, a required keyword for your targeted job, appears at the very bottom of page two and nowhere else? How likely will it make the 60-keyword cutoff? Will the exclusion of that required keyword keep you out of the candidate pool? The remedy for this is easy: include any important required keywords in your Summary at the beginning of page one (e.g., CPA, Kellogg School of Management graduate or Master's Degree in Elementary Education).

You have heard it before and have probably experienced it already – this is a highly competitive job market. Your resume is the first step in positioning yourself as an exceptional candidate and winning well-deserved notice from a prospective employer. Make that first impression of your branded resume a memorable one by incorporating the pluses of a two-page resume and steering clear of the common mistakes that will deep-six your efforts.

If you have a relatively short career history (recent college graduate or entry-level worker), a one-page resume is probably sufficient. In any case, pay attention to the pros and cons of resume writing. You will be distinguishing your resume with top-notch content and marketability. One page or two, your resume will put you at the top of the “To Be Interviewed” heap and create positive spin for your candidacy.

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