



Design Ideas for Making Your Resume Pop

If you want to make a great impression, you have to understand your audience. So take a moment to put yourself in the shoes of the hiring manager you wish to impress. Now picture the desk in front of you and the towering piles of resumes.

How can one eager and able applicant stand out in a sea of competitors? It's a difficult task, but not impossible.

You've surely spent hours writing, editing, and proofreading your resume -- making sure it is clear, concise, accurate, and free of errors. **Hint:** If you haven't yet put in the time, stop right now and focus on the content first.

But how long have you spent on how your resume looks? While you may think that visual appeal is not so critical when it comes to resume writing, think again. You should seize every opportunity to catch the eye of the hiring manager (there are good ways and bad ways to catch someone's eye, of course, but more on that in a moment).

As your primary marketing piece, your resume says a great deal about you. A sharp-looking document shows that you have the ability to present yourself with professionalism and style. If you are applying for design-related jobs or positions requiring a flair for visuals, an attractive resume is even more important.

Resumes are often staid: White paper, black font, and nothing too fancy. In fact, most resumes are indistinguishable from one another in a sea of ecru vs eggshell (calling to mind the business card scene in *American Psycho*).

So, how can one stand out without going overboard?

1. Get it Together

Make sure your content is compelling first, then worry about the design and layout. While appearance can set you apart, it's hard to impress if you don't have substance to go with that style. Plus, it's a lot easier to work with a complete document. Otherwise, you may find yourself forced to re-do design and formatting work as you add or change positions or bullet points.

2. Use a Template

If you're not a designer and don't have time to spend on formatting, the fastest way to a good-looking resume may be through a template. You'll find some decent free resume templates through Microsoft Word. A quick search will lead you to a wealth of other options as well (these are [nice downloadable templates via Primer Magazine](#)). Of course, a lot of the other free resume templates out there are ugly and/or dated looking. If you go with a template, make sure that it follows all of the guidelines listed below.

3. Find a Great Font

Times New Roman is the go-to for many, since it is the default on Microsoft Word. However, your selection of font options is endless, free, and available all over the web. In fact, the choice can seem overwhelming. If you can't pick a favorite, your best bet is to stick with simple, thin fonts. There are a few pre-loaded on every computer. Great examples include Georgia, Book Antiqua and Tahoma.

All look great both on-screen and on the page, with clear and consistent spacing (something that Times New Roman doesn't have). Steer clear of fussy or dated-looking fonts at all costs ([Comic Sans is not your friend](#)). When it comes to font size, don't go any smaller than 9 points or larger than 12 points in the resume body. You want to remain easily readable and maintain a professional look.

4. Contact Information

Your name and contact information should appear prominently at the top of the page without exception. Think of it as the personal letterhead at the top of your professional resume. It should stand out, make a good first impression and gain credibility that will bring the reader in to the rest of your document. After all, you don't want there to be any confusion about how to respond to set up an interview.

5. Make It Skimmable

Remember that many hiring managers will first view your resume on the computer screen. People read differently on a computer screen than on paper. They skim and scan instead of reading every word. That means it's critical to make sure that your resume is skimmable -- and it should only take you a few minutes to make a dramatic difference in readability.

- First, clearly mark your headings. Each heading should be in whichever font you've chosen, but bolded or italicized, and 2 font points larger. This makes them easily identifiable for the hiring manager (or, in most cases, the recruiter or HR person responsible for first viewing resumes).

- Let the headings have some white space around them as well. A cramped resume is no one's friend -- and not very easy on the eyes.

- Keep your paragraphs and bullet point entries short. Big blocks of text can be off-putting.

- Selectively emphasize key words or phrases in bold. Don't overdo it, though. If too much text is bolded, nothing stands out.

- In general, avoid setting type in all caps. Because the letters start to look the same, words in all caps are harder to read. In small doses, text in ALL CAPS is acceptable, but only if you space out the letters.

6. Color is OK!

If wielded with a light hand, color can add a needed point of interest that will draw in the reader. A black and white resume is the norm, but adding one touch of color is not unheard of. Consider adding a different color monogram, or making your headings a dark blue instead of black. Keep in mind that if you're sending the resume electronically, the recipient may not print it out in color despite your intentions.

7. Don't Get Too Artsy

Even in the case of an artist or designer's resume, one should resist the urge to use any sort of clip art, confusing lines or borders, or fancy bullets. Your aim is certainly to stand out, but fancy extras only serve to confuse. A thin, simple border line under your name and address can serve as a nice divider, and further serve your aim to make the resume an easy read.

If your page looks overly cluttered and you don't have suitable margins, this can be a real turn-off to the reader. There is a fine line between appropriately stylistic and cluttered/overdone. Some great examples of simple but attractive resume designs can be seen at [JobMo](#). Artistically, it's best to err on the side of caution (especially if you're applying to positions at conservative companies), but do be sure that your resume stands out as a top of the line representation of YOU.

8. Link Them to Work Samples

Is the resume format too limiting for you? If you're a designer, writer, or other creative professional, you may benefit from going beyond the standard resume. If you really want to wow them with your creativity, use a link or [QR code](#) on your resume to direct hiring managers to an online portfolio. Let your talent speak for you by showing off your best work. Check out [Behance](#), [Carbonmade](#), or [Shownd](#) to quickly and easily set up an online portfolio.