

What is an Online Resume?

An online resume is a plain text document which can be sent through electronic mail or cut-and-pasted into online forms. It is done as an ASCII resume, which is identified by the .txt file extension. ASCII files are recognized by PC's, Macintoshes, UNIX Workstations, and mainframe terminals. Online resumes are becoming more popular as e-mail becomes a standard way of sending and receiving information.

Why do I need an Online Resume?

By creating an internet version of your resume, you have an immediate link to companies who are soliciting resumes via e-mail. It is simply the fastest way to contact a potential employer or networking contact. Frequently the companies who are calling for resumes want them in the form of a plain text document sent in the body of an e-mail message. Also, posting your resume in an online database for more exposure is much easier with an internet resume. Since many sites allow you to build your resume on their pages by cutting-and-pasting it into a form they provide, having your resume already prepared in plain text will quicken this process.

Can't I just send my resume as an email attachment?

Sending any attachments through email can be tricky, and the last thing you want to do is make a potential employer work to read your resume. There are many types of computer systems, increasing the risk that the program that you create your resume in will not be compatible to the computer of the receiver, making it impossible for them to open up the attachment. The online resume solves that problem as you import it directly into the text body of the email message. Its simple, plain text look is easy for employers to read through email.

How do I create an Online Resume?

Follow these hints to make your resume as flawless as possible:

ASCII Formatting. To begin with, you must make sure your text is formatted in standard ASCII text with line breaks. You should use only the standard ASCII character set:

- Letters A through Z, both upper and lowercase
- Numbers 0 through 9
- These punctuation marks: ! " # \$ % & ' () * + , - . / : ; < = > ` _ ~ '

The text must be saved as a text-only file through the "Save As" feature of your word processor. You must review your document after storing it to make sure that it doesn't translate some special characters into their ASCII counterparts.

Margins and Columns. The line length of your text should be sixty-five characters or less. This basically translates to a document with one-inch left and right margins created with a twelve-point mono spaced font. It also does not work well to use the often preferred two column format for resumes in ASCII format because it is hard to make two attractive columns out of line that is only sixty-five characters long.

Instead, using headings above text and indent the corresponding material slightly. Since tabs can be interpreted differently in different environments, use spaces instead to align the text horizontally.

Length. Even though college students are usually encouraged to have a version of their resume that fits on one page in the print world, ASCII formatting allows you to overflow onto two pages. However, unless you've been asked for a detailed resume, don't expand it beyond two pages.

Notepad or Text Editor. Open your "text only" file in Notepad or other text editor that you can cut and paste text into. Notepad lets you view your resume as it will most likely be viewed by the recipient. It will

indicate which parts are unsupported by ASCII characters, such as bullets or underlining, which you will need to replace with an equivalent. If you have long lines of text, use Notepad's word wrap feature, under the Edit menu, to enter "hard" returns that allow you to format the resume to meet specified margins. Finally, cut and paste the text of the resume into the body of a test email message, with a short cover letter pasted in the same message, and send it to yourself and a friend before transferring it on to potential employers.

Can I still customize an Online Resume?

The online, or ASCII, resume is done only in plain text. There is no special formatting, which is an adjustment from the current trend of writing resumes in multiple fonts on specialty paper. Since you cannot use bolds, underlines, or bullets in a plain text document, consider the following characters for substitutes:

1. bullets - use asterisks (*) or plus signs (+) at the beginning of lines.
2. lines - use a series of dashes to separate sections. Don't try to underline text.
3. bold text - consider capital letters or use asterisks to surround the text.

Also, don't try to highlight text with your resume, but highlight the headers or titles of each section using all capital letters.

Is an Online Resume confidential?

Since it is going to be posted online and be sent via email, your ASCII resume will not be confidential. You have the option of only including an email address or a post office box so that potential employers can contact you without the use of a personal phone number or address. However, since most employers still prefer to contact by telephone, you could hire a voice mail account during your job search. If you choose to post your resume, consider it a public document that is out of your control.

How does this differ from a Scannable Resume?

A scannable resume is one that is actually "read" by specially equipped computer hardware. The paper form is scanned and put into ASCII text format, which can then be distributed into a database. Key words and phrases can be searched for, and the resume is also summarized and ranked among other qualified candidates. With the online resume, you personally create it in the ASCII form, and then you are able to use it anytime resumes are called for electronically or to post it on the internet. Creating your resume in a standardized form that is widely recognized puts you a jump ahead of the competition.