PLAIN TEXT/SCANNABLE RESUMES FOR APPLYING ON-LINE

Now that the Internet and E-mail systems have become central parts of our lives, more and more employers are requesting that job seekers submit their resume via e-mail or copy and paste it into an on-line format. When sending your resume electronically, however, there are a couple of things to keep in mind. Many employers don't want you to send a Word document as an attachment. Sending attachments increases the risk of also sending a computer virus along, and secondly, the different email systems and different versions of word processing software may not be able to read each other's attachments. Be sure to follow the employer's instructions exactly. If the potential employer does not want you to send an attachment, you will need to create a plain text resume that you can copy and paste into the body of your email and that can also be used for copying and pasting into on-line application forms.

Scannable resumes

Although you will see the words 'scannable' and 'plain text' used interchangeably, their meanings are not exactly the same. Originally, 'scannable' meant that the employer was using optical scanners and other electronic devices to enable computers to 'read' your resume. Some employers still use optical scanners, but nowadays, your resume may be automatically filed into a database without having been read before it is stored. In that case, 'scannable' simply means that the resume is formatted so that it can be stored into and retrieved by a computer. Since computers read resumes in a different way than human beings do, you will need to adjust your resume in such a way that the computer can read every letter and character and will extract the important information about you, such as your name, address, phone number, qualifications, education and work history. Some computer systems are able to scan documents composed in Word; other computers can only scan Plain Text documents. Plain Text, or ASCII (pronounced ASKEE) is simply the language in which computers communicate. ASCII stands for American Standard Code for Information Interchange.

How to compose a Scannable Word resume

- Use the simplest format possible: no borders, no columns, no graphics, no shading.
- Use only standard fonts, such as Arial or Times New Roman, with a font size of no smaller than 10 and no bigger than 14.
- Justify (=line up) your text on the left.
- Use only standard, solid bullets. Open bullets may be read as an 'o'.
- Make sure your NAME is at the top of the page on its own line.

How to compose a Plain Text resume:

Start out by composing and saving a resume as a regular Word document. After re-opening it, you can save a second copy as plain text by hitting the "Save As" command on the File icon, and then on the bottom, under file name, it will say "save as type." Your computer is probably pre-set to save your file as a Word document, and you will scroll down until you see "plain text." You will need to give your plain text resume another name so as not to lose your original Word-formatted résumé. Saving it as plain text will probably take out most of your Word-type formatting (as it is supposed to do), but you may need to do some editing. Limit each line in your e-resume to 65 characters, since most e-mail programs wrap text around after that point. If you go beyond 65 characters, your "e- resume" will probably end up looking all chopped up. If you use a 12-point font and set both your left and right margins in your "page setup" at 1.4 inches, each line will be limited to 65 characters. Count the characters on the longest line to be on the safe side. If there are any tabs in your resume, you will need to take them out. **Don't use the tab at all in a plain text resume. Only the space bar should be used to separate or indent text.** Don't use columns or horizontal and vertical lines either. Essentially, you will only use the characters that are visible on your keyboard. For emphasis, you can use the asterisk key (*) or the dash (-), since you won't be able to use bullets. You may also want to use CAPS, for example for the different sections of information on your resume and to distinguish between your title and the name of previous employers.

Use "key-words" when describing your duties and accomplishments:

Your resume may not be read by a human, but may be immediately stored into a database that will be searched for appropriate position/applicant matches. **Make sure that you use industry and job-specific words on your resume, so that yours will be found in a search**. Carefully read want-ads and job descriptions to look for industry and function-specific words.

All resume guides of the past twenty years have encouraged people to use "action verbs" that show your accomplishments; words such as *administered, counseled, initiated, managed, trained*, etc. These words should still appear in your resume, but in addition you should think of some key words for the position, occupation and industry you are applying for, and if you have had that type of experience to make sure that these key words appear in your resume. **Key words are nouns, and the nouns you would use are the ones that are common to your profession**. You should include key words in a "Summary of Qualifications" section on the top portion your resume. You can then describe your experience using "action verbs" in the "Work Experience" section of your resume. Use some of the key phrases from each job you are submitting your resume for consideration.

Employers who file the resumes of prospective employees into a human resource database, use systems that are very similar to using a search engine such as Google or Yahoo when searching for information on the Internet. For example, some key words that are common to the profession of accounting are: general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, cash handling, reconciliation, CPA (Certified Public Accountant), B.A. Accounting. If an employer were looking for an accountant, he or she would simply type in the key words for the skills they would be looking for in an employee. Resumes that contain the 'right' key words will then pop up.

In order to write an effective keyword resume, you should be familiar with the key words that are used in the particular industry and/or position you are interested in. You can find some of those words in want-ads, in job descriptions, in books such as the Occupational Outlook Handbook, and on-line under occupation descriptions (for example in O*NET OnLine – http://online.onetcenter.org).

How to send a Plain Text resume via e-mail:

1. When sending an e-mail to a specific employer, copy and paste your entire plain text resume in the body of the e-mail. You want to start your e-mail with a brief cover letter, explaining why you are writing and announcing the presence of your resume further down in the e-mail. See the Cover Letters Handout for email cover letter tips.

2. When applying on-line via an employer web site, you can copy and paste appropriate sections of your plain text resume into the fill-in format. Highlight each section of your plain text resume, copy it and paste it in the appropriate space in the employer's fill-in-format. Make sure you follow any instructions about copying and pasting exactly.

Three things to consider when sending your resume via e-mail:

1. Try a test run. E-mail your resume to yourself (or a friend with a different e-mail system) to see how it looks on the receiving end, *before* you send it to an employer.

2. Include a brief cover letter, explaining your interest in the position and announcing that the resume follows the introduction. Unless the employer requests a cover letter as an attachment, let the first part of your email be your cover letter.

3. Unless the employer specifically forbids it, some people are sending two resumes at the same time: a plain text in the body of the email as well as an attachment. This gives the employer the opportunity of which format he or she prefers to read. If you're not sure what to do, you can always call the Human Resources department of a particular employer to ask which format they prefer.

Example of Plain Text/Scannable Resume

JANE SMITH
1701 Broadway Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98122
(206) 555-1234
jsmith@sccd.ctc.edu

Summary of Professional Skills
- Three years of office management, office support and customer service experience.
- Computer applications: MS Word, Excel, Access, Publisher, E-mail systems, Internet.
- Keyboarding speed: 60wpm.
- Electronic calculators, photocopy and fax machines; 10-key by touch.
- Experience with multi-line phone systems.

Education
A.A.S.-Business Information Technology, Seattle Central Community College, Seattle, WA
June 2001 - GPA 3.6.

Work Experience
ALLRITE INSURANCE   Seattle, WA   1/01-present
Administrative Assistant
- Manage front desk operations while providing administrative support for department manager and
five sales staff.
- Communicate with clients, resolving customer service problems and answering inquiries.
- Prepare correspondence, reports, spreadsheets and mailing lists.
- Schedule and confirm staff appointments.

ABBOTT COMMUNICATIONS   Seattle, WA   11/99-1/01
Office Assistant
- Prepared correspondence, forms and budget documents for advertising agency.
- Provided telephone support for 8 incoming lines.
- Compiled information folders for prospective clients and maintained files.
- Created and updated client mailing lists.

DATA-COM   Seattle, WA   10/98-11/99
Receptionist
- Greeted visitors and answered incoming lines for small data communications company.

Community Service
BRIGHTON ELEMENTARY   Seattle, WA   10/00-present
Volunteer Tutor
- Tutor 4th and 5th grade students in math and language skills, using a variety of teaching methods.