

You've found the job that you really want. You're sure that you're the best-qualified individual for the position. Now all you have to do is convince the person doing the hiring to select you from hundreds of applicants, all of whom believe they are equally as qualified as you.

You know that you have to find a way to make your resume stand apart from the others, your competition. But you may not know exactly what you need to do in order to fulfil this goal.

Perhaps you're sitting in front of your computer holding your head in your hands with your eyes popping out of your face and your mouth frozen in an "O" position. Kind of like a cartoon. Maybe you're so stressed that veins are popping out of your forehead, and you're frantically thinking, "Oh no! What to do! What to do!"

Well, maybe you haven't quite reached that state of panic. But seriously, there are several things you can do to get your resume past that first hurdle.

In order to get past that first hurdle, you need to go back to the basics. You need to understand exactly what the first hurdle is.

If a company places a job posting in print or online classifieds, they usually expect to receive many, many more resumes than they'll need. They also realize that probably 90 percent of those applications will be inappropriate.

Upper management really doesn't have the time to personally go through each and every application. For this reason, they'll get those not directly responsible for the hiring to go through the mounds of resumes.

The people who most often go through the first round of applications are usually assistants. The assistants who go through the resumes before they reach upper management's desk can often be referred to as "gatekeepers." This term, while not necessarily very flattering, can be quite accurate. The gatekeepers prevent any printed garbage from reaching the desks of busy upper management.

Assistants or gatekeepers are trained to quickly look for any disqualifying features that prove that a resume is unworthy of the attention of upper management.

You need to know about these disqualifying features if you want to increase your chances of your resume making it past the first hurdle.

1. Type your resume on good-quality, crease-free white paper. Make sure there are no ink smudges, no coffee ring stains, no smears of mustard from the hotdog you had for lunch as you wrote the resume. You've heard this hundreds of times, but unfortunately too many people send in dirty resumes or handwritten resumes enhanced with glittery marker. Their argument? They want their resume to "stand out

from the crowd." Well, do this and it's guaranteed to stand out. In fact it will stand out so much, a gatekeeper will cheerfully file it away under "G" (G for garbage) to someday be recycled into toilet paper.

2. Put your full name on the first line of the page in a clear, bolded, large font. Spell your name correctly. (Yes, it's happened where those sending in resumes check out everything, but the correct spelling of their names.) Make sure you include all necessary contact information. Cell phone numbers and pager numbers aren't always necessary. For example, if you're applying for a shelf-stocker position, really, why on earth would your potential employer need to know your cell and pager numbers? They're not your buddies wanting to chat to you at midnight!
3. Use a font size for the body of your resume that's 10 to 12 points in size. It's better to use the 12-point font because after reading just a few resumes, you can bet your life that the reader's eyes are getting tired and the person is getting sleepy.