

Converting Your Resume to Plain Text (ASCII) Using E-Mail in Your Job Search Correspondence

[for more complete information on preparing your resume and job search correspondence refer to the "Resume Writing" and "Cover Letter Writing" topics in the Virtual Career Center.]

The Internet offers an overwhelming array of information regarding vast amount of topics. While daunting, the Internet can be an important tool in your job search when it is managed correctly. Use your career goals to keep you focused when doing research. Talk to colleagues about key sites. And, keep your job search Internet work separate from your work.

STEPS FOR ASCII (TEXT ONLY) CONVERSION

An ASCII (Text Only) Resume can be opened and read by any computer user, can easily be forwarded through Email, and can easily be added to an Internet resume database.

(Adapted from Susan Whitcomb's "Cyber-Savvy Resumes" Chapter in *Resume Magic*)

1. Open the document you wish to convert to ASCII.
2. Set your left and right margins to 1 inch so that you have just 6.5 inches of text across the page.
3. Highlight the entire resume by pressing Ctrl+A. Click Format, Font; change the font to Courier and the font size to 12 point.
4. Click File, Save As; save the file as an ASCII/Text Only (.txt format) file under a new name. Exit the document.
5. Open the new document. Delete any coded formatting, enhancements, and graphics - underlining, italic, boldface, full justification, industry icons, monogram boxes and vertical or horizontal lines. Look for and replace "odd" characters with common characters.
6. Use keystrokes instead of bullets or other formatting to set off category headings. Avoid formatting bullets for visual appeal. When extending a series of characters to the right margin, limit the total number of characters on the line to 60 or 65.
7. Make it look like one page, even though the resume may fill 2 or 3 pages when printed. Remove the header information that would have appeared on subsequent pages of the resume. Keep key information near the top.
8. Add a section for keywords at the top or at the end of the resume. Keywords help increase the number of "hits" a resume will receive through a database search. Analyze job descriptions that you are targeting for common terms to use as keywords.
9. When adding the resume to Internet databases consider deleting the street address and use your Email address as the point of contact. This gives you more privacy and more control over how people contact you.
10. Save your changes. Make sure you maintain the file as an ASCII/Text Only (.txt format) document.
11. Email yourself a copy to see how the resume will look to the receiver. You can paste the text document into the body of the Email message or send it as an attachment.
12. You are now ready to share a printed copy with an employer who may scan the resume into a database, to cut and paste this resume into an Internet database, or to send the resume through Email to an employer.

USING EMAIL AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL

Email offers flexible and accessible communication. While the format of the business letter does not need to be followed, many rules of professional letter writing do apply.

- *Set up a non-work Email account* - In order to avoid the conflict between work time and time spent on your job search set up a separate Email account using an Internet Service Provider like AOL or a Web-based Email System like Hotmail.com or Yahoo.com.
- *Think before you write* - Is your purpose to network, gather information, or ask about a particular job opening? Knowing your ultimate goal in advance will help clarify your message.
- *Keep it short* - The more succinctly you present your purpose, the more likely you'll receive a prompt reply.
- *Use the subject line to your advantage* - Generic subject terms such as "details" or "reminder" fail to describe accurately the contents of your message and whether it's time sensitive. As a result, the employer may delay opening it.
- *Be considerate* - Use "please" and "thank you" even in brief messages.
- *Include an action step* - Unless you request a response, the employer may assume you're sending the message as an FYI. Clearly outline what type of reply you're looking for.
- *Proofread* - Apply the same business style you use in any written materials, and check carefully for grammatical and typographical errors.
- *Use Caution* - Email is not very secure. The Email you send can be saved and read at a later date and can be forwarded purposefully or accidentally to anyone with an email address. Don't write anything in Email that you don't want people other than your intended recipient to read.

JOB LISTING SITES

Several sites allow you to search a database of job leads for descriptions that match your preferences. Links to several career specific sites can be found at Virtual Career Center through the Other Job Posting Sites web page on "Job Search Tools".

LISTSERVS

Listservs are Email discussion groups that allow people who share an interest discuss that interest. These discussion groups differ in the degree to which they are moderated. An un-moderated discussion does not have to follow any guidelines while a moderated list has an administrator who pre-screens messages and/or provides follow-up when messages are inappropriate. Read any policies and procedures before signing up for a list or before posting a message to a group. It is important to follow any community etiquette guidelines that the discussion group may have established.

View a list of Listservs at <http://groups.yahoo.com>.