

Quick Basics For Writing A Good Resume

Today most search committees in Baptist churches begin their work by gathering resumes of prospective staff persons to be considered for their vacant position. As a candidate, your goal is to share your ministry skills and abilities in an effective way. How you present yourself in your resume can make a great difference in the final outcome of the search process. Since the initial impression is from your resume, it should serve one basic purpose – to create a positive first impression with the search committee. It must, therefore, be a carefully prepared document.

Suggestions on preparation:

1. Take the necessary time and effort. Prepare your resume so it will create the positive impression you desire.
2. Be brief. One or two pages (back to back) are the ideal length.
3. Be neat. The actual appearance of your resume may say as much to the committee about you as its content. Erasures and misspelled words detract from the quality of your resume. Do not over-crowd the material. Leave some white space for easy reading.
4. Skip the embellishments. Be accurate. Be certain all the information given is accurate and complete. Cast a careful eye over your descriptions to make sure they tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Double-check all the phone numbers and mailing addresses. Above all, be sure your name, address, and phone number is on the first page and your name is on all other pages.

What to include:

1. Contact Information. List your contact information at the top of the resume. Include your full name, mailing address, phone number and email address. If you have a personal website, include the URL if the site shows your skills or applies to your ministry goals. Be sure your name is on all other pages, normally in the top right-hand corner.
2. Photo. Use a small, (wallet size) color photo of excellent quality. Place it in the upper right-hand corner of the first page.
3. Other Personal Information. Include your date of birth, marital status, number of children and their ages, and whether or not you are ordained and/or licensed to the ministry.
4. Ministry Objective. The objective section gives committee members an immediate sense of who you are and what you're looking for, without forcing them to wade through the entire resume. What church staff position(s) are you seeking? Be specific. List the positions for which you are available in priority order. Stress what you'll add to their ministry, not what you're looking to achieve.
5. Education. Include only institutions from which you earned a degree and the date of graduation in that order.
6. Church Related Experience. List your experience chronologically, with your most recent job first. If your latest experience wasn't your most impressive, arrange your list by importance. Include the name of church, location, position held, and the dates of each experience. Also give a brief description of your accomplishments.

7. **Skill and Interests.** Today's churches are more tech-savvy than ever before, so make sure you mention your technical and computer skills. List programming languages, software programs and operating systems you've used as well as certifications you have. Don't forget "soft skills" like foreign languages.
8. **Include a Few References.** Select about four people who are well acquainted with you and your ministry. Get permission from them to use their names as references. State their names, mailing addresses, phone number and their position or relationship to you. Include at least one layperson on your list. If you run out of space, you could forego this section and state "references provided upon request".
9. **Include a Cover Page.** Churches like to know that you are genuine and real, but show some initiative without posing yourself as braggadocios or overly confident. Briefly express why you are looking for a new position. Then turn your focus on a summary statement that will speak directly to why you think this church should consider you as a candidate for this position. The entire cover page should be no longer than ½ page. Keep it brief, warm and personable.

Tips for a Better Resume

Emphasize your most important responsibilities even if they weren't your primary duties.

Use active voice. Strong sentences are those in which a person performs an action (active voice) as opposed to an action being performed on the person (passive voice). "I scheduled regular choir practices," is stronger than "Choir practices were scheduled by me."

Use cause-effect relationships and tangible results. Quantify your achievements with percentages and numbers like "increase Sunday School enrollment by 35% in three years" and "supervised a three-person staff".

Use strong verbs to highlight your sense of initiative. Present yourself as an initiator with verbs like, "launched", "supervised", "proposed", "managed" and "created."

Finishing Touches

Create several versions of your resume; each tailored to the type of position you're applying for. Writing multiple resumes can be time-consuming, but it's a small price to pay for the job you want.

Whatever job you are applying for, research the position and the church. Pay attention to the previous employee and things like annual statistics. Highlight your qualifications as they reflect on these things.

Use fonts that are easy to read, not overly creative ones.

Proofread your resume, Proofread your resume, Proofread your resume. Read, edit and re-read your resume to make sure it's well written, clear and typo-free. Read it again. Ask your friends and family to do the same.

If you use an online resume, consider saving one version as a text file (".txt") that will look good on any computer. Send your resume as an attachment file and also paste the text into the body of the email just to be safe.