How to Create a Plain Text Resume (With Template and Example)

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Formatting your resume properly is an important part of the job application process. At some point in your job search, you may be asked to submit a resume in plain text, If you are unsure of what a plain text resume is, it's a good idea to know what an employer is looking for when they ask for one. In this article, we explain what a plain text resume is and how to format one correctly with a template, example and tips.

What is a plain text resume?

A plain text resume, also known as an ASCII resume, is a resume written in a plain text file format (.txt). This means it has no special formatting like colors, special lines or multiple columns.

When do you need to use a plain text resume?

There are two main reasons you need a plain text resume: when an employer requests one and when posting a resume to a job board.

Many larger companies run resumes through scanners to sort them and store them based on keywords, especially when they receive hundreds, sometimes thousands of resumes for one position. The scanners work best without formatting. Companies also may require you to send your resume as plain text within the body of an email, because they have a rule for opening attachments, in case a virus is present.

If you are posting your resume to a job board, it may also be a good idea to submit it as a plain text file. When you upload a resume to a job board, a "bot" will extract the information from your file and upload it into the job board fields. When a resume has formatting, the bot will sometimes misplace information when it fills in sections, requiring you to go through and edit. If you upload a plain text file, the bots should organize the information into the correct fields. This will save you a lot of time and extra effort.

Before spending the time to create a plain text document, be sure to read the job description carefully for the format the employer wants. Some may want a formatted Microsoft Word document, some may require an attached plain text document and others may request for you to paste plain text directly into an email.

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