

Resume Checklist

Resumes are designed to get past gatekeepers. Recruiters and hiring managers spend about 6-7 seconds skimming a resume when they first see it. They are essentially pattern-matching for titles, key skills, locations, and software. Make it easy for whomever (or whatever Applicant Tracking System) to move you forward by focusing on the right information and making it easy to scan.

HEADER

- The top quarter of your resume is prime real estate; this is where people looking at your resume spend the majority of their time skimming. Make it count!
- Use the name you want to be called at work on your resume and use the same name in your email. (e.g. if your legal name is Abigail, but you've gone by AJ your whole life, use AJ.)
- Only include your city/state — there is no reason to include your home address; it opens up security and bias issues. If you're planning a move, write that instead of your current location (e.g. "Relocating to Portland, OR in Summer 2021").
- Create a custom LinkedIn URL and include it with your contact information.
- Use a business-appropriate email address (and make sure your email display name is correct too!).
- If your past job titles are confusing or not analogous to the role you're applying for, consider including a title at the top of your resume that acts as a thesis for the rest, and provides pattern-matchers with an easy match.
- Skip the "Objective" — obviously your objective is to get a job. Consider instead a "Profile" section with a small elevator pitch of your experience — no more than 2-3 sentences.

EXPERIENCE

- Your resume is a sales pitch, not an autobiography! Include the most recent and relevant details for the position you're applying to, rather than everything you've ever done — we typically suggest focusing on the last 3-5 roles or 10-15 years.
- Whenever possible, use quantitative details that highlight your specific achievements rather than just listing your assigned duties. Your resume should tell your story, not just the story of anybody who might do that job (e.g. "answered 10+ phone lines on Mitel system" vs. "acted as receptionist").
- Leave off or minimize space on job tasks that you really do not want to do in the future.
- Include context where necessary — if one of your past employers was particularly small, obscure, or located elsewhere, potential employers may not know what they do. One short line of text before you get into the bullet points conveying relevant context can go a long way: "New Jersey's largest widget manufacturer, employing 3,000 in NJ/NY/PA" or "A small branding firm with global clients and annual revenue of \$14M."
- Address any employment gaps longer than about ~12 months (there's no "rule" and the best practice may vary based on your industry). You don't need to go into a lot of detail. "Traveled the world" or "Took care of family" is enough to satisfy any curiosity.
- Significant volunteer experience can be included in experience — just because it wasn't paid doesn't mean it wasn't work.
- Unless you have a very, very good reason not to, use chronological format, starting with your most recent roles.

EDUCATION

- Unless you are a recent grad, your education should be placed *under* your work experience.
- Omit your GPA (unless required or relevant for your industry).

- It's "Bachelor of Science" not "Bachelor's of Science."
- If you're worried about ageism, don't feel like you need to include any graduation dates.

SKILLS

- Include technical skills and other "hard skills" rather than "soft skills". Hard skills are things that can be evaluated objectively, such as MS Excel, core competencies, or a typing speed. Soft skills such as "good communication skills" or "hard worker" should be demonstrated within the experience section.
- Include all relevant/required software, even if it seems obvious. "MS Office" may not suffice for a job that requires MS Access.
- Don't evaluate your hard skills (either qualitatively like "expert ability" or quantitatively like "90% Excel aptitude") — let the employers decide if you're an expert.
- Skills are common keywords, so use the job description to make sure you've included all the relevant skills someone skimming your resume is looking for.

OMIT

- Photographs! They trigger bias and take up a lot of space. Don't do it.
- Your references' names and phone numbers — this information should only be supplied upon request as references should not be called without your knowledge and consent.
- The statement "references available upon request" — it'll be assumed.
- Irrelevant personal details — this includes hobbies, which can trigger a lot of bias.

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Focus more on readability than flashiness — it's okay for a resume to be "boring." The goal is to clearly express your experience and abilities.
- Bullet points, no chunks of text larger than 2-3 lines, and white space throughout will help the eye track through.
- Consistency is key! Some commonly-missed details:
 - Use the same style of hyphen in every date range (and bonus — always align dates to right).
 - Make sure design elements are aligned together the same way from top to bottom.
 - To end bullets with periods or not to end bullets with periods? It doesn't matter as long as you're consistent!
 - Hyphenate words that ought to be hyphenated (e.g. "detail-oriented").
- Make sure that your resume can be read by an automated applicant tracking system — the final draft should have selectable text and your name should be written plainly in text at the top of the resume.
- Your resume can be two pages, but use space wisely — if there are only two lines on page two, find a way to reformat.
- Beware of resume templates. They're finicky to update, recruiters have seen them all, and they're often not easy to skim.
- Make sure that all content attached to your application is professional, relevant, and up-to-date, including your LinkedIn profile and any personal websites that might be associated with your email address or otherwise featured.
- Don't make your font and margins super tiny just to fit on one page. Size 12 font is usually safe. Headers can safely be a font size or two larger. Less than 0.5" margins is probably too small.

Looking for more resume tips, cover letter tips, interview advice, and more? We've got your back!
Visit our Job Seeker Resources page at bolywelch.com/jobseekers to learn more.