

Resume Best Practices: A Recruiter's Playbook

Craft a resume that lands interviews

1. Font and Format

- Use clean, web safe fonts such as Calibri, Arial, or Garamond, 10 to 12 point body, 14 to 16 point headings.
- Maintain one inch margins all around for easy reading and printing.
- Avoid text boxes or graphics because most applicant tracking systems ignore them.
- Save and send as PDF to preserve formatting, keep an editable Word version handy for quick updates.

2. Structure and Sections

- Contact information at the top, three lines max, include LinkedIn URL if it is optimised.
- A six line professional summary that answers, "Why you, why now?"
- Four to six core competencies as bullet points for instant keyword hits.
- Professional experience in reverse chronological order, group internal promotions under a single company heading.
- Move education to the bottom once three plus years out of school unless a credential must be prominent.

3. Content that Counts

- Lead with achievements, revenue growth, cost savings, market share wins, new product launches.
- Follow the Challenge Action Result formula, one line on the context, one on what you did, one on the measurable outcome.
- Mirror critical skills from the job description so recruiters see the fit in seconds.
- Use action verbs such as Drove, Launched, Negotiated, Exceeded, Streamlined.

4. Tailor and Tweak

- Reorder bullets so the most job relevant achievements appear first.
- Match job title wording if your internal title differs but role scope is identical, indicate the official title in parentheses.
- Run the posting through a free word cloud tool, be sure the biggest words appear naturally in your resume.

5. Proof and Polish

- Run spell check, then print and read aloud to catch errors your eyes skip.
- Wait a day, read again with fresh eyes.
- Have a trusted colleague proof for clarity, typos, and jargon.
- Replace weak phrases like “Responsible for” with strong verbs.

6. Length and Clarity

- One page is great for early career, two pages are normal for senior talent, three only for technical CVs with patents or publications.
- Use bullet points and short paragraphs, no more than five lines each.
- Keep tense consistent, present tense for current role achievements, past tense for prior roles.
- Avoid jargon and buzzwords that do not add substance.

7. Technical and Optional Sections

- List critical tools, software, or clearances near the top if essential to the role.
- Include relevant certifications, patents, languages, or board roles under separate headings.
- Remove outdated tech older than ten years unless the posting specifically requires it.

8. ATS and Keywords

- Use exact phrases from the job description where truthful.
- Avoid headers and footers for vital info, some ATS strip them out.
- Do not keyword stuff, place skills in context of achievements.
- Use standard section headings like Professional Experience instead of creative alternatives.

9. Design Do's and Don'ts

- Skip headshots, birthdate, and marital status for US roles.
- Do not include references, “References available upon request” is obsolete.
- Use a single bullet style throughout, consistency signals professionalism.
- If adding color, keep it minimal and accessible, dark navy headings are safer than bright graphics.

10. Quick Checklist

- Clean font and consistent layout.
- Action verbs start each bullet.
- Quantified metrics in every role.
- Resume is typo free after external review.
- Saved as PDF and file named Lastname_Firstname_Resume.pdf.