This is Canada

Your Ticket To The Interview

The Essential Guide to Writing Your Resume and Cover Letter

Introduction

You're ready to advance your career, but your resume isn't getting you the responses you expect. You apply to countless jobs, but the phone never rings. You know you're qualified—so why aren't employers noticing? The problem might not be you; it's your resume.

In most job applications, you're one of hundreds, maybe even thousands, of applicants for a single position. Recruiters and hiring managers are flooded with resumes, and they're not spending more than a few seconds on each one. Your resume is your first—and sometimes only—chance to make an impression. If it's not perfect, it's not getting you in the door.

What's worse, your resume might be falling into the black hole of an ATS (Applicant Tracking System), which means it's not even being seen by human eyes. Maybe you've spent hours perfecting the look of your resume, but all those fancy designs and graphics are working against you, not for you. Or perhaps you've kept it too simple, making it easy to overlook. Even worse, small mistakes— like typos—are immediately taking you out of the running for the role.

You're frustrated because your resume isn't showing the best version of you. And every time you hit "submit" and don't hear back, you wonder what you are doing wrong. Every application feels like a shot in the dark—it's time to shed some light on what really works. The following guide is based on researching recruiters and hiring managers to help you land your dream job.

The Solution

Your resume needs to be a perfect blend of ATS-friendly structure and eye-catching design. This guide will show you how to craft a resume that gets past the bots and impresses hiring managers — without spending hours on trial and error. Let's begin by discussing a resume ATS-friendly.

1. ATS-Friendly Formatting

First and foremost, your resume needs to get past the ATS. That means:
- Basic Fonts: Avoid decorative fonts; stick to clean, professional ones.
- No Text Boxes or Graphics: These often get garbled in ATS, so keep it straightforward.
- Columns: A single column layout is safest, though two columns can work if designed properly with no text boxes.

Fortunately for you, we have already designed your resume to be ATS-compatible. However, you now have to put in the work to make sure that your resume is targeted to the job that you are applying for. Include keywords from the job description which the ATS scanner will notice. Employers are looking for certain skills. So show that you have these skills!

Once you've ensured your resume can bypass the ATS, it's time to make sure the content stands out.

2. Tailor Your Resume

Each job is unique, and your resume should be, too. So, focus on 3-5 high-quality roles and customize your resume for each one. This is where a good resume template is invaluable—it keeps your formatting consistent while allowing you to tailor the content.

3. The Perfect Length

Another key to a strong resume is getting the length just right. Most resumes should be one page with 475-600 words. Exceptions include executive or academic roles, where more detail may be necessary. Use a 2 or more page resume for these applications. However, for most applicants, a one-page resume is perfect.

4. Eliminate Buzzwords and Clichés

Steer clear of overused phrases and irrelevant buzzwords. Use industry-specific keywords instead, especially those mentioned in the job description. Remember, the ATS scanner is looking for these words.

Overall, your resume needs to be a perfect blend of an ATS-friendly structure and compelling content. Now that we've covered the overarching principles, let's get into the details of how.to write each section of your resume to help you land that essential first interview.

Professional Branding

Your professional branding sets the stage for the rest of your resume, making the first impression count. It is your chance to create a strong first impression and show your unique value proposition. Your professional branding covers 3 sections of your resume.

A. Professional Title: Choose a title that immediately tells the hiring manager who you are and what you bring to the table. You have three options:

1. Use an impressive current job title.
2. Adopt the job title you're applying for if it fits your experience.
3. Create a custom professional title by combining a discipline and descriptor (e.g., "Innovative Leader").

B. Professional Summary: Craft a concise, four-sentence summary:

Sentence 1: Years in the Industry: Start with how long you've been in your field.
Sentence 2: Best Skills: Highlight your top skills.
Sentence 3: Great Accomplishment: Mention a significant achievement.
Sentence 4: Commitment to the Team: End with a statement that shows your dedication to collaboration and results.

C. Areas of Expertise: List the key skills required for the job you're applying for, focusing on industry terminology, relevant software, and technical skills. This section is essential for ATS scanners, so remember to use the exact keywords found in the job description.

Professional Experience

Your work history is the backbone of your resume. Here's how to structure it effectively and clearly:

- Job Title, Company, and Dates of Employment: Start each entry with this information, including the months and years. If you just include the year, this is a potential red flag to the hiring manager.
- Job Overview: Provide 1-2 sentences about the company (industry, relative size) and your high-level responsibilities.
- Key Accomplishments: Use bullet points to showcase your most impressive achievements. Each bullet should include:
  - Action Verb: Start with a strong action word.
  - Specific/Quantifiable Detail: Include numbers or metrics where possible. Ask yourself:
    - How many times did I do this?
    - How much did this make/save?
    - How many people did this help?
    - What were my measurable impacts?
  - Results/Impact: Explain the result of your actions—answer the "so what?" question.
  - For example: "Improved client acquisition by building a standardized model for finding prospects and turning them into clients. This increased our assets under management by $50 million."

Education

Your educational background should support your professional experience.

What to Include: List your degree, focus area, the school you attended, and the city and state of the school. Avoid listing your graduation year to prevent age discrimination. You may be overlooked for being either too old or too young. Avoid this by not including your graduation year on your resume.

Certifications

Highlight any certifications that are relevant to the job you're applying for. This can set you apart from other candidates.

Other Optional Sections

Depending on your industry or role, you might consider adding the following sections to your resume.

- Technical Proficiencies: List any specialized software or tools you're proficient in.
- Awards: Mention any awards or recognitions you've received.
- Languages: List any languages you speak fluently.
- Volunteer Experience: Include relevant volunteer work that highlights your skills or commitment to your community.
- Publications & Presentations: If you've written articles or presented at conferences, this is the place to showcase them. This is an essential section for certain roles, such as a university lecturer.
- Extracurriculars: Include any extracurricular activities that demonstrate leadership, teamwork, or other relevant skills. This is especially helpful if you are a recent college graduate.

The Bottom Line: Keep it Simple, Keep it Strong

Simplicity and strength: these are the hallmarks of a standout resume. Your resume is more than a list of jobs; it's a strategic document that should present a clear, compelling narrative of who you are and why you're the perfect fit for the role. With the right approach—and the right resume template—you can ensure your resume stands out in all the right ways. Let our design do the visual work while you focus on crafting content that will get you noticed.

Above all, be honest and consistent. Double-check for typos—these small errors can be deal-breakers. Many hiring managers will not interview someone with typos in their resume.

Let your resume tell a coherent story of your career, showing why your past roles naturally lead to the position you're applying for now. Remember, your resume is more than just a document—it's your personal marketing tool and the first step toward your next career opportunity. By implementing the strategies outlined in this guide, you'll transform your resume into a powerful asset that captures attention and opens doors.

COVER LETTER

As well as the resume, most job applications will require a cover letter. Paring an optimized resume with a well-crafted cover letter can be your ticket to securing interviews and standing out as a top candidate. This guide provides step-by-step instructions for writing a compelling cover letter.

Addressing the Letter

Personalize the letter by addressing it to a specific person. This can help you stand out in a sea of generic applications. If the hiring manager's name is available, use it. If not, address the letter to the managing partner or CEO.

Showing that you've done your research adds a personalized touch that can make a significant impact. Even if it's not to the exact individual who will read your cover letter, addressing it to a specific person shows that you have gone the extra mile.

Introduction: Setting the Stage

This is your chance to be interesting and make the hiring manager want to pay attention to your application. Remember, they are often reading hundreds of applications for just one role. You always have to remember to show them why you should be the candidate that they hire.

Now that you've grabbed their attention, let's keep them engaged. Begin by mentioning the job title and the company. Clearly state why you are applying for this role. Include a sentence or two about what excites you about the position. This demonstrates enthusiasm and a genuine interest in the role.

Research the company and mention a few key points that make it stand out in the industry. This could be related to their innovations, work culture, achievements, or commitments to particular values (e.g., sustainability, collaboration). Mentioning specific aspects shows that you have done your homework and are genuinely interested in the company, not just any job.

Body: Why You Will Be a Good Fit

By aligning your skills with job requirements, you can clearly demonstrate your fit for the role.

Equation Format: Present your qualifications as a simple mathematical education: you want these 5 skills + I have these 5 skills = we would be a great fit together.
Two-Column Format: Include the "Skills" on the left hand side and "Your Qualification" on the right hand side, as shown on the template.

Example:
Leadership: With over [number] years of leading teams, I have successfully spearheaded several projects, resulting in [specific achievement].

Identify Key Skills: Find out the five most important skills the hiring managers are looking for in the job description that you can prove that you have.

For the qualification, show undeniable proof that you have that skill by either stating how many years you have displayed this skill or provide an example of how you showed this skill.

To wrap it all up, your closing paragraph should leave a lasting impression. Thank the reader for their time and consideration.
Express your eagerness to discuss how your background, skills, and experiences align with the goals of the company.
Mention that you look forward to hearing about the next steps and express enthusiasm about the possibility of contributing to the team.

By following these steps, you'll create a cover letter that effectively communicates why you are the ideal candidate for the job. Writing with clarity, personalizing your letter, and providing concrete examples will significantly improve your chances of standing out and securing an interview.

If you have any questions about writing your resume or personalizing it to your needs, please reach out to us via direct message on Etsy

www.immigrantresource.ca