



PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE · RESUME WRITING

Professional Resume Writing & Review Toolkit

A step-by-step method for building an ATS-readable resume, writing achievement-based bullets, tailoring to a target job, and running a final quality check before you submit.

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What "ATS-readable" really means

An Applicant Tracking System (ATS) is software employers use to receive and organise applications. It is not a judge — it parses your file into fields (name, contact, titles, dates, skills, and text) and makes you searchable. Most ATS problems are caused by layout choices that break parsing, not by hidden scores.

A resume is ATS-readable when its text can be extracted cleanly in the intended order. You achieve that with a simple layout: standard fonts, standard section headings, a single column, and no content locked inside images, tables, or text boxes.

Scope and honesty. This is a general educational resource authored by Precious Ifediora. It shows a method and illustrative writing patterns — not a real person's resume, not a fabricated employment record, and not a guaranteed ATS score. No tool can promise a specific recruiter outcome. Use it on your own genuine experience.

PART 1

01 A clean, ATS-readable resume structure

Use this section order and formatting. It parses reliably and reads naturally for humans.

Recommended structure

Section	What goes in it
Name & contact	Name; city/country; email; phone; LinkedIn/custom URL. Plain text, no icons or photo (unless the market expects one).
Professional summary	3–4 lines naming your target role, years/level, specialism, and one proof point.
Core skills	8–12 keywords relevant to the target role, honest and searchable.
Experience	Reverse chronological. Employer, title, location, dates, then 3–6 achievement bullets per role.
Education	Qualification, institution, and dates. Add detail only if it is recent or directly relevant.
Certifications & projects	Optional. Include only if relevant and verifiable.

Formatting rules that keep parsing intact

- ☐ Single-column layout; no multi-column designs.
- ☐ No tables, text boxes, headers, or footers for real content.
- ☐ No text inside images; no icons standing in for words.
- ☐ Standard section headings: "Experience", "Education", "Skills".
- ☐ Standard, widely available font (e.g., Calibri, Arial, Georgia).
- ☐ Follow the employer's application instructions. Use PDF when it is accepted; provide .docx when the employer requests it or the system prefers it.
- ☐ Consistent date format throughout (e.g., "Jan 2021 – Present").
- ☐ File name: FirstName-LastName-Role.pdf.

Why it matters. A beautifully designed two-column resume with graphics can parse into nonsense: dates in the wrong order, titles split from employers, and skills lost entirely. Simplicity is not boring — it is findable.

PART 2

02 Writing a strong professional summary

The summary is your only chance to state, in the employer's language, exactly what you are and what you offer. Keep it to three or four lines.

The summary formula

FORMULA

- Line 1 — [Target title] with [years/level] of experience in [domain].
- Line 2 — Strengths in [2–3 specialisms] and [relevant tools/methods].
- Line 3 — One proof point: [quantified or clearly-scoped achievement].
- Line 4 — What you are seeking (optional): [target role / type of organisation].

Illustrative pattern (technique example, not a real person)

Weak summary	Strong summary
"Hardworking professional with excellent communication skills and a passion for excellence. Looking for a challenging role."	"Operations Manager with 8 years in logistics and process improvement across multi-site teams. Skilled in Lean, inventory systems, and cost control, with a record of cutting fulfilment errors and stock-outs. Seeking a senior operations role in a growing distribution business."

The strong version names the role, the level, the domain, specific skills, a defensible proof point, and the target — all in employer-facing language.

Tailor per application. Change line 1 and line 4 to mirror the exact job title and context in each job description. A summary that names the target role reads as a fit; a generic one reads as a mass mail.

PART 3

03 Skills selection & keyword alignment

Keywords are how the ATS and the recruiter both find you. Choose them from the job description, not from memory of your last title.

Extract the keywords

1. Collect 5–10 job descriptions for roles you actually want.
2. Highlight recurring **hard skills** (tools, techniques, systems), **job titles**, and **domain terms**.
3. Rank them by frequency. Your top terms are the ones to include.
4. Separate must-haves (appear in most ads) from nice-to-haves.

Where to place keywords

Location	Use it for
Professional summary	Your target title and top 2–3 specialisms.
Core skills list	8–12 searchable hard skills and tools.
Experience bullets	Keywords in context, showing how you used them.
Job titles	Standard, searchable titles rather than internal jargon.

Align honestly. Mirror the employer's language for skills you genuinely have. Never add a tool, qualification, or responsibility you cannot discuss in an interview — that is the fastest way to lose an opportunity you were qualified for.

Skills worksheet

Keyword from job descriptions	Frequency	I have it? (Y/N)	Where I will place it

PART 4

04 Turning responsibilities into achievement bullets

Duties describe the job. Achievements describe you. Convert every responsibility into evidence of impact.

The bullet formula

FORMULA

[Strong action verb] + [what you did] + [how / with what] + [measurable result or scale]

Illustrative patterns (technique examples)

Responsibility	Achievement bullet
"Managed a team of staff."	"Led a team of [n], introducing weekly performance reviews that lifted on-time delivery from [x] to [y]%."
"Handled budgets."	"Managed a [amount] annual budget, identifying [amount/%] in savings through renegotiated supplier contracts."
"Wrote reports for management."	"Built a monthly reporting pack adopted company-wide, cutting manual reporting time by [x] hours per month."
"Improved customer service."	"Redesigned the complaint-handling process, reducing average resolution time from [x] to [y] days."

Start every bullet with a strong verb

Examples: Led, Built, Redesigned, Reduced, Increased, Launched, Negotiated, Automated, Standardised, Recovered, Trained, Delivered.

If you lack hard numbers. Use scope and magnitude honestly: "across 5 sites", "for a 12-person team", "over two quarters", "company-wide". Accurate context is more credible than an invented percentage, and you can defend it in the interview.

PART 5

05 Tailoring to a target job description

The same experience, arranged for a specific role, outperforms a generic resume every time. Tailoring here means reordering and re-wording — never inventing.

Six-step tailoring procedure

1. **Mark the essentials.** Underline the must-have requirements in the job description.
2. **Match evidence.** Next to each, note where in your history you meet it. If you do not, do not fabricate — acknowledge and pivot to your closest strength.
3. **Rewrite the summary** to name the exact target title and top two requirements.
4. **Reorder bullets** within each role so the most relevant achievements appear first.
5. **Mirror the language.** Use the employer's terms for tools and outcomes where they match your real work.
6. **Trim.** Cut anything that does not serve this role. Relevance beats completeness.

Tailoring checklist

- ☐ Summary names the target job title.
- ☐ Top three job-description requirements are visible in the top third of the resume.
- ☐ Skills list reflects the job description's hard skills.
- ☐ Bullets are reordered so the most relevant lead each role.
- ☐ No irrelevant or outdated content left in.
- ☐ File name reflects the role applied for.

Time budget. Tailoring a resume to a strong role takes 20–40 minutes. That is a sound investment — but reserve it for roles that scored well on your target-role evaluation, not for every posting.

PART 6

06 Formatting & readability standards

Standards that keep a resume readable on screen, on paper, and inside an ATS.

Element	Standard
Length	1 page for early career (0–7 years); up to 2 pages for experienced professionals. Rarely more.
Font	One standard font throughout; body 10–12pt; headings slightly larger.
Margins	Consistent, roughly 1.3–2cm. Enough white space to breathe.
Line spacing	Single or 1.15; a clear gap between sections.
Bullets	Standard round bullets; 3–6 per role; one line or two each.
Dates	Right-aligned, consistent format, no gaps unexplained.
Colour & graphics	Minimal. Dark text on white. No photos unless the market expects them.
File format	Follow the employer's instructions. Use PDF when accepted; provide .docx when requested or preferred.
File name	FirstName-LastName-Role.pdf (no "final_final_v3").
Spelling	Match the market's convention (e.g., US or UK English) consistently.

The blank-page test. Toggle "print preview" or view at 100% zoom. If a recruiter skimming for six seconds cannot find your role, level, and two strongest achievements, the layout needs work — not more content.

PART 7**07 ATS-readability quality-control checklist**

Run this before sending. It targets the parsing and readability problems that quietly cost candidates interviews.

Parsing

- ☐ Text can be selected and copied (not an image or scanned document).
- ☐ Single column; no tables, text boxes, headers, or footers holding content.
- ☐ Standard section headings used ("Experience", "Education", "Skills").
- ☐ Dates and job titles sit together and in a consistent format.
- ☐ Contact details are in the document body, not a header.
- ☐ File is a text-based PDF or clean .docx.

Readability

- ☐ No spelling or grammar errors (read it aloud once).
- ☐ Role, level, and two key achievements visible in the top third.
- ☐ Bullets start with strong action verbs and show outcomes.
- ☐ No dense paragraphs; white space is consistent.
- ☐ Font size readable at 100% zoom and in print.

Accuracy & relevance

- ☐ Every claim is true and defensible in an interview.
- ☐ Keywords mirror the target job description honestly.
- ☐ No outdated or irrelevant roles dominating the page.
- ☐ Employment dates are accurate and gaps are not hidden deceptively.

PART 8

08 Final review worksheet before submission

Complete this for each significant application. It is the last gate before you press submit.

Application summary

Field	Details
Target role & employer	
Resume version / file name	
Top 3 requirements addressed	
Keywords added	
Date submitted	

Pre-submission sign-off

- ☐ Summary names the target title and matches this employer's language.
- ☐ Most relevant achievements appear in the top third.
- ☐ Skills section reflects the job description's hard skills.
- ☐ Every number and claim is accurate.
- ☐ Full ATS-readability checklist (Part 7) passed.
- ☐ Formatting is consistent and error-free.
- ☐ File name follows the convention.
- ☐ PDF opened and reviewed on a phone as well as a desktop.
- ☐ Correct version attached — not an old draft.

After submitting. Record the application in your tracker, note the follow-up date, and move on. One strong, tailored application plus genuine outreach will do more than ten rushed ones — and no resume, however good, guarantees an interview or an offer.

GENERAL RESOURCE

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