



COMPLIMENTARY RESUME GUIDE & TEMPLATE

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INTRODUCTION

This complimentary resume guide & template is not meant to be an in-depth analysis of every different job-search strategy, nor is it an essay on how to write the perfect C-level resume. Rather, it is meant to be a short, easy-to-follow, step-by-step guide to help junior and intermediate professionals create a simple and effective resume.

Before we begin, there is one important detail everyone must understand.

The only purpose of a resume is to get you an interview.

That's it. Please read that multiple times before continuing.

If a resume succeeds at getting you interviews for the positions you're after, then it is an effective resume. If it fails to do that, then it is not an effective resume.

In order for a resume to accomplish that, it does not need to be creative, original, unique, lengthy, comprehensive, or even compelling.

All it needs to do is tell the hiring manager or HR person that you're worth interviewing.

Legal Disclaimer: This complimentary resume guide & template does not make any promises or guarantee any specific result.

BASICS

Before you write a single word, get these basics right. They apply to every resume, at every level.

KNOW WHO READS IT

Your resume is usually read twice. First, many employers use an applicant tracking system (ATS), which is software that scans and sorts applications. Then a person reads it: a hiring manager, an HR person, or a recruiter. That person is busy, and on the first pass, they skim. Your resume has to be easy for both to read.

TAILOR IT TO THE JOB

Do not send the same resume to every job posting. Read the posting carefully and note the job title, skills, software, and experience it asks for. If you have them, make sure they are easy to find on your resume, using the same words the posting uses.

BE HONEST

Never exaggerate your job title, dates, education, or results. Employers check references, verify credentials, and ask detailed questions in interviews. One false claim can cost you the job, even after you have been hired.

KEEP IT SHORT

Junior professionals should aim for one page. Intermediate professionals should aim for two pages or less. If something does not help you get the interview, cut it.

KEEP A MASTER COPY

Keep one master resume with everything you have ever done. When you apply for a job, save a copy and trim it down to what matters most for that role.

PROOFREAD

Read it out loud. Then ask someone else to read it. Spelling and grammar mistakes are one of the fastest ways to get screened out.

FORMAT

A simple format wins. Fancy designs are harder for people and software to read.

LAYOUT

- Use this order: Name & Information, Overview, Summary of Skills, Education, Experience, References.
- List your education and experience in reverse chronological order, most recent first.
- Use bullet points for your skills and experience, not long paragraphs.
- Use one date format everywhere, such as January 2022 to Present.

FONTS AND SPACING

- Use one simple font, such as Arial or Calibri.
- Use 10 to 12 point for body text, 12 to 14 point for section headings, and 18 to 22 point for your name.
- Keep your margins between 0.75 and 1 inch on every side.
- Use black text on a white background.
- Use bold only for your name, section headings, company names, and job titles.

WHAT TO AVOID

- Photos, logos, icons, graphics, and skill rating bars.
- Tables, text boxes, and columns. Many tracking systems cannot read them.
- Contact information in the header or footer. Some systems skip those areas.
- Colours, unusual fonts, and decorative borders.

SAVING AND SENDING

Save your resume as a PDF, unless the employer asks for a Word document. Name the file with your name, for example: Jane-Smith-Resume.pdf.

SECTION 1: NAME & INFORMATION

This section sits at the very top of the page. It tells the reader who you are and how to reach you. Keep it to two or three lines.

INCLUDE

- **Your full name.** Use the name you go by professionally, and make it the largest text on the page.
- **City and province.** For example: Edmonton, AB. You do not need your full street address.
- **Phone number.** Use a number you answer, with a professional voicemail greeting.
- **Email address.** Use a professional address, ideally a version of your name. Avoid nicknames, and never use your current work email.
- **LinkedIn profile (optional).** Only include it if your profile is complete, professional, and matches your resume.

DO NOT INCLUDE

- A photo
- Your date of birth or age
- Your marital or family status
- Your Social Insurance Number
- Your gender, religion, or health information
- The word “Resume” as a title

In Canada, employers are not supposed to use this kind of personal information to make hiring decisions. Leave it off. It takes up space and does not help you get the interview.

EXAMPLE

Jane Smith

Edmonton, AB | 780-555-0123 | jane.smith@email.com | linkedin.com/in/janesmith

SECTION 2: OVERVIEW

The overview is a short paragraph right under your name. It is the first thing the reader sees, so it needs to answer one question fast: who are you, professionally?

HOW TO WRITE IT

- Keep it to two to four sentences.
- Start with your current or target job title and your years of experience.
- Name your main strengths, focusing on the ones the job posting asks for.
- If it helps, finish with the type of role you are looking for next.
- Write it last. It is much easier once the rest of your resume is done.

AVOID

- Objective statements that only talk about what you want, such as “Seeking a challenging role with room for growth.”
- Buzzwords with no proof behind them, such as hard-working, detail-oriented, team player, or go-getter.
- Writing in the first person. Leave out I, me, and my.

EXAMPLE

Intermediate Accountant with 4 years of full-cycle accounting experience in construction and professional services. Skilled in month-end close, account reconciliations, and year-end audit preparation. Currently completing the CPA Professional Education Program.

SECTION 3: SUMMARY OF SKILLS

The summary of skills is a short bullet list that shows, at a glance, that you have what the job requires. Many hiring managers and recruiters read this section before anything else.

HOW TO WRITE IT

- Use 4 to 8 bullet points.
- Make the first bullet your total years of experience in your field, for example: 4+ years of accounting experience.
- List your technical skills, software, systems, certifications, and languages.
- Match the skills in the job posting, as long as you actually have them.
- Put the most important skills for the role first.
- Only list skills you can confidently talk about in an interview.

AVOID

- Soft skills with nothing to back them up, such as communication or time management. Show those in your experience instead.
- Rating your skills with stars, bars, or percentages.
- Listing basic tools everyone is expected to know, unless the job posting asks for them.

EXAMPLE

- 4+ years of full-cycle accounting experience
- Month-end and year-end close, account reconciliations, and journal entries
- Accounts payable and accounts receivable for multiple entities
- Software: Sage 300, QuickBooks Online, Microsoft Excel (pivot tables, XLOOKUP)
- CPA Professional Education Program, in progress

SECTION 4: EDUCATION

This section shows your formal education, designations, and certifications. Keep it simple. For most roles, the reader only needs to confirm that you have the credentials the job requires.

HOW TO WRITE IT

- List your most recent education first.
- For each entry, include the institution, city and province, the credential and field of study, and the year you completed it.
- If you are still in school, write your expected completion date, for example: Expected June 2027.
- Include professional designations and certifications that are relevant to the role, such as CPA, P.Eng., PMP, or First Aid.
- If you have a post-secondary credential, leave out high school.

AVOID

- Listing every course you took.
- Including your GPA, unless you are a recent graduate and it is strong.
- Listing a program you did not finish as if you completed it. Show the years you attended, or leave it off.

EXAMPLE

University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB

Bachelor of Commerce, Accounting, 2021

Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada

CPA Professional Education Program, Expected 2027

SECTION 5: EXPERIENCE

This is the most important section of your resume. It is where you prove you can do the job.

HOW TO SET UP EACH ROLE

List the company name, city, and province, your job title, and your start and end dates (month and year). Use 3 to 6 bullets for recent roles, and 2 to 3 for older ones.

HOW TO WRITE YOUR BULLETS

- Start each bullet with an action verb, such as managed, built, or reduced.
- Focus on results, not duties. Say what you did and what it achieved.
- Use numbers you can back up: dollars, volumes, percentages, and timelines.
- Put the most impressive and most relevant bullet first.
- Use past tense for past roles, and present tense for your current role.

DUTIES VERSUS RESULTS

Weak: Responsible for accounts payable.

Strong: Processed 300+ supplier invoices per month across three companies, with no late payments.

Weak: Helped with month-end.

Strong: Prepared month-end journal entries and reconciliations for 12 accounts, closing by the fifth business day each month.

OTHER TIPS

- If you were promoted, list the company once, with each title and its dates.
- Label contract and temporary roles as Contract, so they do not look like job hopping.
- Go back about 10 to 15 years. Cut or summarize older, unrelated roles.
- Explain a long gap in one short, honest line, rather than leaving it blank.

SECTION 6: REFERENCES

References are people who can speak to the quality of your work. Employers usually contact them near the end of the hiring process, often right before an offer. A strong reference can win you the job, and a weak one can lose it.

WHO TO CHOOSE

- Choose two to three professional references.
- Former direct supervisors and managers are the strongest references.
- Senior coworkers or clients can work if a supervisor is not available.
- Do not use friends or family members.

HOW TO LIST THEM

For each reference, include their name, their job title and company, how they know you, their phone number, and their email address.

BEFORE YOU LIST ANYONE

- Ask their permission first, every time.
- Tell them about the role you are applying for, so they know what to speak to.
- Confirm their phone number and email address are current.
- Thank them, and let them know how it turned out.

If you prefer to keep your references private, you can leave this section off and provide them when asked. There is no need to write “References available upon request.” Employers already assume it.

EXAMPLE

John Doe, Controller, ABC Construction Ltd.

Former Direct Supervisor | 780-555-0147 | john.doe@email.com

COMMON MISTAKES

These are the mistakes we see most often. Any one of them can be the reason a resume gets passed over.

1. **Spelling and grammar mistakes.** They suggest a lack of attention to detail. Proofread, then have someone else proofread.
2. **Sending the same resume to every job.** Tailor it to each job posting.
3. **Listing duties instead of results.** Show what you achieved, not just what you were responsible for.
4. **Making it too long.** One page for junior professionals, two pages or less for intermediate professionals.
5. **Overdesigning it.** Photos, graphics, columns, and colours make it harder to read, for people and for software.
6. **Including personal information.** Leave off your photo, age, marital status, Social Insurance Number, and full address.
7. **Missing or inconsistent dates.** Every role needs a start and end month and year, in the same format.
8. **Burying the important information.** Put the skills and experience the job posting asks for near the top, where they will be seen.
9. **Exaggerating or lying.** It will come out in the interview, in the reference check, or after you start.
10. **Sending the wrong file.** Send a PDF named with your name, not “resume final v3.docx”.

FREE TEMPLATE

On the next page is a simple resume template that follows every step in this guide. Use it as your starting point.

HOW TO USE IT

1. Replace everything in [square brackets] with your own information.
2. Add or remove roles, bullets, and education entries as needed.
3. Delete anything that does not apply to you.
4. Tailor it to each job you apply for.
5. Proofread it, save it as a PDF, and name the file with your name.

An editable Word version of this template is included with this guide.

[YOUR FULL NAME]

[City, Province] | [Phone Number] | [Email Address] | [LinkedIn URL]

OVERVIEW

[Job title] with [#] years of experience in [industry or field]. Skilled in [skill], [skill], and [skill]. [One sentence on a key strength, or the role you are looking for next.]

SUMMARY OF SKILLS

- [#]+ years of [field] experience
- [Technical skill or area of expertise]
- [Technical skill or area of expertise]
- [Technical skill or area of expertise]
- Software: [software], [software], [software]
- [Certification, designation, or language]

EDUCATION

[Institution Name], [City, Province] [Year]
[Credential], [Field of Study]

[Institution Name], [City, Province] [Year]
[Credential or Certification]

EXPERIENCE

[COMPANY NAME], [City, Province] [Month Year] to Present
[JOB TITLE]

- [Action verb] + [what you did] + [the result, with a number if you can]
- [Action verb] + [what you did] + [the result, with a number if you can]
- [Action verb] + [what you did] + [the result, with a number if you can]
- [Action verb] + [what you did] + [the result, with a number if you can]
- [Action verb] + [what you did] + [the result, with a number if you can]

[COMPANY NAME], [City, Province] [Month Year] to [Month Year]
[JOB TITLE]

- [Action verb] + [what you did] + [the result, with a number if you can]
- [Action verb] + [what you did] + [the result, with a number if you can]
- [Action verb] + [what you did] + [the result, with a number if you can]

[COMPANY NAME], [City, Province] [Month Year] to [Month Year]
[JOB TITLE] (Contract)

- [Action verb] + [what you did] + [the result, with a number if you can]
- [Action verb] + [what you did] + [the result, with a number if you can]

REFERENCES

[Full Name], [Job Title], [Company]
[Relationship, for example Former Direct Supervisor] | [Phone Number] | [Email Address]

[Full Name], [Job Title], [Company]
[Relationship, for example Former Direct Supervisor] | [Phone Number] | [Email Address]