How to Write a Resume (Step by Step for Beginners)

Work World · about 18 minutes · 2026-11-11

A fully illustrated 28-step guide to writing a resume that gets read: pick one target role, gather proof, build scannable sections, turn duties into results, and pass both a six-second skim and a keyword scan.

Phase 1 — Define the Target and Gather Proof

1. **Write the exact job title you are aiming for**
   Write the exact job title you are aiming for.
2. **Read three real job postings for that title**
   Read three real job postings for that title.
3. **Decide the one job this resume must do**
   Decide the one job this resume must do.
4. **Choose a format that fits your history**
   Choose a format that fits your history.
5. **List every role with its real dates**
   List every role with its real dates.
6. **Gather numbers before you write anything**
   Gather numbers before you write anything.
7. **Record the tools, skills and certificates**
   Record the tools, skills and certificates.

Phase 2 — Build a Clean, Scannable Structure

8. **Put contact details in a simple header**
   Put contact details in a simple header.
9. **Use one typeface and even margins**
   Use one typeface and even margins.
10. **Order sections by relevance to the role**
    Order sections by relevance to the role.
11. **Open with a two-line professional summary**
    Open with a two-line professional summary.
12. **List roles in reverse chronological order**
    List roles in reverse chronological order.
13. **Add education and certifications plainly**
    Add education and certifications plainly.
14. **Add a compact skills line**
    Add a compact skills line.

Phase 3 — Turn Duties into Evidence

15. **Start every bullet with a strong verb**

    Start every bullet with a strong verb.

16. **Attach a number to each significant claim**

    Attach a number to each significant claim.

17. **Show the result, not just the task**

    Show the result, not just the task.

18. **Keep each bullet to one or two lines**

    Keep each bullet to one or two lines.

19. **Mirror the posting's exact keywords**

    Mirror the posting's exact keywords.

20. **Cut anything that does not serve this role**

    Cut anything that does not serve this role.

21. **Test it with a six-second skim**

    Test it with a six-second skim.

Phase 4 — Pass the Checks and Send

22. **Save a plain-text copy as well as the PDF**

    Save a plain-text copy as well as the PDF.

23. **Remove tables, columns, icons and text boxes**

    Remove tables, columns, icons and text boxes.

24. **Use standard section headings**

    Use standard section headings.

25. **Read it aloud and verify every date**

    Read it aloud and verify every date.

26. **Name the file and set the PDF options**

    Name the file and set the PDF options.

27. **Ask one person to skim it for you**

    Ask one person to skim it for you.

28. **Send the right file to the right person**

    Send the right file to the right person.

Sources

1. LinkedIn — career and job-search resources
   https://www.linkedin.com/
2. Purdue OWL — writing and citation guide
   https://owl.purdue.edu/
3. USA.gov — official U.S. government services
   https://www.usa.gov/
4. TED — talks and ideas
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Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/How-to-Write-a-Resume. Corrections: https://www.howcompass.com/correctio