Resume Building Cheat Sheet

A comprehensive guide to crafting effective resumes that highlight your skills and experience. This cheat sheet covers various resume formats, essential sections, and tips for optimizing your resume for different industries and roles.

Resume Basics & Formats

Resume Formats

Chronological	Lists work experience in reverse chronological order, highlighting career progression. Best for those with a consistent work history.
Functional	Focuses on skills and abilities rather than work history. Suitable for career changers or those with gaps in employment.
Combination	Combines elements of chronological and functional formats, highlighting both skills and work experience. A versatile option for many job seekers.
Targeted	Tailored to a specific job or industry, emphasizing the skills and experience most relevant to the target position.

Essential Resume Sections

Contact Information: Full name, phone number, email address, and LinkedIn profile URL.

Summary/Objective: A brief overview of your skills, experience, and career goals. (Optional, but recommended for experienced professionals).

Work Experience: A detailed description of your previous jobs, including job title, company name, dates of employment, and key responsibilities/achievements.

Education: List your degrees, certifications, and relevant coursework.

Skills: Include both hard skills (technical skills) and soft skills (interpersonal skills) relevant to the job.

Optional Sections: Projects, volunteer experience, awards, publications, languages, etc.

Key Principles

Clarity	Use clear and concise language. Avoid jargon and ambiguous terms.
Relevance	Focus on the skills and experiences that are most relevant to the job you're applying for.
Quantification	Whenever possible, quantify your achievements with numbers and data.
Keywords	Incorporate keywords from the job description to help your resume get noticed by applicant tracking systems (ATS).

Writing Effective Content

Crafting a Compelling Summary/Objective

A resume summary is a brief statement highlighting your key skills and experiences. It's best for experienced professionals. An objective is a statement of your career goals and is best for entry-level candidates or those changing careers.

Example Summary:

Results-driven marketing professional with 8+ years of experience in digital marketing and social media management. Proven ability to develop and execute successful marketing campaigns that drive brand awareness and increase sales.

Example Objective:

Seeking an entry-level position in the field of data analysis where I can utilize my strong analytical skills and passion for problem-solving.

Describing Work Experience and Achievements

Use action verbs to describe your responsibilities and achievements. Focus on what you accomplished, not just what you did. Use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to structure your descriptions.

Example:

Managed a team of 5 software engineers in the development of a new mobile application (Situation & Task). Implemented Agile methodologies and conducted daily stand-up meetings to ensure project milestones were met (Action). Successfully launched the application on time and within budget, resulting in a 20% increase in user engagement (Result).

Showcasing Your Skills

Hard Skills	Technical skills and knowledge that are specific to a particular job or industry. Examples: Programming languages, data analysis tools, project management software.
Soft Skills	Interpersonal skills and personal attributes that enable you to work effectively with others. Examples: Communication, teamwork, problem-solving, leadership.
Listing Skills	Create a dedicated skills section and categorize your skills into relevant groups. Include both hard and soft skills that are relevant to the job.

Formatting & Optimizing Your Resume

Resume Design and Layout

Choose a clean and professional font (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman) with a font size between 10 and 12 points. Use consistent formatting throughout your resume. Use white space effectively to make your resume easy to read.

Use bullet points to highlight your achievements and responsibilities. Use bolding and italics sparingly to emphasize key information. Keep your resume concise and avoid unnecessary details. Aim for one page if possible, especially for early-career professionals. Two pages are acceptable for experienced professionals with extensive work history.

Optimizing for Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) are software applications used by companies to screen and manage job applications. To optimize your resume for ATS, use keywords from the job description, save your resume as a Word (.doc or .docx) or PDF file (ensure it's text-searchable), avoid using tables, images, or other complex formatting elements.

Use standard section headings (e.g., "Work Experience," "Education," "Skills"). Avoid using headers and footers. Proofread your resume carefully to eliminate any typos or grammatical errors.

File Formats

PDF (.pdf)	Preserves formatting across different devices and operating systems. Generally preferred unless the job posting specifically requests a different format.
Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx)	Easily editable and can be opened by most employers. Use this format if requested by the job posting.
Plain Text (.txt)	Removes all formatting, leaving only the text. Use only when explicitly required, as it sacrifices visual appeal.

Tailoring and Reviewing Your Resume

Tailoring Your Resume for Each Job

Customize your resume for each job you apply for. Carefully review the job description and identify the key skills and qualifications that the employer is seeking. Highlight those skills and qualifications in your resume, using the same language as the job description.

Reorder your sections to emphasize the most relevant information. For example, if the job requires strong project management skills, move your "Projects" section above your "Education" section.

Proofreading and Editing

Proofread your resume carefully to eliminate any typos, grammatical errors, or inconsistencies in formatting. Ask a friend, colleague, or career counselor to review your resume for feedback. Use online grammar and spell-checking tools to identify potential errors.

Read your resume aloud to catch any awkward phrasing or sentences. Print out a hard copy of your resume and review it carefully. It's often easier to spot errors on paper than on a screen.

Seeking Feedback

Before submitting your resume, seek feedback from trusted sources such as career counselors, mentors, or peers in your industry. Be open to constructive criticism and willing to make revisions based on the feedback you receive. Remember that a fresh pair of eyes can often catch mistakes or suggest improvements that you may have missed.