

MAKE YOUR APPLICATIONS TECH-FRIENDLY

Many employers use software—including AI-enabled tools—to read and sort resumes before a person looks at them. A clear resume makes it easier for both applicant tracking systems (ATS) and hiring managers to quickly understand the value you bring, which increases your chances of moving to the next stage of the hiring process.

DESIGNING YOUR DOCUMENT

CATEGORY	GUIDELINE	WHY IT HELPS TECHNOLOGY (ATS)	WHY IT HELPS PEOPLE
LAYOUT AND STRUCTURE	Use a simple, single-column layout (no tables, text boxes, charts)	Reads top-to-bottom correctly	Easier to scan quickly
	Use standard section names (e.g., Experience, Education, Skills)	Matches expected fields	Easy to find key info
	Use simple round bullets and consistent formatting	Avoids misreading symbols	Improves readability
	List graduation year only (not full attendance dates)	Fits standard date parsing	Reduces clutter
FORMATTING AND DESIGN	Avoid photos, icons, logos, and images with text	ATS cannot read image text	Keeps focus on content
	Do not use headers/footers for your name	Some systems ignore these areas	Keeps your name visible
	Use common fonts (e.g., Calibri, Arial, Times New Roman); avoid effects	Prevents parsing errors	Clean, professional look
FILE TYPE	Upload .docx unless a PDF is requested	Imports more accurately	Still prints well
CONTENT AND KEYWORDS	Use employer language when it matches your experience	Matches job posting keywords	Shows alignment with role
	Integrate skills into accomplishment statements	Context improves keyword recognition	Demonstrates impact, not just listing
Examples: Keywords in Context	Job posting: "Proficiency with Qualtrics survey distribution and data cleaning."	Matches exact phrasing	Shows relevance
	Accomplishment: "Managed Qualtrics survey distribution for 300+ participants and cleaned response data for reporting."	Strong keyword match	Clear, measurable impact
	Job posting: "Experience with budget reconciliation." Accomplishment: "Completed monthly budget reconciliation for student organization accounts."	Matches financial terms	Demonstrates applied experience
Examples: Skills vs. Context	Skills list: Excel, Python, dashboards	Keywords present	Basic overview
	Accomplishment: "Built Excel dashboards to track weekly sales and forecast trends for a five-person team."	Stronger parsing with context	Shows results and scope
	Accomplishment: "Used Python to clean datasets and create visualizations improving reporting accuracy."	Reinforces relevance	Demonstrates outcomes
PRE-UPLOAD CHECKLIST	If the graphics disappeared, is all the information still there?	Ensures full readability	Content remains intact
	Are section names and dates standard?	Improves parsing accuracy	Easier navigation
	Do bullets include relevant keywords—truthfully?	Improves match scoring	Shows role alignment
	Did you upload a .docx file (unless asked for a PDF)?	Avoids formatting issues	Ensures accessibility

TECH-FRIENDLY RESUME: QUICK DO/DON'T GUIDE

DO

- ☐ Use a simple layout that doesn't break content into multiple columns.
 - *Easy for software to read, easy for people to skim.*
- ☐ Use common section names.
 - *Helps systems and humans find your information quickly.*
- ☐ Write clear bullet points that show skills in context.
 - *Good for matching systems and helpful for human reviewers.*
- ☐ Use common fonts and consistent formatting.
 - *Reduces errors and looks cleaner.*
- ☐ Save as .docx unless a PDF is requested.
 - *Ensures your resume imports correctly.*

DON'T

- ☐ Don't use tables, multiple columns, text boxes, charts, icons, or logos.
 - *These can scramble how software reads your content.*
- ☐ Don't put any text inside images.
 - *Most systems won't "see" it.*
- ☐ Don't use underlining, special symbols, or unusual fonts.
 - *Can cause misreading or display issues.*
- ☐ Don't rely on a long "skills list" without context.
 - *Systems and people both look for real examples.*
- ☐ Don't upload a PDF unless the employer says it's okay.
 - *Some systems flatten PDFs and lose structure.*

QUICK TIP ?

Tip 1: Have your resume critiqued during the Resume Clinic that takes place each fall and spring semester. View a calendar of events on the University Career Services website at go.gmu.edu/careers-events for more details.

Tip 2: If you want to test how the robot is matching the resume and/or cover letters with a job description, visit jobscan.co.

Tip 3: Save your resume using your last and first name (e.g., PopescuFlorin) instead of something generic (e.g., Resume2) to make it easy for employers to search for it.

