

The Resume Reply-Rate Checklist

Your resume passes three gates before anyone replies: screening software, a six-second human skim, and the “so what?” test. Most resumes die silently at one of them. Run this before you send your next application.

Gate 1. Get past the software (ATS)

Many resumes are filtered by software before a person ever sees them. Make yours easy to read — for a machine.

- ☐ I mirrored the **exact skill words and job title** from the posting (using my real experience — not invented).
- ☐ One simple **single-column layout** — no tables, text boxes, or side-by-side columns that scramble when parsed.
- ☐ No important text hidden in the **header or footer** (many systems skip those entirely).
- ☐ No logos, photos, icons, or unusual fonts standing in for words.
- ☐ Saved as a **text-based PDF** (not a scan or image) — unless the posting asks for .docx.
- ☐ File named like a professional: **Firstname-Lastname-Resume.pdf**.

Gate 2. Win the six-second skim

A recruiter skims before they read. Make the most relevant proof impossible to miss in the top third.

- ☐ My **strongest, most relevant** three or four bullets sit in the top third of page one.
- ☐ Job titles, employers, and dates are **clear and consistent** — no gaps left unexplained.
- ☐ Five to seven bullets per role, maximum. No walls of text.
- ☐ Two pages or fewer, with the most recent and relevant experience first.

Gate 3. Prove impact, not duties

A duty says you occupied a chair. Impact says you'd be worth hiring for the next one. This is where most resumes are won or lost.

- ☐ Every bullet follows **action + task + result + context**: what I did, the task it served, what changed, and the scale (how many, how often, how big).
- ☐ I added a **number or a concrete outcome** wherever I honestly can — faster, cleaner, cheaper, more.
- ☐ I cut filler: “responsible for,” “hardworking team player,” “detail-oriented,” and anything that fits every job I've held.
- ☐ **Swap test**: if another company's name went at the top, the resume would no longer fit as well. (If it still fits, it's too generic.)

Before you hit send

- ☐ The **top third is tailored** to this exact role, in the posting's own language.
- ☐ **One other human** read it for typos and unclear acronyms.
- ☐ Contact info is **correct** and the email address is professional.
- ☐ No SIN, photo, age, or personal details that don't help me get hired.