

Resume & CV Design — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a build. Working alongside the four modules, you will run a real ATS parse test on your current resume, set up a single-page layout on a working type scale, rewrite your bullets into quantified accomplishments, and export two coordinated versions. Use the templates to keep your sizes, keywords, and bullets in one place.

How Resumes Are Actually Read

Diagnose how your current resume reads to both the parser and the recruiter.

Exercise: Run Your Own ATS Parse Test

Take your current resume as a PDF, open it, press select-all, copy, and paste into a plain text editor like Notepad or TextEdit. Read what comes out and compare it to the on-page layout. This is roughly what an applicant tracking system sees.

- Is every piece of contact info present in the pasted text, including name, email, and phone?

- Did the text land in a sensible top-to-bottom order, or did columns get spliced across each other?

- Were any items missing entirely, suggesting they were trapped in an image, text box, or header region?

- Did your job titles and dates stay attached to the right employer?

Exercise: Six-Second Scan Drill

Hand your current resume to two or three people and let them look for only six to seven seconds, then take it away. Ask each what they remember. This reveals what your visual hierarchy is actually surfacing.

- Could each person recall your name and most recent job title after the glance?

- Did anyone catch a key number or accomplishment, or only a general impression?

- What did people fixate on that you did not intend to be the hero?

- Where did their eye get lost or stuck in a grey block of text?

Worksheet: Format Decision

Decide your structural format and length before designing, based on your history and target roles. Chosen format (reverse-chronological / hybrid / functional)

Reason for that choice in one sentence

Target length (one page / two pages) and justification

Any career gap or pivot the format must frame honestly

Region and matching page size (US Letter / A4)

Checklist: Two-Reader Mindset Check

- I know which ATS the target employers likely use (Workday, Greenhouse, Lever, etc.) where findable
- I understand my file is read by software before any human sees it
- I have run the copy-paste parse test on my current resume at least once
- I have chosen reverse-chronological unless I have a documented reason not to
- I am avoiding the pure functional format unless absolutely necessary

Building the Single-Page Layout

Set up the page, grid, and type system so the document scans in seconds and fits one page.

Worksheet: Page and Grid Setup

Lock in the structural skeleton before styling anything. Record the page size, margins, and baseline rhythm you will build on.

Page size (US Letter / A4)

Margins on all four sides (between 0.5 and 1 inch)

Column structure for the ATS-safe master (single column)

Baseline leading in points (e.g. 13 pt)

Top-band content reserved for name and contact line (yes / no)

Worksheet: Type Scale Specification

Build a modular type scale from one base body size and a ratio, then assign each role a size. Use the type-scale template to do the math and keep sizes harmonious.

Body size in points (10.5 to 12)

Scale ratio (e.g. 1.25 major third)

Name size in points (largest element)

Section heading size in points

Job title / employer size and weight

Dates / location size and colour

Typeface(s) chosen and whether one or two families

Font license / availability confirmed or fonts to be embedded (yes / no)

Exercise: Hierarchy Squint Test

Open your draft layout and either squint hard or zoom out until the text blurs. Note which elements still stand out when the words are unreadable. Those are what your hierarchy is actually emphasising.

- Is your name clearly the most prominent element when blurred?

- Do section headings read as a distinct second tier?

- Is the gap between separate jobs visibly larger than the gap within a job?

- Does anything unimportant (a decorative line, a date) pop louder than it should?

Checklist: Layout Quality Check

- Page is single-column for the ATS-safe master
- Margins are between 0.5 and 1 inch, never tighter than 0.5 inch
- All spacing snaps to one consistent baseline rhythm, not eyeballed gaps
- Body text is left-aligned, not justified, on the narrow column
- One restrained accent colour at most, with near-black body on white
- More vertical space between sections than within them (proximity principle)

Content That Earns the Interview

Structure every section and rewrite your bullets into quantified, keyword-aligned accomplishments.

Worksheet: Section Inventory

List every section in order with its exact label and confirm it uses a standard, parser-friendly heading. Flag anything that needs renaming or moving.

Section order top to bottom

Exact heading label used for each section

Standard parser-friendly label confirmed (yes / no)

Contact details placed in the body, not the header/footer region (yes / no)

Personal data (photo, DOB, full address) correctly included or excluded for the region

Strongest section front-loaded (experience or education) and why

Exercise: Bullet Rewrite Sprint

Take five of your current duty-style bullets and rewrite each using the XYZ formula: accomplished X, as measured by Y, by doing Z. Start each with a strong past-tense action verb and attach a real number. Use the bullet-builder template to draft and compare.

- What is the original duty statement versus your rewritten accomplishment for each of the five?

- What strong action verb opens each new bullet (led, built, grew, reduced, launched)?

- What number did you attach to each, and is it accurate and defensible?

- Did you cut every instance of Responsible for and Duties included?
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Worksheet: Keyword Match Map

Paste a target job description elsewhere, extract its hard skills and repeated terms, and map which you genuinely have. Use the keyword-map template to track each term and where you will place it.
Keyword or skill phrase from the job description

Do you genuinely have it with evidence (yes / no)

Employer's exact wording to mirror

Where it will appear (summary / skills / specific bullet)

Acronym spelled out once in full (yes / n/a)

Checklist: Content Honesty and Impact Check

- Every bullet describes an accomplishment, not a responsibility
- Most recent role has three to five bullets, each one or two lines
- At least one credible number appears in most bullets
- Verb tense is consistent: past for past roles, present only for the current job
- Skills are listed in words, with no star bars or percentage meters
- No keyword stuffing and absolutely no hidden white text
- Every claimed skill is backed by a real accomplishment somewhere on the page

Production, Export, and Two Final Versions

Choose the right tool, export a clean tagged PDF, link your portfolio, and run final QA.

Worksheet: Tool and Version Plan

Decide which tool builds which version and which version goes through which channel.
Tool for the ATS-safe master (Word / Google Docs)

Tool for the creative portfolio PDF (InDesign / Affinity / Figma / Canva)

Channels that get the ATS-safe version (portals, large-company ATS)

Channels that get the creative PDF (direct email, printed handoff, design roles)

Plan for keeping the master editable for fast per-job tailoring

Checklist: Clean PDF Export Checklist

- Exported to PDF unless the posting explicitly requests DOCX
- Fonts embedded so the layout cannot re-flow into a substitute
- File is not a flat image or scan; all text stays selectable
- File size kept small, ideally under 1 MB
- Filename is clear, such as Firstname-Lastname-Resume.pdf

- Tagged / accessible PDF option enabled where the tool supports it
- PDF title metadata set to your name, not a default document name

Exercise: Final Parse and Link Test

On your final exported PDF, re-run the copy-paste parse test and then click every hyperlink. Fix anything that is scrambled, missing, or broken before you send the file anywhere.

- Did the final copy-paste come out complete and in sensible order?

- Did every hyperlink (portfolio, LinkedIn, project links) open the correct destination?

- Do the visible link texts still communicate the destination if printed on paper?

- Is the document genuinely one page with no stray line spilling onto a second?

Checklist: Pre-Send Final QA

- Proofread cold and out loud, with at least one other person reading it
- Every date, employer, and number verified as accurate
- No placeholder or leftover detail from a previous tailored version remains
- ATS-safe version ready for portals and creative PDF ready for human-first channels
- Custom readable LinkedIn URL used instead of the long default
- Final copy-paste parse test passed on the file actually being sent

Your Action Plan

1. Run the copy-paste parse test on your current resume and note what scrambles or disappears.
2. Choose reverse-chronological (or a justified hybrid) and the right page size for your region.
3. Set up a single-column page with 0.5 to 1 inch margins on a consistent baseline grid.
4. Build a modular type scale from one body size and assign name, heading, and body sizes.
5. Tighten the visual hierarchy so name, titles, employers, and numbers surface in the scan.
6. Rewrite every bullet into a quantified XYZ accomplishment led by a strong action verb.
7. Map keywords from a target job description and weave the truthful matches in honestly.
8. Export a tagged PDF with embedded fonts, selectable text, a clean filename, and title metadata.
9. Add and click-test portfolio and LinkedIn hyperlinks, shown as readable link text.
10. Proofread cold, confirm one page, re-run the parse test, and prepare both final versions.

