



GLOBAL CV & RESUME STANDARDS CHECKLIST



A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
To Crafting a Strong Submission

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Global CV/Resume Standards Checklist For Clients

INTRODUCTION

This Global CV and Resume Standards Checklist is designed to help you present your experience clearly, confidently, and competitively—wherever you're building your career. It walks you through each section of your CV or resume step by step, so you know exactly what to include, what to improve, and what to avoid. Use it as a practical guide to tailor your documents for different countries and roles, and to get the most value from your work with your career coach.

RESUME VS CV: DEFINITIONS AND USAGE

- **Resume (U.S./Industry):** A concise (1–2 pages) document highlighting skills, experience and achievements for a specific job. It's the standard application format in the US, Canada and most industries. Recruiters prefer brevity since many applicants are reviewed quickly.
- **Curriculum Vitae (CV):** A comprehensive record of your career and academic history, often multiple pages. Used for academic, research, and international positions. In the UK, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, "CV" is the norm even for non-academic jobs. UK-style CVs traditionally included full education details and personal statements, though today they are often trimmed and tailored to each role.
- **Key Differences:** CVs emphasize academic credentials and chronological history; resumes emphasize relevant skills and results. Resumes usually lead with experience, while CVs often list education first. A US-style resume is generally 1 page (2 max for senior roles); a CV can be longer. If in doubt, follow the job posting or ask: use a CV for faculty/research or UK/EU jobs, otherwise use a resume.
- **Regional notes:** In the U.S., the terms are distinct (resume for jobs, CV for academia); in the UK/EU and Australasia the term "CV" usually means the resume-style document. In countries like India, Australia, and New Zealand the terms are often interchangeable. When in doubt, follow the job posting or consult to your career coach.

WHAT TO DO:

- **Step 1:** Before you begin editing your profile, review your current CV/resume against the checklist taking notes of each of the sections.
- **Step 2:** Contact a certified IACC Career Coach to discuss the nuances of your job search and how you should modify the recommendations of this checklist.

Checklist Sections

- ☒ **Contact Information (Header / Personal Details)**
- ☒ **Professional Summary (Profile / Personal Statement)**
- ☒ **Professional Experience (Work History / Employment History)**
- ☒ **Education (Academic Background)**
- ☒ **Certifications & Training**
- ☒ **Projects & Portfolio (Tech/Creative/Independent Work)**
- ☒ **Publications & Research (Academic CV)**
- ☒ **Skills & Core Competencies**
- ☒ **Awards & Honors**
- ☒ **Professional Affiliations & Memberships**
- ☒ **Volunteer & Community Involvement**
- ☒ **Languages**
- ☒ **Additional Sections (Interests, References)**
- ☒ **Layout & Design Best Practices**
- ☒ **Final Quality Check**

Each section is structured through (when and where applicable):

Why: Explains why this section matters and how it helps recruiters and hiring managers understand you better.

Must-have: The essential items that should always be included for this section to work properly.

Nice-to-have: Optional additions that can strengthen the section if they are relevant and add value.

Bonus Tips: Practical ideas and best practices to help you improve impact and stand out.

Regional Variations: Notes on how expectations may differ depending on country, culture, or profession.

Contact Information (Header / Personal Details)

WHY: The header identifies you and provides contact methods. It's the first thing recruiters see and must include reliable information to reach you. An accurate header also establishes your professional identity.

MUST-HAVE:

- Full Name (as you present professionally). Can be in larger/bold font. Must match your LinkedIn, etc.
- Email Address: Professional email (ideally your name; no nicknames). Do not use a current employer's email. Ensure it's active and checked often.
- Phone Number: Include a number with country/area code (especially if applying internationally).
- Location: At minimum list city and state/region (no need for full address in US resumes).
- Online profile/website: Add a LinkedIn URL or portfolio/site if it's up-to-date and professional.

NICE-TO-HAVE:

- Certifications/Credentials: Post-nominals (e.g., CPA, PMP) after your name if widely recognized in your field.
- Summary Statement Line (Very Brief): Some add a one-line branding statement (e.g., "Data Scientist | Machine Learning Expert") under the header.

BONUS TIPS:

- Hyperlink your email and URLs in digital versions for easy access.
- File name: Save your resume as a PDF and name it clearly (e.g., John_Doe_Resume.pdf).
- Use a clear header font and avoid heavy graphics around your name.
- Repeat your name and contact details on each page if your resume is multi-page.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS:

- Photos: Generally do not include a photo on US/UK/Canadian resumes. In some European or Asian countries (e.g. Germany, France, South Korea), including a small professional photo or nationality can be customary – check local norms before adding these.
- Personal Details: Do not list age, marital status, or religion on US/UK resumes. In some EU CV traditions (e.g., Germany), these are customary.
- Spelling/Format: Use American English for US jobs, British English for UK jobs. Format dates (e.g., "Jan 2023", "2023") according to local convention.

Professional Summary (Profile / Personal Statement)

WHY: A short summary (2–4 sentences) at the top of your resume can hook the reader with your top credentials. It highlights who you are, your key expertise, and your career goals in one place. This helps recruiters quickly see why you're a fit before reading details.

MUST-HAVE:

- Concise Overview: 2–4 sentence paragraph or 3–5 bullet points at the top. Highlight your most relevant experience, years of expertise, key skills, and major accomplishments.
- Keywords: Include terms from the job posting to match ATS filters (e.g., “certified project manager”, “Java development”, etc.).
- Target Role: State the job title or field you're aiming for to clarify your goal.

NICE-TO-HAVE:

- Achievements: One metric-driven achievement if space allows (e.g., “Increased sales 25% in one year”).
- Strong Adjectives/Results: Use descriptors that convey impact (e.g., “results-driven engineer”) and mention areas of expertise.
- Customization: Tailor this summary for each application; treat it like a mini cover letter pitch.

BONUS TIPS:

- Avoid vague terms like “hardworking” without context. Focus on tangible results.
- Write in the implied first person (omit “I” and articles). Use short, punchy sentences.
- Example: “Data analyst with 5+ years in retail analytics; developed dashboards that cut inventory costs by 15% annually.”
- If you have a cover letter, the summary can be shorter; if not, the summary should explain your unique selling points.

REGIONAL / CULTURAL VARIATIONS:

- Often called Personal Statement or Career Objective in UK/EU resumes. In the US, it's simply “Summary” or can be omitted if a cover letter explains your goal.
 - Academic CVs typically replace this with a “Research Summary” or skip it altogether.
 - Entry-level candidates may write one sentence about their career goals; experienced professionals should focus on achievements and expertise.

Professional Experience (Work History / Employment History)

WHY: This is the centerpiece of your resume. It documents your employment and achievements, showing recruiters what you have actually done on the job. A strong experience section demonstrates your impact and career progression.

MUST-HAVE:

For each position, in reverse-chronological order:

- Employer: Company name and location. Use company's official name, link it if submitting online.
- Title: Your job title. You may append a keyword for clarity (e.g., "Software Developer | Healthcare"). List official titles to avoid confusion in reference checks.
- Dates: Use month and year (e.g., "Jan 2020 – Mar 2023"). Adding months is standard. Omit "Present" formatting (no leading zeros).
- Achievements & duties: 3–5 bullet points summarizing your main responsibilities and, critically, your accomplishments. Start each with a strong action verb. Quantify results whenever possible (numbers, percentages, time saved, revenue, team size, etc.).
- Keep bullets concise (2–3 lines max, no full paragraphs). Each bullet should follow the formula "Result/impact – Metric – How/with what". Example: "Improved on-time delivery by 18% by redesigning the demand planning process and aligning weekly with sales and logistics teams."

NICE-TO-HAVE:

- A brief company description or industry if it isn't obvious (e.g., "Global fintech startup").
- Context for projects (e.g., team size, budget).
- Promotions or multiple titles at one company (list as sub-entries or separate job lines with dates).
- Relevant technologies, tools, or methods used on the job.

BONUS TIPS:

- Use bullet points consistently (no paragraphs) to make skimming easy.
- Avoid filler words like "responsible for"; instead, say what you did and the result.
- Use the present tense for your current role and the past tense for previous roles. Keep bullet points to 1–2 lines; avoid paragraphs.
- For readability, right-align dates so the eye can track your career timeline quickly.

REGIONAL NOTES:

- U.S./UK resumes emphasize measurable achievements. In some cultures (e.g., Asia), there may be more focus on duties. Adapt your style to the norm, but always highlight results when possible.
- Academic CVs or government roles might have longer lists of duties or publications integrated.
- Freelancers/consultants can list clients or projects as job entries.

Education (Academic Background)

WHY: Credentials and training underpin your qualifications. Especially important for entry-level and certain fields.

MUST-HAVE:

- Degree and field: e.g., “M.Sc. in Chemistry” or “B.A. in Economics.” Include major/minor as needed.
- Institution: Name and location of the college or university.
- Dates: Year of graduation (month optional). You may omit graduation dates if it was many years ago.

NICE-TO-HAVE:

- Honors/Distinctions: (e.g., “Summa Cum Laude,” “First Class”), scholarships, and any board exam scores if relevant.
- GPA (if impressive and early career) or key courses/projects for fresh graduates.
- Study abroad or exchange programs, especially if relevant to the role or showing cultural adaptability.

BONUS TIPS:

- List education in reverse chronological order (most recent first).
- If you hold multiple degrees, include only the most relevant ones. Don’t list high school if you have any higher education.
- For professional/technical schools or certifications (short courses), you can list them here or in a separate “Certifications” section.

REGIONAL / CULTURAL VARIATIONS:

- In the UK, include degree classification (e.g., “BSc Economics, 2:1”). In the US, you might list the GPA if it is strong. In many EU countries, the grade scale or level of completion is often listed.
- For CVs in Europe, the standardized “Europass” format includes specific sections for education; follow local preferences.

Certifications & Training

WHY: Professional certifications and licenses can be mandatory or highly valued in certain fields (e.g., CPA, PMP, medical licenses). They demonstrate up-to-date, specialized knowledge.

MUST-HAVE:

- Certification/License name, issuing organization, and date earned (and expiration if applicable).
- Professional training or courses relevant to the job (e.g., “Six Sigma Green Belt,” “Cisco Certified Network Associate”).
- Licenses: For regulated fields, list license title and number (e.g., “RN License, State of NY, #123456”).

NICE-TO-HAVE:

- Additional credentials like language certificates or software badges (if relevant).
- Brief note of continuing education or workshops (if directly applicable).

BONUS TIPS:

- Only list certifications that are current and relevant. If a certification has lapsed, either renew it or omit it.
- Place this section right after Education if you have several, or merge into an “Education & Certifications” heading.

REGIONAL NOTES:

- Some countries require showing certification IDs (e.g., CPAs in the US).
- In Europe, professional titles (ingénieur, architect) may be regulated; list accordingly.

Projects & Portfolio (Tech/Creative/ Independent Work)

WHY: Showcases concrete examples of your work, especially important for freelancers, developers, designers, engineers, and consultants.

MUST-HAVE:

- Project Title & Role: E.g. “Website Redesign – Team Lead”.
- Description: 1–2 lines: what the project was, what you did, and outcome/impact (with metrics if possible).
- Date/Duration: When it took place.

NICE-TO-HAVE:

- URL or Demo: If a live project or portfolio, include a link (for web, design, code projects).
- Team Size: If large team, mention it (e.g. “Collaborated with a 5-person design team”).

BONUS TIPS:

- Keep the language action/result-oriented, like experience bullets.
- Highlight projects relevant to the job (e.g. a volunteer fundraising campaign if applying to a nonprofit role).
- Provide context (e.g. “Freelance project for a Fortune 500 client” or “Open-source project with 200+ stars on GitHub”).

REGIONAL / CULTURAL VARIATIONS:

- In a corporate CV, projects may be listed under related job experience or omitted unless exceptional. In tech/creative fields worldwide, a separate “Projects” section is common.
- Ensure project names are descriptive if not well-known (e.g., “Mobile App for X Company”).

PUBLICATIONS & RESEARCH (ACADEMIC CV)

WHY: Critical for academic, scientific, and research positions. Demonstrates your contributions to the field and thought leadership.

MUST-HAVE:

- Publications: List peer-reviewed papers, books, and articles. Include full citations (APA or similar) with authors, title, venue, year, and pages.
- Presentations: Conference talks, poster sessions, etc., with title, conference, and date.

NICE-TO-HAVE:

- Links: DOI or URL if the resume is digital.
- Summary: (Optional) brief description of your research focus or noteworthy findings.

BONUS TIPS:

- Limit to the 5–6 most relevant publications on your resume. Put the rest on a personal website or CV appendix.
- Use a smaller font or multiple columns if needed to save space.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS:

- Normally omitted on corporate resumes (mention only if directly relevant, like patents).
- In Europe, include publications if applying in R&D or academic roles.

Skills & Core Competencies

WHY: A dedicated skills list lets recruiters (and automated systems) quickly scan for your technical and soft skills. It underscores your fit for the job by matching keywords from the posting.

MUST INCLUDE:

- Relevant hard skills: Tools, technologies, certifications, languages (e.g., “SQL, Adobe Creative Suite, Financial Modeling”) tailored to the target role.
- Key soft skills: Leadership, communication, etc., only if you can back them up with examples in your experience.
- List 5–10 skills; more can clutter. Group them by category (Technical vs. Professional skills) if helpful.

NICE-TO-HAVE:

- Proficiency levels (e.g., “Fluent”, “Advanced”, or years of experience) for each skill.
- Any relevant badges or certifications (e.g., “PMP”, “AWS Certified”).

BONUS TIPS:

- Phrase skills exactly as in the job ad or industry standard to pass Applicant Tracking Systems.
- Order skills by relevance (put the most important at the top).
- If you have many technical skills, consider a two-column list to save space (while keeping readability).

REGIONAL NOTES:

- Some resumes label this section “Core Competencies” or “Expertise”. Use the header that reads naturally for your industry.
- In more traditional sectors, these skills may be integrated into the summary or experience instead of a separate section.

Awards & Honors

WHY: Highlights external recognition of your skills and achievements.

MUST-HAVE:

- Award Name: Exact title (e.g., “Employee of the Year”).
- Year & Issuer: When and by whom.
- Context: (Optional) brief note on selectivity (e.g., “chosen from 50+ candidates”).

NICE-TO-HAVE:

- Relevant Honors: Scholarships, competitions, professional accolades.
- Placement: Can appear in the Education section or stand-alone.

BONUS TIPS:

- Use consistent formatting (bold award name, year in parentheses).
- Include only significant awards (3–5 total).

Professional Affiliations & Memberships

WHY: Shows engagement with your field and ongoing professional development.

MUST-HAVE:

- Organization & Role: (e.g., “IEEE – Member since 2019”).
- Dates: Active membership years.

NICE-TO-HAVE:

- Leadership: If you held office (e.g., “Treasurer, Local PMI Chapter”).
- Committee Work: Participation in committees or organizing events.

BONUS TIPS:

- List only relevant associations (e.g., marketing associations for marketing jobs).
- Professional certifications (e.g., CPA, PE) may alternatively be listed here.

Volunteer & Community Involvement

WHY: Reflects values and transferable skills (leadership, teamwork, community).

MUST-HAVE:

- Role & Organization: Name of nonprofit or group, your role, and dates.
- Key Activities: 1–2 bullets with your contributions (e.g., “Organized annual charity drive raising \$8K.”).

NICE-TO-HAVE:

- Skills Demonstrated: If relevant, note skills like event planning or teaching.
- Accolades: Volunteer awards or recognitions (e.g., “Volunteer of the Year, 2020”).

BONUS TIPS:

- Only include significant/ongoing volunteer efforts. Briefly explain the impact (e.g., “Mentored 5 high-school students in robotics club”).

Languages

WHY: Important for jobs requiring communication in other languages or international work..

MUST-HAVE:

- Language & Proficiency: List each language (e.g., Spanish – fluent; Mandarin – intermediate).
- Certification: (Optional) e.g., “TOEFL iBT 110/120” or “DELE C2” if taken.

NICE-TO-HAVE:

- Context of use (e.g., “conducted business in a German daily” or “exchange year in Japan”).
- Dialects or specific skills (e.g., “Mandarin – including reading traditional characters”).
- Sign Language: If applicable.

BONUS TIPS:

- Only list languages you can use professionally (avoid “basic”).
- On a CV, you can include reading knowledge separately (e.g., “Reading knowledge: Greek”).

REGIONAL/CULTURAL VARIATIONS:

- European CVs almost always include language skills (with levels). In the U.S., it’s optional unless relevant (e.g., bilingual jobs).

Additional Sections (Interests, References)

WHY: Optional extras that can personalize your resume or provide closure.

- Hobbies/Interests: Short list of personal interests (e.g., “Trail running, coding side-projects”) only if they show relevant skills or culture fit.
- References: Usually not listed in detail. Instead, include a line “References available upon request.” Most US resumes skip references altogether.

Layout & Design Best Practices

WHY: A well-formatted resume is easier to read and makes a professional impression.

A good layout also helps automated systems (ATS) parse your document correctly and submit PDFs (not DOCs).

MUST-KNOW:

- **Length:** Typically 1–2 pages for a resume; academic CVs can be longer (several pages) depending on experience. As a rule, keep it as short as possible while covering all relevant info.
- **Font and Size:** Use a clear, professional font (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman, Open Sans). Body text should be around 10–12 pt; headings slightly larger. Maintain consistency throughout.
- **Margins and Spacing:** Keep margins even (e.g., 0.5”–1” all around). Align text left and bullets consistently. Use uniform line spacing (avoid double spaces after periods). A small space after each bullet list and section helps readability.
- **Headings and Sections:** Use clear section headings (e.g., Experience, Education). Bold or slightly enlarge headings to distinguish sections. Adapt heading names to fit content (e.g., “Technical Skills” vs “Expertise”).
- **Bullets and Alignment:** Use bullet points for lists of achievements (not paragraphs). Ensure all bullets align neatly and text wraps cleanly. Avoid writing bullets as full sentences.
- **Color and Layout:** Stick to a mostly monochrome scheme for corporate roles. You can use a single accent color for headings or lines for a modern look. Two-column layouts are acceptable if they improve flow, but always check that ATS or printers will handle it.
- **Consistency:** Check consistency of style: same bullet symbols, date formats, abbreviations, and capitalization. All sections should use the same font and formatting.
- **Final format:** Save your resume as a PDF to preserve formatting (unless a job application requires a specific format). Name the file clearly (e.g., FirstName_LastName_Resume.pdf).

BONUS TIPS:

- For multi-page resumes, include page numbers or your name in the footer/header.
- Run a spelling/grammar check. Tools like Grammarly or asking a peer to review can catch errors.
- Check how it prints in grayscale (many recruiters print resumes). Ensure it remains legible.

REGIONAL/CULTURAL VARIATIONS:

- In the UK, resumes (CVs) are often two pages, even for experienced candidates. US resumes often try to fit junior candidates on one page. Academic CVs have no page limit.
- Certain industries have style norms (e.g., law/finance prefer classic fonts; design/tech may allow more creativity). Always tailor the look to the audience.
- Be aware of local CV templates (e.g., the Europass format in EU applications) and electronic submission requirements (some ATS systems prefer simple, unadorned layouts).

Final Quality Check

After completing your resume, double-check:

- Are dates, titles, and names correct?
- Is formatting consistent on each page?
- Have you used active, concise language throughout?

A polished, error-free resume with a clear structure is more likely to impress both humans and software.

DISCLAIMER: Authoritative career and HR resources were used to compile these guidelines. These checklists are designed to be comprehensive yet adaptable for corporate, academic, and freelance clients across regions.

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The intent is for this to remain a living document that reflects real-world, regional best practices; if you have additional regional differences or insights to share, please send them to us at hello@iacareercoaches.org so we can continue to refine and improve this resource together.

Learn more about the International Association of Career Coaches (IACC) at www.iacareercoaches.org.