

How to Use the Free BCN ATS Resume Template

A free resource from the Black Catalyst Network (BCN). No signup needed to use the template. Share it freely — please keep the BCN credit line on this guide.

WHY THIS TEMPLATE LOOKS SIMPLE

Most resumes are first read by software, called an Applicant Tracking System (ATS), before a person sees them. The software reads top to bottom, in one column. Tables, sidebars, photos, icons, skill bars, text boxes, and contact details hidden in a header or footer often come out scrambled or missing. This template removes everything that commonly breaks that reading, so your name, job titles, dates, skills, and education are extracted in the right order.

WHAT NEVER TO INCLUDE

- No photo, and no SIN, passport, work permit, or date of birth — an employer only needs those after hiring, never on a resume.
- No full home address. City and province are enough.
- No tables, columns, graphics, or logos.
- No contact details in the header or footer — keep them at the top of the page itself.

HOW TO FILL IT IN

- Keep the section headings exactly as they are: PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY, SKILLS, PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE, EDUCATION, CERTIFICATIONS.
- Use one date style everywhere: Jan 2022 – Present.
- Write achievements, not job duties. Formula: Action Verb + Number or Scale + What You Did + Result. Example: Reconciled 150+ invoices monthly and found \$18,400 in billing errors.
- Use the words the job posting uses, only where they are true for you. Aim to naturally cover the posting's key skills — never copy skills you do not have.
- Experience from outside Canada counts. List it the same way, with the city and country.
- If your credential was assessed (for example by WES), say so in one line under Education.

TAILOR IN UNDER 10 MINUTES

- Minutes 1–3: Read the posting and highlight the skills and tools it repeats.
- Minutes 4–6: Move your matching skills into the SKILLS section and the summary, where true.
- Minutes 7–9: Reorder your bullets so the most relevant achievement in each job comes first.
- Minute 10: Re-check the job title wording, dates, and spelling.

THE PLAIN-TEXT TEST

Before you submit: copy your whole resume and paste it into a plain-text editor (Notepad on Windows, TextEdit in plain-text mode on Mac). If it reads cleanly top to bottom, in order, with nothing missing or jumbled, an ATS will very likely read it the same way. If it scrambles there, it will scramble in the ATS.

FILES AND SUBMISSION

- Send the .docx version unless the posting asks for PDF. If you send PDF, export it as a text-based PDF from Word — never a scanned image.
- Google Docs users: download as .docx and run the plain-text test after export; Docs exports can shift spacing.
- Name the file clearly: Firstname-Lastname-Resume.docx (for example, Amara-Osei-Resume.docx).
- One page is fine for under about 10 years of experience; two pages are acceptable after that. Never shrink the font below 10.5 to force a fit — cut words instead.

STRONG ACTION VERBS

Processed | Coordinated | Reduced | Improved | Built | Trained | Reconciled | Organized |
Delivered | Resolved | Streamlined | Maintained | Supported | Led | Launched | Saved |
Increased | Prepared | Tracked | Negotiated