

LHURD RESUME

Career documents that get you seen

The ATS Survival Checklist

23 checks to run before you submit, so software never rejects you before a human reads a word.

Before you use the checklist

Most applications are not rejected by a person. They are filtered by an applicant tracking system, then skimmed by a recruiter in about six seconds. You are writing for both, in that order.

The order it actually happens in

1. Parsing — can the software read your file at all?
2. Matching — do your words match the posting's words?
3. The six-second human scan — is your value obvious at a glance?

Each section below maps to one of those three stages. Work through them in order. If a resume fails stage one, nothing else you did matters.

SECTION 01

Parsing: can the software read it?

- ☐ Submit a .docx file unless the posting names another format.
PDFs usually parse fine now, but .docx remains the safest default across older systems.
- ☐ Use one single column for the whole document.
Multi-column layouts are the most common cause of scrambled parsing.
- ☐ Keep contact details in the body, never in the header or footer.
Many systems ignore header and footer regions entirely, so your phone and email vanish.
- ☐ Remove text boxes, tables, graphics, icons and logos.
Anything that is not plain text is at risk of being dropped.
- ☐ Use a standard typeface such as Calibri, Arial, Garamond or Georgia.
- ☐ Use standard section headings: Experience, Education, Skills.
Clever headings like 'Where I've Made an Impact' can stop a parser mapping the section.
- ☐ Write dates one consistent way throughout, for example Mar 2021 – Present.
- ☐ Spell out an acronym once, then use it: Search Engine Optimization (SEO).
Systems may match on only one of the two forms.

SECTION 02

Matching: do your words match theirs?

- ☐ Tailor the resume to one job description at a time.
A single generic resume sent widely is the most expensive shortcut in a job search.
- ☐ Pull exact terms from the posting and mirror that phrasing.
If they write 'stakeholder management', do not write 'managing stakeholders'.
- ☐ Put your target job title near the top of the document.
If your current title differs from the one you are applying for, this matters even more.
- ☐ Place the most important keywords in your summary and recent role.
Recency is weighted. Keywords buried in a job from 2014 carry less signal.
- ☐ Include a short, honest skills section with real tools and methods.
- ☐ Never use white text, hidden keywords or keyword stuffing.
Modern systems detect it, and recruiters discard the application when they see it.
- ☐ Match seniority language to the level you are targeting.
'Led', 'owned' and 'set direction' read very differently from 'assisted' and 'supported'.

SECTION 03

The six-second scan: is your value obvious?

- ☐ Lead with a four-line summary, not an objective statement.
Who you are, what you do, proof you are good at it, what you want next.
- ☐ Quantify achievements instead of listing duties.
Not 'responsible for reporting' but 'cut monthly reporting time from 5 days to 2'.
- ☐ Use the formula: action + what changed + by how much.
If you do not have a number, use scale, frequency or before-and-after instead.
- ☐ Put your strongest bullet first in every role.
Recruiters rarely read to the bottom of a list.
- ☐ Keep bullets to two lines maximum.
- ☐ One page for under ten years of experience, two pages above that.
- ☐ Cut every line that would be true of anyone who held the job.
'Team player', 'detail oriented' and 'hard working' occupy space and prove nothing.
- ☐ Read it aloud once. If you would not say it in an interview, rewrite it.

Want a second opinion on yours?

Send us your current resume and we will tell you exactly what is holding it back — which checks above it fails, and what to fix first. No pitch, no obligation, reply within 12 to 24 hours.

lhurdresume.com/contact-us

Or if you would rather we wrote it for you:

Resume from \$80 · 48–72 hour delivery

Resume + Cover Letter from \$150

Complete Career Package from \$200

Express and Executive tiers available

Every package is written by a human, never AI, with unlimited revisions.

Lhurd Resume · 701 Tillery St, Unit 12, Austin, TX · lhurdresume.com