

HOW TO

# Make a Resume that stands out.

THE WHOLE WORKS



# Before you start

In the world of full-time employment, a resume is the golden ticket. It almost singularly decides if you get entry into the party or not. Making it carefully and tactfully can be the difference between getting that job and getting frustrated.

In this ebook, I'll show you how to make a resume that will help you stand out, and get you the interview call you want. But before that, let's clear up a few things.

## **#1 | A resume is NOT about you. It is about your suitability for the job.**

When you send a resume along with a job application, the recruiter (the HR person) or the recruiting manager (your future boss) aren't interested in learning about you. They are primarily interested in seeing if you can do the work they need done.

*Don't put everything you've done in your life in your resume. Just the relevant parts.*

## **#2 | The goal is not to get you a job; just an interview.**

A resume has a simple purpose — to get you an interview. Which means that its only task is to convince the recruiter that you are worthy of a longer conversation. It's a shortlisting mechanism, not a magic wand.

*Prove you're worthy by showing that you have the qualifications they are seeking in their job description.*

## **#3 | CV / Resume / Bio Data / Balderdash**

Don't worry about the nomenclature. The recruiter is unlikely to worry either. Remember the goal and do what's needed to achieve it. When in doubt, ask them what they're looking for (but, they're unlikely to be helpful).

*Keep it under 2 pages, if you can.*

## #4 | More is not always better.

Whoever taught you that more information means more chances of getting a job lied. Filling every corner of the A4 sheet with information about being a school pupil leader isn't the best way to impress a recruiter.

*Focus on what's relevant. If you have over 10 years of experience, don't harp on your CAT scores or GPAs.*

## #5 | Looks matter more than you think.

I've met so many professionals who think the resume is all about words. Lord, no. A recruiter gets tens, if not hundreds, of resumes for each role. If you make it difficult for her to find the information she needs, you are making it difficult for yourself to get the job. A well-designed resume will definitely attract more attention.

*Even if you can't get a professional designer to make it, give more thought to layout, colour, design, balance etc.*

## #6 | Make it show who you are.

Most professional documents in India seem to follow the 'as I'm suffering from fever, kindly grant me two days leave' template taught in school. As a result, there is no personality to anything that we write — no style, no voice, no panache. But why not?

*Make it a reflection of you. If you're a bold person, use bright colours. If you're a fun person, crack a (appropriate) joke or two. Make it more you.*

## #7 | Don't contradict yourself.

Your resume can not be very different from your LinkedIn profile or your website / blog. If your resume says 'Director of Marketing' and LinkedIn says 'Manager', it looks suspicious. I'm not saying you can't have different persona; just don't give contradicting information.

*Be consistent, everywhere.*

## #8 | One size does not fit all.

If you have one resume that you are sending out to every job opportunity that comes your way, stop! When you do this, you are burdening the recruiter to dig into your resume and excavate your suitability. No one's got time for that.

*Make an individual CV for each role you are applying for — customise it for every need.*



# Writing a resume

section by section

SECTION 1

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# Put your name on it.

Let's begin with the easiest part of the resume. Write your name. In big bold font right at the top. Try title case, upper case, lower case etc. and see what feels right. Use that.

**POOJA**  
KARTHIK

**POOJAKARTHIK**

Pooja  
Karthik

**Pooja K.**



## SECTION 2

# Add a short description.

This is just 3-5 words that quickly tells people who you are. Don't worry about details, this is to make it easy to pick you out of a heap.

While writing this, use the following prompts:

- ▶ **Fundamentally what is it the you do?** Write, code, build buildings, manage people, file taxes. This is the simplest way to tell what you do.
- ▶ **Do you specialise?** Write white papers, Android apps, sustainable architecture etc. This is what you're great at.
- ▶ **Is your industry important?** Restaurant menu designer, B2B marketer, retail store designer etc. This is to catch the attention of the right sub-set of your audience.
- ▶ **Where in your career are you?** Leader, entrepreneur, independent consultant etc.
- ▶ **Are you accomplished?** Award-winning journalist, LinkedIn Power Profile etc.

**POOJA**  
K A R T H I K    B2B Technology Writer  
and Editor.

Pooja  
Karthik    Visual designer  
Illustrator  
Restaurant industry specialist

**Pooja K.**  
Architect. Workspace designer. Sustainable structures.

**POOJAKARTHIK**  
Android developer | Enterprise solutions

## SECTION 3

# Write your introduction.

This is the most important section of your CV — also known as career summary, brief profile etc. Here, summarise your entire professional existence in 3-4 lines.

A few things to keep in mind:

- ▶ Write a paragraph instead of as a bulleted list. It allows you to tell a complete story in sentences rather than chewed-and-spat phrases.
- ▶ Mention the number of years of experience — it is one of those things recruiters are interested in.
- ▶ Include the industry, function, organisation size, location etc. as relevant.
- ▶ It is helpful to include a line that describes what you are doing currently, but keep this succinct.

## Customise for the role you're applying to.

Read the job description (JD) carefully. Highlight words that are mentioned in the JD that are applicable to you.

Now, mimic these words in your CV.

For instance, you might be using the term 'writer' to describe yourself, while the JD is seeking a 'content writer'. As long as the terms mean the same thing, use the JD's nomenclature.

If you're saying 'Android developer' but the JD says 'mobile developer', use the JD's words unless it specifically means anything other than Android.

If the JD asks for experience such as in the BFSI sector, or startups, or working with global teams, highlight your experience here. Same goes for specific responsibilities such as P&L ownership, team management etc.

### ANSWER THE QUESTION

## What makes you perfect for this role?

Hi, I'm Ranjani.

I'm a **writer, editor and marketer**. I've been one for twelve years — doing online marketing, web content and marketing communication, along with the occasional pursuit of magazine writing and research.

Currently, I am the founder-writer at emdash, and the Tamil film critic at Firstpost.

Technology management professional with 10 years of experience building product lifecycle management solutions for the automobile sector. Led large teams of solution architects, developers, quality analysts, and DevOps engineers across multiple locations.

I am now the Head of Projects at Tesla.

Visual designer specialising in brand design. In my 25 year-long career, I have designed communication for brands across web, print, murals, physical installations and so on. From small mom-and-pop bakeries to multinational corporations, my work is being used across the globe.

I now design logos from my garage in the outskirts of Chennai.

If you need a simple one-page website within 24 hours, you've come to the right place.

I'm a full-stack web developer specialising in high-performing web products. I help entrepreneurs, freelancers and sidegig-ers quickly set up their online presence without having to worry about 'tech'.

I am, on the side, also building my own web analytics product.

# Samples



## SECTION 4

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# Add a list of specialties.

This is optional, but it's useful. Sometimes, when you're unable to say everything in the introduction, this section is what you need. It also helps include keywords that machines will parse.

- ▶ Mimic the JD
- ▶ Keep them specific — not 'analytics' but 'analytics-based hyper-personalisation'.
- ▶ Don't add more than 4 — you can't specialise in everything!

Hi, I'm Ranjani.

I'm a **writer, editor and marketer**. I've been one for twelve years — doing online marketing, web content and marketing communication, along with the occasional pursuit of magazine writing and research.

Currently, I am the founder-writer at emdash, and the Tamil film critic at Firstpost.

B2B tech  
content

Re-purposing  
specialist

Multimedia  
production

If you need a simple one-page website within 24 hours, you've come to the right place.

I'm a full-stack web developer specialising in high-performing web products. I help entrepreneurs, freelancers and sidegig-ers quickly set up their online presence without having to worry about 'tech'.

I am, on the side, also building my own ticket management product.

Wordpress

Forms

Tech  
support

Marketing  
automation

Visual designer specialising in brand design. In my 25 year-long career, I have designed communication for brands across web, print, murals, physical installations and so on. From small mom-and-pop bakeries to multinational corporations, my work is being used across the globe.

I now design logos from my garage in the outskirts of Chennai.

Minimalism

Monochrome

Motion graphics

Technology project management professional with 10 years of experience building product lifecycle management solutions for the automobile sector. Led large teams of solution architects, developers, quality analysts, and DevOps engineers across multiple locations.

I am now the Head of Projects at Tesla.

Agile DevOps  
specialist

Certified  
SCRUM master

AWS-certified  
cloud architect

# Samples

## SECTION 5

# Now, experience.

Once you've spent more than three years in employment, your experience counts for a lot more than your educational qualifications. Therefore, after your summary, list your experience.

Each experience, as in each job you've held so far, will a bunch of sub-sections.

- ▶ **Heading:** Job title, employer, start date - end date
- ▶ **Responsibilities:** Write 1-2 lines about your role, purpose and responsibilities, as a paragraph.
- ▶ **Tasks:** Include top tasks you performed on a regular basis, in bullet points.
- ▶ **Accomplishments:** Your successes, awards, recognition etc.

## “Marketing Associate, JCN, Mar 2015-Apr 2020

As part of the demand generation team at JCN India, I was responsible for content creation, publishing, distribution and optimisation of the JCN blog, in addition to the LinkedIn content of 3 managing directors.

- ▶ Wrote and published 2 blog posts each week.
- ▶ Wrote copy for social media updates to distribute them.
- ▶ Produced weekly analytics reports and made recommendations for improvement.
- ▶ Tracked progress and optimised regularly.
- ▶ Since I took over, JCN has published 2 blog posts every single week, bringing over 100,000 visitors each month.
- ▶ Built a list of over 80,000 subscribers, 3% of whom are paying customers.
- ▶ LinkedIn engagement for JCN's leaders have grown 100% year-on-year since 2015.
- ▶ Built and manage a network of over 15 freelancers to support content creation.



# Because you'll need to write this section multiple times, here are things to keep in mind.

## **Follow a chronological order.**

Unless your last few jobs are irrelevant to the job you want, start with the latest job and work backwards.

## **Do it one job at a time.**

Make each role complete in each section. Add everything about the job in one place — this helps give information in context. Don't put awards / accomplishments in a separate section later.

## **Give most important information first.**

Follow the reverse pyramid structure within each job role. The first bullet is the most important (or most relevant) work you did. The last bullet is one the reader can glance past.

## **Include numbers, wherever possible.**

Measurable results add strength to your resume. Sales you closed, bugs you fixed, calls you handled, articles you wrote etc.

## **Write simply and clearly.**

Don't say you were responsible for organisational endamundo, strategic jujitsu, while also being the mama bear for team spirit. Just say you sent employee newsletters, followed up for timesheets and managed the complaint box.

## **Avoid more than one level of bullets.**

If you need bullets within bullets to tell what you did at your previous job, you're probably saying too much, or being long-winding.

## **Give more space to the last 5 years.**

You're more likely to have gained relevant experience recently. So, give more space to your jobs of the last 5 years and crunch those before that to just the salient points.

## **Don't expand on all your jobs.**

If you are a Python developer now, seeking ML engineer jobs, you don't need half a page on the culinary internship you did as part of your undergraduate degree. Just put the title and move on.

SECTION 6

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# Education.

If you have more than 3 years of experience, your education matters very little. Keep it short.

My preferred format: Course, University (Year)

SECTION 7

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# Contact.

Just an email ID and a mobile number.

This is important, of course. But if the recruiter is impressed with you, they will look for this information. So, no need to make it prominent. Put it under your name, on the header, footer, or at the very end of your CV. Just make sure it has the correct info.

SECTION 8

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# References.

Just mention that these are available on request. But add a link to your LinkedIn, where people can read testimonials. (Goes without saying that you need to have testimonials on LinkedIn).

SECTION NO

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# Personal info.

Don't do this!

Date of birth, gender, marital status, father's name, house address, caste, star sign, just no.

The background of the image is a black and white optical illusion. It consists of a series of concentric, slightly irregular circles that create a strong sense of depth, making it look like a tunnel or a hole in a wall. At the far end of this tunnel, there is a circular opening. Through this opening, a bright blue sky with a single, fluffy white cloud is visible, providing a stark contrast to the dark, textured interior of the tunnel.

# Frequently asked questions

**How long should the CV be?**

2-pages. But the thing is: It often doesn't matter.

**I've been told never to write in first person on the resume. What do I do?**

I love writing in first person. I don't think there is anything wrong with it. In fact, without the word 'I', the sentences look broken. But, if you're not confident, don't. Do what you're comfortable with.

**How many resume should I make?**

One for each job you're applying to. It doesn't mean you'll make it from scratch. It just means, you'll edit it to fit the need better.

**But this is too much work!**

Yes.

**My friend tells me that my resume is too short. What do I do?**

Feedback is great. Send your CV around and ask for feedback. But, while incorporating that feedback, consider the following:

- ▶ Is the person qualified to give the feedback they have?
- ▶ Have they understood why you've done what you've done?
- ▶ Is the feedback legit?
- ▶ Has anyone else given similar feedback?
- ▶ Do I agree with the feedback?

**Do I need a professional designer to make my resume?**

No. But some sense of design — like typography, colours, layout etc. — will help make your CV more readable. You need to present information in a way that's clear and attractive.

**Should my LinkedIn be the same as my resume?**

It can't possibly be. You'll customise your resume for each job you're applying to. But you can't edit LinkedIn that way. So, LinkedIn will be a more generic summary of your work life. That's fine. Just make sure the information on your LinkedIn profile isn't contradictory to your resume.

**I have a poetry blog. Should I include it?**

If you're applying for the position of a poet, lyricist etc., yes. Else, no. Don't give them an opportunity to judge you before even meeting you.

**Should I include hobbies?**

Why?

**What file format should I send it in?**

PDF, unless asked otherwise. This is for good reason.

- ▶ PDFs can be opened without needing additional software. A Word document, for instance, needs Microsoft Word.
- ▶ Your fonts and styles will be locked in a PDF.
- ▶ The recruiter or any intermediary won't be able to edit it easily.

### **What links should I provide?**

LinkedIn, certainly. If you have a relevant personal website or blog, include that. If it's a social media or personal branding role, include Twitter as well. If you have a portfolio website, or GitHub, or something like that, include it. If you're been covered in the press — for relevant reasons — put that in.

### **Should I mention what each of my employers are about?**

Explaining your employer's business is a waste of space. If they're a very small firm, or a startup in a new field, include a link to their website.

### **What page margins should I allow?**

Don't worry about the exact millimetres of this. But make sure there is enough white space around and in between your text.

### **Should I use British or American spellings?**

Either is just fine. Be consistent, and be correct.

### **I don't know what the role is. This recruitment consultant is asking me to send a generic resume. What do I do?**

First, try your very best to learn from her what the role is. If she's still reluctant, send a resume that presents you in good light and keep your fingers crossed.

### **I'm not a good writer. What do I do?**

Get help. It is perfectly fine to tell someone else about yourself and get their help in writing it down. Unless your job is writing, then, that's a shame!

### **How often should I update my resume?**

Before sending it out. Unlike LinkedIn, which I recommend you revise every three months, resume will be seen only when you send it. So, update it when there is a need to send.

### **Can I include my side gigs in the resume?**

If they're related, yes. Otherwise, may be not. However, during the interview, make sure there is no clause in the employment contract that prohibits you from moonlighting.

### **What about the covering letter?**

Typically, for jobs in India, a formal cover letter isn't necessary. Just attach your resume to the email and write a short note in the body of it. Introduce yourself, mimic keywords, point to the attachment, ask for a confirmation.

Don't forget a good subject line.



I genuinely hope this ebook gives you everything you need to get started on creating your CV.

For more about work, entrepreneurship, freelancing, writing and CVs, read

**[thewhole.works](http://thewhole.works)**

If you'd like your CV reviewed by me, email it to

**[thewholeworks@gmail.com](mailto:thewholeworks@gmail.com)**.