

## Phase 1: Foundation & Research

### *Personal Brand Audit*

- Clean up all social media (Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, Instagram)
- Create/optimize LinkedIn profile with professional content only
- Set up professional email address (*firstname.lastname* format)
- Google yourself - review and clean up any public content

### *Self-Assessment*

- Define and inventory your skills (technical/soft), career goals and target roles
- Identify 3-5 key accomplishments with quantifiable results
- Write elevator pitch/value proposition (See “**Elevator Pitch Guide**” for details)
- Write an Objective Statement or Summary Profile that addresses 3 key questions:
  - What is your Major or area of emphasis?
  - What job/position are you seeking (internship, part-time or full-time)?
  - What 3-5 objective or learned skills will you bring to perform this role?

### *Target Research*

- Company: Size, culture, financials, projects, mission/vision
- Position: Required skills, certifications, experience level, responsibilities
- Hiring Manager: Background via LinkedIn, mutual connections
- Industry: Current trends, terminology, key players

## Phase 2: Applicant Tracking System (ATS) & Screening Optimization

### *ATS Compliance*

- Use standard section headings (Experience, Education, Skills)
- Save in .docx or .pdf format (check job posting requirements)
- Use standard fonts (Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman, 10-12pt)
- Avoid headers, footers, tables, text boxes, graphics, columns (put personal information in body text)
- No special characters or symbols (use asterisks for bullets)
- Include full spelled-out terms AND acronyms (e.g., "Search Engine Optimization (SEO)")

### *Keyword Optimization*

- Extract 10-15 keywords from job description and include them in multiple sections naturally
- Match exact phrasing from job posting when possible
- Prioritize hard over soft skills, but include both if job description does
- Include industry-specific terminology and add relevant certifications and tools mentioned
- DO NOT simply copy!** Only use keywords, phrases, and terms matching your skills and knowledge

### *HR Screener Strategy*

- Place most relevant qualifications in top 1/3 of resume
- Mirror the job posting's language and priorities when they match your skills and knowledge
- Explicitly include all required qualifications that match with yours
- Add LinkedIn and/or portfolio URL and ensure consistency between resume and profile
- Consider QR code linked to LinkedIn and/or portfolio if desired for printed copies

## Phase 3: Content Development

### *Must-Include Elements*

- Contact: Name, phone, email, city/state, LinkedIn URL
- Summary/Objective: 2-3 lines targeting specific role (optional but recommended)
- Experience: Create 1-2 line bullets for each project or experience (see **4 Question Format** below)
- Quantifiable achievements (percentages, dollars, time saved, people managed)
- Education: Degree, school, graduation date (GPA only if >3.5)
- Skills section: Technical, software, languages, certifications
- QR code to portfolio/LinkedIn (for printed versions at job fairs)

### *Writing Guidelines*

- Organize experience from the top down, starting with most recent role first and oldest role last
- Use present tense for current role, past tense for previous roles
- Put most important/relevant content first within each bullet paragraph.
- Start bullets with strong action verbs (managed, developed, increased, reduced)
- Experience bullets should be 1-2 lines maximum and follow the **4 Question Format**:
  - What was your role or title?
  - What did YOU do specifically? (Keep focus on your role and actions, not what team did)
  - What degree-specific skills did you use?
  - What were the results? How did you make a difference?
- Follow template: [Action Verb] + [What you did] + [Skills/Tools/Methods] + [Quantified Result]
- Use metrics and numbers wherever possible
- Example format: "Programmed microcontroller (STM32) to control motor speed using PID loop, improving torque stability by 15%"
- Write in first person implied (no "I" statements)
- Use impact language: change "Worked on circuit board design" to "Designed and prototyped PCB for low-noise amplifier, reducing signal loss by 30%"
- Include specific technical tools in parentheses (e.g., STM32, SolidWorks, MATLAB)

### *Projects as Experience*

- Format academic projects like job entries: "Project Title – Role | Tools Used | Date"
- Include capstone projects as primary experience
- Add personal builds and side projects as professional experience
- Describe each project using **4 Question Format** (see above)

### *Responsibility as Experience*

- Include unrelated work experience to show leadership, accountability and promotion
- Include unpaid and volunteer experience to show trust and responsibility

### *Create Portfolio*

- If possible, consider creating a printed and/or online portfolio highlighting your project work
- For Software/EE/CS: Link projects to GitHub with proper READMEs, comments and commit history
- For ME/CE: Create portfolio with CAD drawings, FEA analysis, or prototype photos
- Include direct links to specific projects relevant to the position
- Ensure all linked content has professional presentation

## Phase 4: Design & Format

### *Layout Requirements*

- Length: 1 page (new grads), 2 pages max (experienced)
- Margins: 0.5" to 1" all around
- White space: 20-30% of page for readability
- Consistency: Same date format, bullet style, spacing throughout
- Hierarchy: Clear visual distinction between sections

### *Final Quality Checks*

- Zero spelling/grammar errors (use multiple checkers)
- Consistent punctuation and capitalization
- All dates accurate and in reverse chronological order (latest on top, oldest at the bottom)
- Print test: Ensure it looks good in black and white

## Phase 5: Customization & Submission

### *For Each Job Application*

- Tailor a custom resume version to match a specific job description
- Adjust professional summary to each specific target role
- Write customized cover letter (when required)

### *AI Feedback*

- Consider submitting resume to an AI service (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, etc.) for feedback
- Review AI suggestions carefully and only use what accurately describes your skill and experience.
- Be careful:** You are responsible for the final product – make it something you are proud to defend.

### *Pre-Submission Checklist*

- Run through ATS simulator (Jobscan, Resume Worded, etc.)
- Score 70%+ match rate with job description
- Save with appropriate filename: "FirstName\_LastName\_Resume\_CompanyName"
- Keep master version and track customized versions
- Verify all technical terms are spelled correctly (especially software names)
- Confirm all project metrics and results are accurate and defensible
- Test all portfolio/GitHub links in incognito mode
- Have another engineering student/professional review for errors and technical accuracy

### *Don'ts - Common Pitfalls to Avoid*

- No photos, graphics, or creative design elements
- No personal information (age, marital status, religion)
- No outdated contact info or broken links
- No generic objectives or buzzword-heavy summaries
- No job descriptions - focus on achievements instead
- No unexplained employment gaps
- No references on resume ("available upon request" is outdated)
- Don't cheat or lie – expect you'll be asked to explain every role, keyword, acronym, skill, date, etc.