

WORK CENTRAL AB

Resume Writing Guide

Build a Professional, ATS-Friendly Resume for Central Alberta Employers

A Career Resource from Work Central AB

Why Your Resume Matters in Central Alberta's Job Market

Your resume is often the first impression an employer has of you, and in a competitive regional labour market, that first impression counts. Central Alberta's economy spans agriculture, manufacturing, energy, healthcare, trades, and public service, and each of those sectors reviews resumes differently. This guide walks you through building a resume that is clear, professional, and tailored to the kinds of employers you'll find across Red Deer, Lacombe, Sylvan Lake, Blackfalds, Olds, and the surrounding region.

Whether you're entering the workforce for the first time, changing careers, or relocating to Central Alberta, the goal is the same: a resume that gets you the interview.

1. Choose the Right Resume Format

There is no single 'correct' resume format. The right choice depends on your work history and career goals.

Chronological Resume

Lists your work experience in reverse order, most recent first. Best for candidates with a steady work history in one field, since it shows clear career progression.

Functional Resume

Organizes content around skills rather than job history. Useful if you're changing careers, have gaps in employment, or are new to the workforce.

Combination Resume

Blends both approaches: a skills summary up top, followed by a chronological work history. This is the format most Canadian employers expect, and the one we recommend for most job seekers using Work Central AB.

2. Essential Resume Sections

A strong Alberta-style resume typically includes the following sections, in this order:

- **Contact Information** - full name, phone number, professional email, city/region, and LinkedIn URL (if applicable). Full mailing address is not required.
- **Professional Summary** - 2–3 sentences highlighting your experience, key skills, and what you bring to the role.
- **Core Skills** - a short list of relevant hard and soft skills, scannable at a glance.
- **Work Experience** - reverse chronological order, with job title, employer, location, dates, and 3–5 achievement-focused bullet points per role.
- **Education** - degrees, diplomas, certifications, and the institutions and years completed.
- **Additional Sections** - certifications, volunteer work, languages, or professional development, where relevant.

3. Alberta and Canadian Resume Standards

Canadian resumes differ from those used in some other countries. A few standards apply broadly across Alberta employers:

- Do not include a photo, date of birth, marital status, or Social Insurance Number.
- Keep it to one or two pages - one page for early-career roles, two pages for experienced candidates.
- Use Canadian spelling and terminology where relevant (e.g., 'labour,' 'centre').
- List credentials earned outside Canada, and note if credential recognition or equivalency is in progress - this is common and expected for newcomers.

4. Writing an ATS-Friendly Resume

Many employers, including larger regional organizations, use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to screen resumes before a human ever reads them. A resume that isn't ATS-friendly can be filtered out automatically, regardless of your qualifications.

Tips for ATS compatibility:

- Use standard section headings such as 'Work Experience' and 'Education' rather than creative alternatives.
- Avoid text boxes, columns, tables, and images - many ATS platforms cannot read them correctly.
- Save your resume as a .docx or a text-based PDF, not a scanned image.
- Mirror key words and phrases from the job posting, especially job titles, tools, and required qualifications.
- Use standard fonts such as Arial, Calibri, or Helvetica at 10–12pt.

5. Tailor Your Resume to Each Job Posting

A generic resume sent to every employer is one of the most common reasons qualified candidates get passed over. Before submitting, review the job posting and adjust your resume to reflect:

- The exact job title used by the employer, where accurate.
- Key skills and qualifications the posting emphasizes.
- Industry-specific terminology relevant to that sector (agriculture, trades, healthcare, etc.).
- Achievements that most closely match the responsibilities listed.

Small, targeted edits - not a full rewrite - are usually enough to significantly improve your response rate.

6. Common Resume Mistakes to Avoid

- Listing duties instead of achievements (e.g., 'Responsible for sales' vs. 'Increased regional sales by 18% in one year').
- Spelling and grammar errors - always proofread, and have a second person review it if possible.
- Inconsistent formatting, such as mismatched fonts, spacing, or date formats.

- Including outdated or irrelevant experience that doesn't support your current goal.
- Using an unprofessional email address or missing contact details.
- Submitting the same resume for every application.

7. Final Resume Checklist

- ✓ Contact information is current and professional
- ✓ Summary is tailored to the specific role
- ✓ Achievements use numbers and results where possible
- ✓ Formatting is clean, consistent, and ATS-friendly
- ✓ Resume is one to two pages in length
- ✓ File is saved as 'FirstName_LastName_Resume.pdf' or .docx
- ✓ Proofread for spelling, grammar, and clarity