Resume Best Practices & ATS Optimization Guide

I. Formatting and Structure

- **File Type:** Always save and submit as a PDF unless otherwise specified to preserve formatting.
- **Length:** Aim for one page for every 10 years of experience. Two pages is a common maximum for non-academic roles.
- **Font:** Use a clean, professional, and legible font like Calibri, Arial, Helvetica, or Garamond. Font size should be between 10-12 points.
- **Margins:** Keep margins between 0.5" and 1".
- **Sections:** Standard sections are:
    1. Contact Information (Name, Phone, Email, LinkedIn URL, City/State)
    2. Professional Summary (3-4 lines tailored to the target job)
    3. Skills (A scannable list of hard and technical skills)
    4. Work Experience (Reverse-chronological order)
    5. Education
    6. (Optional) Certifications, Projects, Publications

II. ATS (Applicant Tracking System) Optimization

- **Keywords:** Identify keywords from the job description (e.g., "data analysis," "project management," "Python," "Agile methodologies") and ensure they are naturally integrated into your resume's Skills and Work Experience sections.
- **No Graphics or Tables:** Avoid using images, charts, text boxes, or tables, as most ATS cannot parse them correctly.
- **Standard Section Headings:** Use conventional headings (e.g., "Work Experience" instead of "My Career Journey").
- **Acronyms:** Spell out acronyms first, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. E.g., "Customer Relationship Management (CRM)".

III. Content: Action Verbs & Quantification

- **Action Verbs:** Start every bullet point with a strong action verb (e.g., "Orchestrated," "Engineered," "Managed," "Analyzed," "Streamlined").
- **Quantify Everything:** Whenever possible, use numbers to show the scale and impact of your work.
    - *Instead of:* "Responsible for managing the team's budget."
    - *Write:* "Managed a departmental budget of $500K, reducing operational costs by 15% year-over-year through strategic vendor negotiations."