Resume Checklist Review

This checklist gives you a list of ways to make your resume excellent.

Check out the resource link for an interactive version of this checklist of questions.

This advice is for: software engineers applying to software engineering roles at tech companies and startups. It is less applicable to web developer gigs, engineering gigs at finance companies, etc.

The idea is basically to update your resume as you do the checklist. Read the item, correct it, check that you've done it.

1. Is the formatting clean, i.e. no weird multi column layouts?
2. Best resume template: <https://quip.com/MFS9AXtq5fk8>
3. Is the resume only 1 page, unless you have 10+ years experience or similar?
4. Is the resume free of embellishment (or even worse, lies)?
5. Is it scannable -- can I figure out school/major/roles/companies in 5-10 seconds? Consider bolding or italicizing.
6. Is it scannable pt 2 -- have you used bullet points wherever possible?
7. Are you avoiding having multiple different font styles?
8. Is the alignment/organization/design consistent?
9. Have you checked over for spelling/grammar?
10. Current student/recent grads -- do you include major (even if non-CS student), and GPA assuming it is >= 3.1?
11. For any questions of the form: 'should I include X,' have you asked 'if someone else had X, would it make you want to work with them more so?'
12. Is the resume in PDF? Have you renamed it to first-last-resume.pdf, or similar? (underscores are fine, but it should include your full name and the word resume)
13. Do you list your city and state? (And if far from where you are applying, do you note something like 'Open to working in Bay Area')
14. Have you tailored version of your resumes for companies that are looking for very different things? (e.g. different cities, roles)
15. Have you removed any info on religion, marital status, and ethnicity?
16. Can someone identify your graduation year (and starting year of college, too) within 2 seconds?
17. If you haven't started or been accepted into a MS program yet, are you leaving it off your resume?
18. Don't include things that aren't relevant
19. If you went to a non-well known college and are applying to a startup, do you include context on the school (e.g. 4 year university vs 2 year, etc)?
20. If you transferred or switched schools, do you include a sentence of context as to why?
21. Have you removed the 'objective' section, if you have one?
22. Do you include email and phone number?
23. Do you include Github profile, personal site, and LinkedIn URLs if relevant? And are all the URLs clickable in the PDF?
24. Have you removed the fluff? e.g. "worked closely with product managers"
25. Are you avoiding the spammy-looking long list of all the technologies you've worked with? (It's OK to list the ones you are proficient with).
26. Asking again because it's so common -- do you only list languages/tools that you would be comfortable diving into in an interview?
27. Projects/experience: do you separate experience notes by projects (most companies divide work into projects)?
28. Projects/experience: if someone without context on your projects skimmed the bullets, would they a) get it and b) think it is cool/interesting?
29. Projects/experience: are keywords/acronyms \*only\* presented in context inside project narratives? Not in lists?
30. Projects/experience: If possible, can you work in benefits/outcomes into the narrative? (e.g. how you improved performance of Y by 15X, or how you spent 2 months on something that represents 20% of all revenue)?
31. If possible, find a way to turn it into some kind of number. Numbers generally seem good while scanning.
32. Seriously, don't underestimate the previous checkbox. Double check it again and try and apply this. The biggest improvements in resumes are always from the previous checkbox. Have you done it even more, for both project and employment bullet points?
33. For projects: if they were personal projects, do you note as such? Also, if you had partners on the projects, do you note so and note what you specifically did?
34. Optional tip to make Github better: have you added a really nice looking readme.md for the first project that shows up in your Github account? (See: https://gist.github.com/jxson/1784669)
35. This is generally as far as someone will go on a quick scan. Click project URL, click Github project URL, scroll through readme.md in 5 seconds, close.
36. Projects/experience: Within each experience, do you list major accomplishments before minor ones (or even better, delete minor accomplishments)?
37. Have you applied the advice on benefits to projects, too? (e.g. write number of downloads, users, what people use the project for/why you built it, etc?)
38. Is your resume ordered such that the best (often, but not always, newest) stuff is first? Education after experience unless it's better (e.g. 4.0 GPA top school vs o-k work experience, then education first)?
39. If you're a semi recent grad or current student, it's generally still best to put education at the top.
40. Only if relevant and you need more content: If you are listing courses, are you listing both names and titles, and perhaps some narrative about what you did? One-two vivid descriptions >> a list of 10 courses names.
41. Do you realize that the resume is just a ticket to an interview?