

The Nurse's Resume Writing Guide

Section-by-section, written for nursing — with strong-vs-weak examples

This guide walks the resume section by section for registered nurses, from new grad to experienced. The single biggest difference between a resume that gets a call and one that gets skipped is not design — it is specific, quantified accomplishments in a clean, scannable layout that both a recruiter and an applicant-tracking system (ATS) can read. Use this alongside the Action-Verb Bank, the Bullet & Phrase Library, and the ATS Cheat-Sheet in this kit.

1. Contact & header

Put your name, credentials, phone, email, city/state, and (optionally) a LinkedIn URL in the body of the document — never in the Word header/footer, where many ATS systems drop it. List credentials in the standard order employers expect: highest degree, licensure, national certifications, then awards. Example: Jane Rivera, BSN, RN, CCRN.

- Use a professional email (firstname.lastname@...), not a college or novelty address.
- One phone number, with voicemail set up and a professional greeting.
- City and state are enough — do not put your full street address.
- Credentials after your name signal licensure at a glance; spell them out again under Licensure.

2. Professional summary

Three to four lines, tailored to the role. Lead with your title and years (or 'newly licensed'), then your setting, patient population, and one or two signature strengths. Skip the objective statement — it wastes prime space telling the employer what you want instead of what you offer.

Weak: Hardworking nurse looking for a rewarding position where I can use my skills and grow.

Stronger: Critical-care RN with 8+ years in ICU and cardiac step-down, caring for high-acuity patients at 2:1–5:1 ratios. Charge nurse, preceptor, and Epic super-user with a sustained record of zero central-line infections.

3. Licensure & certifications

Recruiters and ATS filters look here first to confirm you are eligible. Give each credential its issuing body, number where appropriate, and status/expiration. Note compact (eNLC) multistate licensure if you hold it — it is a real hiring advantage.

- RN license: state board, license number, compact status, and active-through date.
- BLS / ACLS / PALS / NIHSS as applicable, with issuer (American Heart Association) and expiration.
- Specialty certs (CCRN, PCCN, CEN, RNC-OB, etc.) with the certifying body and year earned.
- New grads: list NCLEX-RN passed and the date, plus BLS at minimum.

4. Clinical / work experience

This is where you win or lose the resume. Use reverse-chronological order. For each role give title, employer, location, and dates aligned to the right margin (this kit uses tab stops, so they stay aligned when you edit). Then 3–6 bullets that each start with a strong verb and, wherever possible, carry a number: a ratio, a percentage, a

volume, a time, or an outcome. New grads: use your clinical rotations and a capstone/preceptorship the same way.

Weak: Responsible for patient care and medication administration on a busy unit.

Stronger: Managed care for up to 3 high-acuity ICU patients per shift — ventilator, CRRT, and post-op cardiac — while sustaining 98% adherence to hourly assessment standards.

Weak: Helped reduce infections on the unit.

Stronger: Led a CLABSI-reduction initiative that drove central-line infections from 2.1 to 0 per 1,000 line-days over 18 months, sustained across 3 years.

Weak: Trained new nurses.

Stronger: Precepted 14 new-graduate nurses through a 12-week residency, retaining 13 of 14 (93%) at one year — 20 points above the unit average.

If you do not have a hard number, quantify the scope instead: bed count, patient ratio, shift volume, team size, or how often you did something. 'Charge nurse for a 24-bed ICU, 6–8 shifts per month' is concrete even without an outcome percentage.

5. Education

Degree, school, location, and graduation year. New grads should make education prominent and add clinical hours, GPA if 3.5+, honors, and a capstone. Experienced nurses can keep it short — one or two lines — because your experience now carries the resume.

6. Skills

A tight, scannable list of the clinical systems, equipment, and competencies the posting names — mirror its language so the ATS matches you. Keep it to genuine skills; do not keyword-stuff. Group by relevance to the role you are targeting (e.g. lead with ICU skills for an ICU posting).

- Name the EHR (Epic, Cerner/Oracle Health, Meditech) — postings often screen for it.
- Include equipment and modalities you truly operate (ventilators, CRRT, telemetry, IV pumps).
- Add soft competencies that matter at the bedside: SBAR handoff, rapid response, patient education.

One-page vs. two-page

New grads and nurses with under ~5 years: aim for one page. Experienced nurses with a deep history: two pages is fine and expected. This kit ships BOTH a 1-page and a 2-page version of every design from the same content, so you can pick per application. Keep the strongest, most recent, most quantified material at the top of page one either way.