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## Resumes and Cover Letters with AI — Presentation Summary

### The Purpose of a Resume

**Your resume has one job** — to make an employer say, *"I have to interview this person."* In 2026, this means:

- Software (ATS) may screen it before any human sees it
- When a human does see it, you have only 6–10 seconds
- AI can help you write for both audiences

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### The ATS Problem

**Why Great Resumes Get Ignored (It's Not You)** Most large companies use Applicant Tracking Systems — software that scans resumes before any human reviews them. The ATS looks for specific keywords from the job posting, and if your resume doesn't match, it's filtered out automatically. Notably, this disproportionately affects 50+ job seekers because older resume styles often don't align with what ATS scans for.

💡 **Callout box:** *"Paste a job description into Claude or and ask: 'What are the most important keywords from this job posting I should include in my resume?' You'll have a targeted keyword list in 30 seconds."*

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### Bullet Points: What Makes Them Work

**Important 'Points' about Bullet Points** - What makes bullets effective:

**Important qualities:** keywords, accomplishment-based language, strong opening verbs, and numbers when possible.

**Essential qualities:** concise (1–2 lines), focused on one idea, relevant to the employer and role, starting with the most important result.

An example bullet is provided for improvement: *"Executed a 6-month benchmarking exercise aimed at evaluating industry standards which led to the revision of 40 job descriptions across 5 organizational levels."*

💡 **Callout box:** *"Use AI to improve this bullet point"* — the audience is invited to paste this into Claude or ChatGPT and ask for a rewrite.

The following slide shows a **positive bullet example:**

- *"Reduced costs 10% by leading a major cost rationalization program."*
- Or flipped: *"Led major cost rationalization program that reduced costs by 10%."*

💡 **Callout box:** "AI can suggest both versions and help you decide which puts the result first for maximum impact."

**Even Concise Bullets Can Miss the Target**, short but still imperfect:

- "Decreased turnover by 80% in first year after collaborating with management team."
- "Reduced overtime by 40% by advising management to modify work schedules."

💡 **Evaluate:** "Transitioned to internal recruitment, reduced hiring costs from 500K to 250K, and lowered open-requisition time from 76 days to 44 days." The suggested improvement drops the weak opener and leads with the result.

💡 **Callout box:** "Try it yourself — right now if you have your phone or open another browser window: Open Claude.ai or ChatGPT. Paste this bullet: 'Transitioned to internal recruitment, reduced hiring costs from 500K to 250K, and lowered open-requisition time from 76 days to 44 days.' Ask AI to rewrite it starting with the strongest result."

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## Tailoring Resumes to the Role

**Two Similar Occupations – Two Different Styles** one in Technical Writing/Instructional Design/Training, and one in Instructional Design/Technical Writing. The resumes use different formatting, section emphasis, and skill highlights to match each role's focus.

💡 **Callout box (italicized):** "Notice how both resumes are tailored to the role — not generic. AI can help you create multiple tailored versions of your resume efficiently."

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## Essentials According to the Experts

What expert reviewers look for: grammar, punctuation and spelling; professional tone; keywords and phrases; accomplishments; ATS compatibility; visual readability; knowledge of relevant software; and proper section placement.

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## The 98% Problem

98% of the general public prepares their résumés incorrectly, what most people miss and how AI can help:

### What Most People Miss

Targeting the resume to the role

Using the right keywords

Writing CAR (Challenge-Action-Result) statements

Formatting and design

### How AI Helps

Ask AI to compare your resume to the job posting

Ask AI to extract keywords from any job description

Ask AI to rewrite your bullets in CAR format


Ask AI to flag readability issues

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## Your AI Resume Workflow

A four-step workflow:

1. Copy the job description
2. Ask AI: "What are the top 10 keywords and skills this employer is looking for?"
3. Ask AI: "Here is my current resume and this job description. What should I add, change, or remove to better match this role?"
4. Review AI suggestions — you decide what fits, what's accurate, what sounds like you

 **Callout box:** "AI is your assistant, not your author. Always review everything it produces. You know your experience — AI helps you present it better."

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## Our Best Resume Checklist

	Poor	Fair	Excellent
Résumé targets prospective employers' needs with matching qualifications; demonstrates fit between your qualifications and their needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most important (targeted) information is contained in the top one-third of résumé.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identifies and correctly targets your key transferable skills (skills used in one profession or position than can be transferred over to use in another).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Correct use of résumé format (chronological, functional, combination, CV) for your situation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No employment gaps evident or skillfully handled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work history does not go back further than 10 or, max, 15 years (if relative experience cannot be shown in the past 10 years).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment related to your targeted profession documented under "Professional Experience." Earlier, unrelated experience is listed under "Earlier Career Development," "Additional Experience," or "Other Employment" at the end of your résumé.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Omits or tactfully handles any "red flags"; turns them into assets wherever possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placement of job years to best advantage (before job title if there are no employment gaps; tucked at end of employment line if gaps are evident).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plays up strengths and minimizes weaknesses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unrelated jobs include targeted job functions wherever possible (Example: Someone applying for a railroad conductor might include customer service and money-handling functions in an unrelated position.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activities, hobbies, professional affiliations, and/or special interests included when relative, omitted when not.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promotions are handled well and demonstrate progressive experience in your field.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incorporates relevant information and omits irrelevant information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meets current résumé-writing standards.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Cover Letters

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**A Modern Cover Letter Accomplishes 2 Things:**

1. Showcases why they should hire you
2. Starts to tell the story of transitions or gaps

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## Personal Branding

Use matching headers (name, city, email, phone, LinkedIn) circled in blue ovals to illustrate consistent personal branding across documents.

💡 **Callout box:** "Ask AI: 'Does my cover letter header match my resume header formatting?' — a small detail that signals professionalism."

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## Avoiding Generic Openings

**Why Are You Excited? The Opportunity Or The Impact You'll Make?** "I am excited to apply" — this opener has become generic and meaningless.

💡 **Callout box:** "This is also an AI trap — if you ask AI to write your opening without specific guidance, it often defaults to exactly this kind of generic phrase. You have to direct it."

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## Two Methods to Open Strong

**Method 1 — Start with WHY (Simon Sinek approach):** Simon Sinek's book *Start With Why* is a framework. The example is for a Research & Development role at Kellogg, emphasizing the applicant's belief in the importance of safe and reliable food sources and their vision of being on the cutting edge of nutritious food development.

💡 **Callout box:** "AI prompt to try: 'Help me write a cover letter opening that starts with WHY I care about this type of work, using the Simon Sinek approach. Here is the job description and here are 3 things I genuinely care about in my work: [list them].'"

**Method 2 — Start with Accomplishments:** A sample cover letter for a Personal Trainer role (attributed to newsletter writer Don Orlando) is shown, opening with a bold centered headline: "Consistently Achieve Top 10 Out Of 350 Nationwide" and subhead "2010 Training Coach of the Year Nominee," followed by a passion statement and career highlights.

💡 **Callout box:** "Use this template as your prompt structure. Tell AI: 'Fill in this cover letter template for me. Here is the job description, here is my resume, and here are the three contributions I most want to highlight.' Then edit for your own voice."

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## Cover Letter Body Template

### Make the Body Tight, Impactful and Conversational:

"My skills in [your skills that they are seeking/are listed in the job description] align with your need for [specific requirement]. With [Company Name]'s goal to [company goal or department goal], my experience in [relevant experience] can help drive success.

I believe I can contribute to your team by:

- [Example 1: Improving efficiency in X area]
- [Example 2: Implementing strategies to achieve Y goal]
- [Example 3: Enhancing performance through Z initiative]

Inspired by your mission, I have developed a day-one plan to [accomplish goal one] and [accomplish goal two]..."

💡 **Callout box:** "Use this template as your prompt structure. Tell AI: 'Fill in this cover letter template for me. Here is the job description, here is my resume, and here are the three contributions I most want to highlight.' Then edit for your own voice."

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## Closing with Confidence

Two example closing paragraphs are noted, both emphasizing enthusiasm for the role, alignment with the company's goals, and a forward-looking invitation to discuss further. One example mentions being eager to bring "strategic vision, leadership skills, and industry experience" while another expresses being honored to "partner and collaborate with the leadership team to drive sales growth."

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## Cover Letter Do's and Don'ts

**Do's:** Try to address it to someone, use a creative opening, make a compelling case, indicate how you match the position, show knowledge of the company's current challenges, expand upon your résumé, use white space and bullets, limit to one page, and proofread before sending.

**Don'ts** (illustrated with a woman making an X with her arms): Address it generically, use a boring/standard opening, use clichés, lie or exaggerate, write a bland letter showing no research, regurgitate your résumé, write a crowded hard-to-read letter, go beyond one page, or send a letter with typos.

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## AI Do's and Don'ts for Resumes and Cover Letters

A final table summarizes best practices for using AI:

AI Do's	AI Don'ts
Use it to identify keywords from job postings	Don't let it invent accomplishments or job titles
Use it to rewrite weak bullet points	Don't submit AI output without reading it carefully
Use it to check for ATS compatibility	Don't use AI-generated text that doesn't sound like you
Use it to proofread for grammar and spelling	Don't share sensitive personal info (SSN, full address)
Use it to generate multiple drafts quickly	Don't rely on it to replace your own judgment

💡 **Callout box (bonus tip):** "Upgrade your LinkedIn About section: 'Write a compelling LinkedIn About section for someone with [X] years in [field] who is open to new opportunities. Warm, human, under 220 words. No buzzwords.' Follow-up: 'Make it sound more like how I actually talk.'"

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