

The Nurse Resume ATS Checklist

Make your resume parse cleanly and read well to a recruiter -- free, by Clyde Diето, BSN RN.

Use this before you submit any nursing job application. It's the same pass I make on a resume before it goes out — checking that the screening software can actually read it and that a recruiter sees the right things fast. No fluff, and no promises about offers (that's on you and the market). Just the stuff you control.

How hospital screening software actually treats your resume

Most hospitals run your resume through applicant-tracking software (Taleo, Workday, iCIMS, UKG). It doesn't "auto-reject" you — it **parses** your resume into fields, stores it, and lets recruiters **search and rank** by keywords. If the software mis-reads your formatting, or you don't use the posting's words, you get parsed wrong or buried under applicants who did. This checklist fixes that.

1. Formatting the parser can read

- **One single column.** Two-column layouts, sidebars, and text boxes scramble in the parser. Looks clean to you; reads as mush to the software.
- **No tables for layout, and no critical info in headers/footers.** Put your name, phone, and email in the body at the top of page 1.
- **Standard section headings:** "Experience," "Education," "Licenses & Certifications," "Skills." Clever headings ("Where I've Made an Impact") confuse the parser.
- **A common font** (Calibri, Arial, Georgia) at 10–12pt. No graphics, icons, or photos.
- **Submit a .docx** unless the posting asks for PDF. Never submit a scanned image or a design-tool export.

2. Keywords that match the posting

- **Mirror the posting's exact words.** If it says "telemetry," don't only write "tele." If it says "BLS," write **Basic Life Support (BLS)** — spell it out *and* give the acronym.
- **List every license and certification** with its full name: RN, BSN, ACLS, PALS, NRP, TNCC, CEN — whatever you actually hold.
- **Name your EMR** (Epic, Cerner, Meditech) and your specialty / unit type.
- **Pull 8–12 keywords straight from the job description** and make sure the true ones appear in your resume *in context* — not stuffed into a list.

3. Content that reads well to a human

- **Reverse-chronological**, most recent first, with **month + year** dates (bare years read as missing data to the parser).
- **Lead bullets with action verbs** and quantify where it's TRUE (patient load, bed count, charge shifts). Don't invent numbers.
- **Include your license number and expiration** if the posting or your state asks for it.
- **Label travel, per-diem, and contract roles as such.** A string of short *full-time* jobs reads as job-hopping; clearly-labeled travel contracts don't.

4. The honest stuff (the part most people skip)

- **Never add a skill, cert, or metric that isn't true** to match a posting. It surfaces in the interview and burns you. Match what's REAL to their words.
- **Explain a gap simply** — one honest line beats hiding it behind vague dates.
- **Don't pad to a magic page count.** Two pages is fine for an experienced nurse; one is fine for a new grad. Relevance beats length.

5. Two-minute pre-submit pass

- File named like `FirstLast_RN_Resume.docx` — not `resume_final_v3.docx`.
- Your target job's title language shows up somewhere true on the resume.
- Contact info is plain text, parseable, at the top of page 1.
- Read it out loud once. Typos and a missing license date are the quiet killers.

That's the checklist. Run your resume through it and you've handled most of what gets nurses filtered before a human ever reads them.

Want a second set of eyes? I'll scan your resume against a specific job posting and send back the top 3 keyword/format gaps — free, no pitch. Or if you'd rather have the whole thing rebuilt to do all of this for you, that's what SirClydus Resumes does.

By Clyde Dieto, BSN RN — 13-year ER trauma nurse, Loma Linda. clydedieto.com. This checklist is preparation, not a guarantee of any outcome.