



TIER ONE TALENT & INTEL RECRUITING

Mission-Ready Talent. Defense-Built Solutions.

THE CAREER TOOLKIT

Resumes, Recruiters, and the Cleared Job Search

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Two things move the needle most in a cleared job search: **a resume that earns the second look** and **a recruiter relationship that actually advocates for you**. This guide is a baseline for both: how to write resumes that get past ATS screens and onto desks, and how to work with recruiters strategically while spotting the red flags.

CORE PRINCIPLES

- **Lead with your clearance.** In cleared work, your clearance is the headline. Put it next to your name, not buried at the bottom.
- **Quantify everything.** "Reduced incident response time by 40%" beats "Effectively managed incidents" every single time.
- **Treat recruiters as partners, not gatekeepers.** Good recruiters open doors you can't see; bad ones waste your time and protect their commission. Know the difference.
- **Never share your SSN or banking info early.** Legitimate recruiters don't need it before a formal offer and onboarding. Treat any early request as a red flag until proven otherwise.

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01 • RESUME FUNDAMENTALS

Cleared hiring managers and recruiters scan, they don't read. Your resume has roughly 6–10 seconds to communicate who you are, what clearance you hold, and why you fit. Everything below serves that goal.

Contact Block — What Belongs

- **Name** Bold and prominent. Follow immediately with your clearance level if applicable: **Jane Doe | TS/SCI w/ FSP**
- **Location** City and state only (e.g., Washington, D.C.). Full street address is unnecessary and a privacy risk.
- **Phone** Mobile only. One number.
- **Professional email** firstname.lastname@gmail.com or similar. Skip the high school AOL handle.
- **LinkedIn (optional)** Only if it's current and matches your resume. Inconsistencies are a red flag for recruiters.

Contact Block — What Does NOT Belong

- Date of birth, SSN, full street address — privacy risks, never required.
- Photographs — standard in some countries, problematic in U.S. federal hiring.
- Hobbies, marital status, "References available upon request" — outdated filler.

Format Rules

- Professional fonts only: Calibri, Arial, Times New Roman, Helvetica. 10–12 pt body, larger headers.
- Present tense for your current role; past tense for everything else.
- Bullets over paragraphs. Recruiters don't read essays.
- Save and submit as PDF unless explicitly told otherwise. PDF preserves formatting across systems.
- Two pages is the new standard for mid-career and above; one page only for very early career or specific executive summaries.

02 • CONTENT THAT CONVERTS

The Summary Section

No need to label it "Professional Summary" — just dive in. Two to five tight sentences that capture your clearance, years of experience, technical depth, and the kind of value you deliver. Avoid generic adjectives ("results-driven," "dynamic," "motivated"); they signal nothing and waste prime real estate.

Example:

IT professional with 8+ years designing and managing secure enterprise networks. Expertise optimizing infrastructure for 99.9% uptime, implementing cloud architectures, and delivering scalable solutions. Active TS/SCI w/ FSP. Strong track record of driving efficiency in mission-critical environments.

The Bullet Point Formula

Strong resume bullets follow a simple structure: Action Verb + Task or Responsibility + Measurable Impact. Drop the fluff.

Weak: Effectively communicated with team members to achieve goals.

Strong: Led a cross-functional team of 10 to deliver a \$1.2M cloud migration two weeks ahead of schedule, reducing infrastructure costs 18%.

03 • CERTIFICATIONS, SKILLS & TAILORING

Where to List Certifications

For IT, cyber, and technical cleared roles, list your certifications immediately under the summary — not at the bottom. Hiring managers and ATS screens both prioritize them. For non-technical cleared roles (program management, analysis, operations), certifications belong near the bottom with education.

Group, Don't Dump

Don't list 40 certifications in a single paragraph. Group them logically and use " | " separators to save space:

- **Cybersecurity:** CISSP | CISM | CompTIA Security+ | GIAC GCIH
- **Cloud:** AWS Solutions Architect | Azure Solutions Architect Expert | Google Cloud Professional
- **Networking:** CCNA | CCNP | CompTIA Network+

Tailor for Every Application

- Mirror the job description's language — if the posting says "vulnerability management," don't write "vuln scanning."
- Move the most relevant experience and skills to the top of each section.
- Match keywords for ATS pass-through, but write authentically. Keyword stuffing fails human reviewers and modern ATS alike.
- If using AI tools (ChatGPT, Claude, etc.) to draft or refine, proofread carefully — generic AI phrasing is increasingly easy to spot and signals lack of effort.

Career Gaps — Be Brief, Be Honest

Don't hide gaps. A one-line acknowledgment is enough: "2023–2024: Career break for caregiving responsibilities." Recruiters appreciate honesty far more than creative rephrasing or unexplained jumps.

04 • WORKING WITH RECRUITERS

Recruiters fall into several categories — each operates differently, and understanding the differences helps you set expectations and engage productively.

Recruiter Types

- **Internal (Corporate) Recruiters** Work directly for the hiring company. Deep insight into culture and process; focused on filling that company's roles only.
- **External / Agency Recruiters** Represent multiple clients. Broader market view; sometimes more transactional.
- **Third-Party / Contingency Recruiters** Paid by the employer only when a placement happens. Often have direct hiring-manager access and can bypass the ATS entirely.
- **Retained Recruiters / Headhunters** Exclusively engaged for senior or hard-to-fill roles. Work on retainer; deeper engagement per candidate.
- **RPO (Recruitment Process Outsourcing)** A vendor running the employer's entire recruitment function. Long-term, brand-aligned engagement.

What Good Recruiters Do For You

- Provide resume feedback aligned to the specific role and company.
- Prep you for interviews with insight on the hiring manager, team, and culture.
- Advocate during compensation negotiation, leveraging market data.
- Bypass the ATS — your resume lands on a decision-maker's desk.
- Surface roles that never get posted publicly.

05 • RECRUITER RED FLAGS

The cleared community is small and reputable recruiters are easy to verify. Spotting a bad actor early saves you weeks of wasted time — and protects your personal data from being misused.

Walk Away If You See These

- **Requests for personal information too soon.** SSN, banking info, copy of your ID, full address — never share these before a formal offer and verified onboarding process.
- **Pressure to sign a Right-to-Represent (R2R) without details.** R2Rs grant exclusive submission rights for a specific role. Legitimate ones list the company, position, and scope. Vague or pressure-driven R2Rs are a hard pass.
- **Refusal to disclose the hiring company or contract details.** Some discretion is normal early in the process; complete refusal to name the customer or company even after initial conversations is a red flag.
- **Suspicious contact details.** Generic email domains, foreign phone numbers, no verifiable LinkedIn presence, no visible company website. Verify before engaging.
- **Unrealistic offers.** If the salary is dramatically above market for the clearance and skillset, dig in. "Too good to be true" is usually exactly that in cleared work.
- **Charging the candidate a fee.** Recruiters are paid by employers, not candidates. The only legitimate exception is rare executive headhunting at the senior C-suite level.

06 • THE TIER ONE 10 — NON-NEGOTIABLE RESUME RULES

Twenty-seven rules in the original guide. Here are the ten that matter most for cleared candidates today.

01	Clearance at the top. Next to your name. The single most valuable line of text on the document for cleared hiring.
02	Two pages max. Limit to the last 10 years unless niche or executive. Recruiters won't read more.
03	Quantify your impact. Numbers, percentages, dollars, time. "Reduced X by Y%" beats every adjective.
04	Strong action verbs only. Implemented, designed, led, optimized. Skip overused ones like "spearheaded."
05	Tailor for every role. Mirror the job description's language. Move relevant experience to the top.
06	Send as PDF. Preserves formatting. Save as FirstName_LastName_Resume.pdf.
07	Match LinkedIn to resume. Mismatches are a major recruiter red flag. Update both together.
08	Be honest about gaps. Brief acknowledgment is enough. "Career break for caregiving" works.
09	Skip the fluff section. Drop "Key Skills," "Objective," "References Available Upon Request."
10	Proofread relentlessly. Typos cost interviews. Run spellcheck, read aloud, peer review.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Informational baseline only. Tier One offers free resume reviews and revisions for cleared candidates — reach out anytime. **Related:** Security Clearances, Compensation Playbook, Cleared Pro Resources.

QUESTIONS? REACH OUT.

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