



BEFORE & AFTER — COMPLETE DELIVERABLE PAIR

Associate/Staff Accountant (Audit, Tax, Advisory) resume: the complete rewrite

Target: Senior Audit Associate / Staff Accountant (US market).

CONSTRUCTED EXAMPLE — "Jasmine Carter" is a fictional candidate created to demonstrate our methodology, not a real client. Client materials are never published. Scenario: Audit Associate at a regional public accounting firm, 2 years post-graduation, targeting Senior Associate and industry Staff Accountant roles.

THE AFTER — the optimized resume

Jasmine Carter

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Audit Associate (CPA Candidate — passed FAR and AUD; REG scheduled Q4 2026) with 2 years executing substantive testing and tests of controls under US GAAP and PCAOB standards across manufacturing, SaaS, and nonprofit engagements. Proficient in CaseWare, NetSuite, and Excel (Power Query, XLOOKUP).

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Audit Associate — Hartwell & Boyce LLP · Aug 2024 – Present

- Executed substantive testing and tests of controls across 9 audit engagements (manufacturing, SaaS, nonprofit) with combined revenues of \$250M, documenting workpapers in CaseWare under US GAAP and PCAOB standards with zero review-note reopens in final busy season.
- Owned month-end close support for 3 client entities in NetSuite, preparing 40+ journal entries and 25 balance-sheet reconciliations per cycle; built Excel Power Query reconciliation templates that cut close from 8 to 5 business days.
- Prepared 120+ federal and state returns (Forms 1120, 1065, 1040) in CCH Axcess during busy season, maintaining a 98% first-review pass rate and flagging R&D-credit documentation that supported roughly \$85K in client credits.
- Trained and reviewed workpapers for 2 incoming first-year associates during ramp-up, both passing engagement-lead review on their first submitted testing cycle.
- Performed variance / flux analysis on client financial statements each cycle, documenting explanations for engagement leads and flagging items for SOX 404 internal-controls walkthroughs.

SKILLS & CREDENTIALS

Staff Accountant · Audit Associate · Assurance Associate · Month-End Close · Balance Sheet Reconciliations · Journal Entries & Accruals · US GAAP · PCAOB Standards · Substantive Testing / Tests of Controls · SOX 404 Internal Controls · Variance / Flux Analysis · Corporate & Individual Tax Returns (1120, 1065, 1040) · QuickBooks · NetSuite · CCH Axcess · CaseWare · Excel (Power Query, XLOOKUP) · CPA Candidate — FAR & AUD Passed

EDUCATION

BS Accounting, UNC Charlotte — 2024

Both versions, through our ATS simulator

We ran the complete before and after through the same analysis engine as our free ATS simulator, against a realistic posting for "Senior Audit Associate". This is a simulation of how keyword-based parsing and screening behave in general — not a claim about any specific ATS, and not an "ATS score". Every number is computed from the documents by the simulator's own code and verified by our test suite — never typed in by hand.

ATS simulator result	Before	After
Robot record: fields extracted	7 of 8	7 of 8
Content lines lost (mapped to no field)	0	0
Weighted keyword coverage vs the posting	14%	84%
Simulated recruiter-search rank	#7 of 7	#2 of 7

What changed, and why

KEYWORDS & SEARCH

Summary: exact credential status, not vague ambition

"Hard-working" and "detail-oriented" appear on nearly every entry-level accounting resume and carry zero keyword weight. "CPA Candidate — passed FAR and AUD; REG scheduled Q4 2026" is specific, searchable, and honest: it never overstates licensure a firm would catch at verification, and it names the frameworks (US GAAP, PCAOB) and software (CaseWare) recruiters actually filter on.

ATS PARSING

The two-column table layout → single column

Parsers linearize tables cell by cell, so a two-column layout (dates in the left column, duties in the right) can come out scrambled — dates divorced from their jobs, bullets out of order. A clean single-column body keeps every line in reading order for the parser and loses nothing for the human reader. This is one of the structural hazards our free Resume Health Score tool detects.

RECRUITER APPEAL

"Helped with audits" → the work itself, quantified

"Helped with audits" and "assisted senior staff" describe proximity to work, not the work itself — a recruiter searching "substantive testing" or "PCAOB" will never surface this resume. The rewrite names the standards and the software, counts the engagements, and attaches a result (zero review-note reopens) that an engagement lead can verify.

RECRUITER APPEAL

"Month-end closing duties" → owned entities, counted output

Month-end close is the core screened skill for industry staff accountant roles — but "responsible for month-end closing duties" gives a recruiter nothing to filter on. The rewrite counts the entities (3), the journal entries (40+) and reconciliations (25 per cycle), names the system (NetSuite), and shows a process improvement: close cut from 8 to 5 business days via Excel Power Query templates.

RECRUITER APPEAL

"Prepared tax returns" → named forms, counted volume

Recruiters filter tax experience by form type — 1120, 1065, 1040 — because those strings distinguish corporate from partnership from individual work. Adding the volume (120+ returns), the software (CCH Axcess), and a quality measure (98% first-review pass rate) turns busy-season attendance into a track record.

RECRUITER APPEAL

"Assisted senior staff" → reviewed the work of juniors

For a senior associate target, the direction of assistance matters: the before bullet has her assisting upward; the truth — training and reviewing workpapers for 2 first-year associates, both passing engagement-lead review first time — evidences the coaching duty the senior role's own posting lists. Same facts, correctly weighted.

KEYWORDS & SEARCH

Skills: name the standards and the software

“Accounting” and “auditing” are the two broadest, least-differentiating terms in the field. The rewrite names the standards (US GAAP, PCAOB, SOX 404) and systems (CaseWare, NetSuite, CCH Axxess, QuickBooks) that fill real job postings, lists the title variants recruiters search (Staff Accountant, Audit Associate, Assurance Associate), and states credential status precisely — never bare “CPA.”

Explore this pair as an interactive annotated diff — hover any change to see why it was made — in the Samples section of our site.

THE BEFORE — the resume as it arrived

The complete original. Every highlighted weakness above refers to a line in this document. (Fictional, like the rest of this constructed example.)

Jasmine Carter

Charlotte, NC · jasmine.carter@example.com · (555) 028-4419

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Hard-working and detail-oriented accounting graduate with experience in audit. Team player with strong work ethic, eager to take on new responsibilities and grow professionally.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Audit Associate — Hartwell & Boyce LLP · Aug 2024 – Present

- Helped with audits of clients in different industries.
- Responsible for month-end closing duties and journal entries.
- Prepared tax returns during busy season.
- Assisted senior staff with various accounting tasks.

SKILLS

Accounting · Auditing · Tax preparation · Microsoft Excel · Communication · Teamwork

EDUCATION

BS Accounting, UNC Charlotte — 2024

The keyword table for "Senior Audit Associate / Staff Accountant"

From our research bank for Associate/Staff Accountant (Audit, Tax, Advisory): the recruiter-search terms that matter for this title, and whether each version carries them. The after covers 17 of 36 (the before covered 2). The remaining gaps are deliberate: terms that would be untrue for this candidate stay out. We optimize with what is true, never past it.

Recruiter-search term	Before	After
TITLES (US)		
Staff Accountant	—	✓
Senior Accountant	—	—
Audit Associate	✓	✓
Tax Associate	—	—
Accountant I / II	—	—
GL Accountant	—	—
TITLES (UK / CANADA / FIRM-TRACK)		
Assurance Associate	—	✓
Audit Senior / Audit Trainee (UK)	—	—
Accounts Assistant / Assistant Accountant (UK)	—	—
Staff Accountant, CPA Stream (Canada)	—	—
Articling Student / CPA Student (Canada)	—	—
Advisory Associate	—	—
CORE SKILLS		
month-end close	—	✓
balance sheet reconciliations	—	✓
journal entries & accruals	—	✓

Recruiter-search term	Before	After
financial statements (US GAAP / IFRS / ASPE)	—	✓
AP/AR	—	—
variance / flux analysis	—	✓
AUDIT & TAX		
substantive testing / tests of controls	—	✓
PCAOB / ISA / CAS standards	—	✓
SOX 404 internal controls	—	✓
corporate returns (1120 / CT600 / T2)	—	—
individual returns (1040 / Self Assessment / T1)	—	—
workpaper documentation	—	—
SOFTWARE		
QuickBooks	—	✓
NetSuite / SAP S/4HANA	—	✓
Sage Intacct / Xero	—	—
CCH Axxess / ProSystem fx	—	✓
CaseWare / Workiva / AuditBoard	—	✓
Excel (Power Query, XLOOKUP) / Alteryx / Power BI	✓	✓
DESIGNATIONS		
CPA (US)	—	✓
CPA Canada (PEP / CFE)	—	—
ACA (ICAEW)	—	—
ACCA	—	—
EA (Enrolled Agent)	—	—
CMA / CIA	—	—

Every change in this document maps to our published 12-point checking standard, applied to every delivered order.