

Get the Applicant Tracking System to Select Your Résumé

In the past, you could simply employ critical key words at various points in your résumé in order to attract attention. Unfortunately, many people in the past went overboard with the résumé keyword stuffing process and created résumés that were pure nonsense. Considering that human eyes will eventually view the résumé (if you're lucky), this is a bad idea. It's better to simply learn how to write résumés with **both** résumé robots **and** human readers in mind. After all, your résumé needs to move past both in order for you to land that all important big interview.

Resume Screening Programs Among Employers

The *Wall Street Journal* reports that résumé screening software use is widespread among larger companies to the tune of the "high 90 percent range." It indicates that finding a Fortune 500 company that doesn't employ application tracking systems would be exceptionally rare today.

How Great Candidates Are Missed by Resume Screening Robots

Did you know? Applicant tracking systems reject 75 percent of candidates.

Many highly-qualified candidates are rejected by ATS because they fail to write their résumé for the résumé screening software. This is a significant flaw in the design of ATS. Businesses continue to use these tracking programs, because they make hiring easier on hiring personnel and recruiters.

While this practice of electronically screening résumés saves time for busy HR pros, it also means many qualified candidates are slipping through the cracks because they didn't use specific language.

How Do the Résumé Screening Robots Work?

Before you can figure out how to craft a résumé that **wows the robot**, it's helpful to first learn what the robot is looking for. First, the software removes all formatting from the résumé and scans for specific recognized keywords and key phrases.

Next, it sorts the content of your resume into individual categories:

1. Education
2. Contact Information
3. Skills
4. Work Experience

Then, the employer's list of desired skills and keywords are matched against the results of the resume to determine your potential value to the organization.

Résumés with the highest scores relevant to the employer's specified keywords and phrases combined with your years of experience will be moved up for further review.

Tips on Getting Your Résumé Seen by Human Eyes

Implement the following tips to keep your resume out of the infamous online resume black hole.

Nix the headers in your résumé. According to *Time*, headers and footers jam the algorithms.

Mirror wording from the actual job description in your résumé. Yes, this means that you will need a custom résumé for every job.

Nail your keywords. There is lingo in every profession. Whether it's software, skills, certifications, licenses, responsibilities, or even procedures, there are words that matter in your profession that need to be included in your résumé.

Use acronyms and spelled out form of titles, professional organizations, certifications, and other industry lingo, etc. If you have experience in electronic medical records, include the acronym EMR as well, for example. You have no idea which keyword the robots are scanning for. Using both allows you to be covered either way.

Discuss keywords with an insider, Look for an employer or HR manager in your field and ask them what skills or levels of experience they're looking for in their candidates.

Give job-related keywords depth within your résumé. You don't want them listed in one single section of your résumé if possible. Sprinkle them throughout your résumé, instead.

Dive deeper into your keywords. include the basic skills, but don't forget to dive deeper to mention specific and advanced skills. Some programs are looking for both the basic and advanced skills.

Use bullets rather than paragraphs to describe your work. Not only are bulleted lists easier for human eyes to read, but they are also easier for screeners to navigate than long paragraphs.

Avoid creative wording and descriptions. Screening robots are like Joe Friday. They only want the facts. More importantly, they only want specific facts, in this case, keywords and key phrases.

Use the company website for keyword guidance. Employer websites offer a lot of information on company culture and what they value in their employees.

Include your address. Many programs will kick your resume to the curb without a postal address (Although City, State and Zip are the minimum requirement, most employers will require a Street Address as well). Locations may even be included as keywords in the screening process.

Replace the career objective section with a bulleted results summary. It's an easy way to work relevant keywords into the resume without using "stuffing" tactics

Don't use graphics, logos, or tables in your resume. Essentially, résumés embedded with fancy graphics, tables, and logos confound and choke résumé filtering software and reject résumés.

Choose your font wisely. Use sans-serif fonts — like Tahoma — instead of serif fonts like Cambria that some screening software will actually reject (almost ALL employers will Not reject Times New Roman or Calibri or Arial).

Use social media to your advantage. Go to the company's LinkedIn page and check out their employees. Look at the descriptions of their jobs as well as the company's description. If you have similar skills and qualifications, list them on your résumés.

Submit résumés in text format rather than PDFs (MS Word is NOT a problem for most employers) PDFs have caused problems in the past with ATS systems.

Don't place dates before work experience on your résumé. While this may look better, it confounds the robots. Instead, begin with the name of the employer.

To make it past the robots, it's important to remember that your hope is that it gets read by a real person. For that person, you will first need to have crafted a résumé that is entirely readable and coherent, that is free of résumé errors

Caveat! Don't attempt to game the system. Businesses invest a lot of money into their applicant tracking systems, sometimes to the tune of millions of dollars. Attempting to include "white words" to get in more keywords and keyword stuffing are maneuvers recognized by these systems consistently. Sneaky résumé tactics can cause the résumé-filtering software to move the résumé that employs them to the bottom of the electronic search pile — or even worse, reject it!

Final Thoughts

These practical tips will help you get your résumé seen by the hiring managers. And once you do, be sure to consider interview coaching for the fastest way to turn your interview into a job.

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