**ATS Resume Formatting Guide**

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) scan and sort resumes before a human ever sees them. If your resume isn’t optimized for ATS, it might never make it to the hiring manager—even if you're the perfect fit.

This guide walks you through **best practices, formatting rules, and examples** to help your resume get seen.

**What is ATS?**

An ATS is software used by employers to screen resumes for keywords, job titles, and experience that match the job description.

If your resume isn’t **ATS-friendly**, it may be **automatically filtered out**—even before a recruiter sees it.

**ATS-Friendly Resume Checklist**

1. **Use a simple format**

**✔** Use standard fonts like Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman (10–12 pt)
✔ Black text only (avoid graphics, text boxes, or colored fonts)
✔ Stick to a clean, chronological or hybrid format
✔ Use clear section headers (e.g., “Work Experience,” “Education”)

1. **Avoid Complex Formatting**

🚫No columns, tables, or text boxes (they confuse ATS software)
🚫 No images, logos, or icons
🚫 Avoid headers or footers—ATS may not read them

**✅ Instead,** use simple bulleted lists and left-aligned formatting.

1. **Use Standard Section Headings**

ATS is programmed to recognize common headings such as:

* Work Experience
* Education
* Skills
* Certifications
* Summary or Objective

Avoid custom labels like “Career Journey” or “What I’ve Done”

1. **Include Job Title Key Words**

✅ Tailor your resume using keywords from the job posting.
**Example:** If the job description says, "Project Management," use that exact phrase in your resume.

1. **Use Relevant Keywords Throughout**

✅ Use keywords naturally in:

* Your professional summary
* Your job descriptions
* Your skills section

**Example:**

* “Led cross-functional project teams using Agile methodology”
* “Proficient in Salesforce, CRM data analysis, and Microsoft Excel”
1. **Spell out Acronyms**

✔ Example: Write both “Customer Relationship Management (CRM)” and “CRM”
✔ Cover multiple versions (e.g., “Bachelor of Arts” and “B.A.”)

1. **Save in the Right Format**

✔ Save your resume as a **.docx** or **.pdf** (if PDF is allowed by the employer)
✔ Check the job posting for file type instructions

1. **Use Bullet Points to Highlight Achievements**

✅ Start each bullet with an action verb (e.g., led, managed, created)
✅ Include quantifiable results

**Example:**

* “Reduced onboarding time by 25% through implementation of new training manual”

**Before You Submit**

✔ Run your resume through an ATS simulator (like [Jobscan](https://www.jobscan.co/) or [ResumeWorded](https://resumeworded.com/))
✔ Proofread for spelling and consistency
✔ Match it closely with the job description

**Sample ATS- Friendly Experience Entry**

Customer Service Associate
ABC Retail – Boston, MA | March 2020 – Present

* Resolved 50+ customer inquiries daily with a 98% satisfaction rating
* Trained 5 new employees on POS system and service protocols
* Improved checkout efficiency by 30% by streamlining workflow