

Optimizing your resume for Applicant Tracking Systems

What are Applicant Tracking Systems?



Applicant tracking systems (ATS) are the computer systems used by organizations to manage the flood of applications they receive. The ATS will read your resume, and then rank and score your qualifications as compared to the job description. Only those applicants who receive high scores will get a call for an interview. Part of a successful job search strategy can include sending applications to large companies that use ATS when filtering their applicant pool. If you do this, please consider making the following changes to your resume to optimize your chances for being considered for jobs you are qualified for.

Top 10 Resume Tips to Succeed with an ATS



1. **Tailor each resume** to demonstrate your skills and qualifications desired by the employer. Incorporate relevant, targeted keywords and phrases from the position being sought. Be specific - i.e., “Adobe Photoshop” instead of “image-editing software.”
2. **Do not use a template.** Use a standard word document and save in your preferred format.
3. **Use keywords and phrases from the position in context.** Be descriptive and achievement-oriented with your bullet points; do not just include them as a list of skills or competencies. For example: “Managed client relationships and successfully marketed the software product to increase sales by 30%.”
4. **Use simple formatting.** Do not use headers (including for contact information), footers, templates, borders, lines, symbols (bullet points are fine) or shading.
5. **Be mindful of special characters and accents.** Some words and phrases can be misinterpreted by ATS systems -- for example, accented words. The word “résumé” itself is not ATS-friendly and does not recognize the accented letters. Instead, in some systems it reads it as “r?sum?”.
6. **Don’t include skills you don’t possess** on the resume as an attempt to “trick” the applicant tracking system into selecting you. Anything on your resume needs to be substantiated in an interview, or increasingly in a skills-based test before you interview.
7. **Edit Carefully.** The ATS will not recognize misspelled words. If your resume makes it to the next round, it will next be reviewed by an employee within the company, so please be sure to check for errors.
8. **Review the Writing Resumes: A Guide for Undergraduates handout** for advice on creating and formatting a resume.
9. **Visit a Career Advancement Adviser** to review and discuss your resume before submitting it to the employer.
10. **Know that there are hundreds of different ATS systems out there**, and they all operate slightly differently. Your goal is to do your best to simplify the formatting while still providing keyword-rich, achievement-oriented bullet points.

Incorporate Networking to Your Job Search

In addition to tailoring your resume and application materials, networking plays an integral role in the job search process. An effective way to network is to conduct informational interviews, which are short conversations where you gather information about a field, industry, organization, or company that interests you. Leverage your UChicago network by using the University of Chicago’s online alumni directory (accessible via the Career Advancement website) to find alumni in the industry and organizations that interest you. You can also find people in your network by using LinkedIn. Visit a Career Advancement Adviser for more information about networking and informational interviews.

