

6 ways to make ATS work in your favor

Resume screeners, formally called **applicant tracking systems**, are dreaded by most job seekers. While these robots make life much easier for the hiring manager who is inundated with applications, they are likely the reason you don't hear back from many jobs for which you apply.

When the human element of resume review is removed, your resume becomes purely technical. The good news? Technical means there is a strict set of guidelines by which ATS scan your resume — a set of guidelines you can follow when building your resume. **Check out these 6 ways to make ATS work in your favor:**

1. Stick to a Format

You've probably heard about the three main resume formats: chronological, functional, and hybrid. Each of these formats highlights a different part of a job applicant's history. For example, the chronological resume, which is the classic resume format, focuses on work experience. The functional and hybrid resumes take some of the focus off of experience and shine it on valuable skills. Which format is best for ATS? Whichever format puts your work history in the best light.

2. Introduce Yourself

It sounds pretty obvious, but forgetting to include your name and contact information on your resume could prevent you from getting your dream job. When an applicant tracking system parses your resume (distributes its information into sections), it includes the contact information so the hiring manager can send you an email or give you a call about an interview. Plus, many hiring managers will search ATS by zip code to find applicants who live in the area. So, include your name, phone number, email address, and full home address including zip code.

3. Don't Leave Out Dates

One way ATS work against the job seeker is when they forget to include dates beside their work experience and education. When your resume is parsed by the ATS, it orders your experience and education based on the dates. If you forget

to include a date (month and year), that piece of information could be parsed into the wrong section and never seen by the hiring manager.

4. Keep it Visually Clean

Applying through an ATS is not the time to use fancy fonts or bold designs. Research has actually shown certain fonts and designs (including columns) to parse incorrectly by ATS. Stick to Times New Roman, without columns, to be sure your font and design is not keeping your resume from being seen. When you get an interview, you can let your personality shine through.

5. Customize Your Keywords

This is a big one. After a resume is parsed by the ATS, it is entered into the database with every other application. The hiring manager can then search the database by keywords or skills. These skills will likely be the same top skills mentioned in the job posting. This means that before you apply for each job, you must customize your resume to be sure it includes all relevant keywords. Look for skills used more than once in the job posting and include them naturally into your resume. Be very wary of keyword stuffing when adding them more than once.

6. Check Your Work

All it takes is one letter out of place to make your "marketing" experience turn to "maketing" and send your resume to the bottom of the metaphorical ATS pile. Check your spelling and grammar, and then check them both again. Ask a friend to read it over one more time to be sure it is perfect. Run your resume through an optimization scanner like Jobscan to find out what keywords and other information is missing.

Applicant tracking systems are a little bit like strangers — they are only scary until you get to know them. In fact, they can become your best friend if you learn to accept their secrets and quirks. These tips will give you a solid foundation with which to build your ATS relationship.

— James Hu, founder and CEO of Jobscan, a tool that compares resumes against job descriptions for keywords and match rates