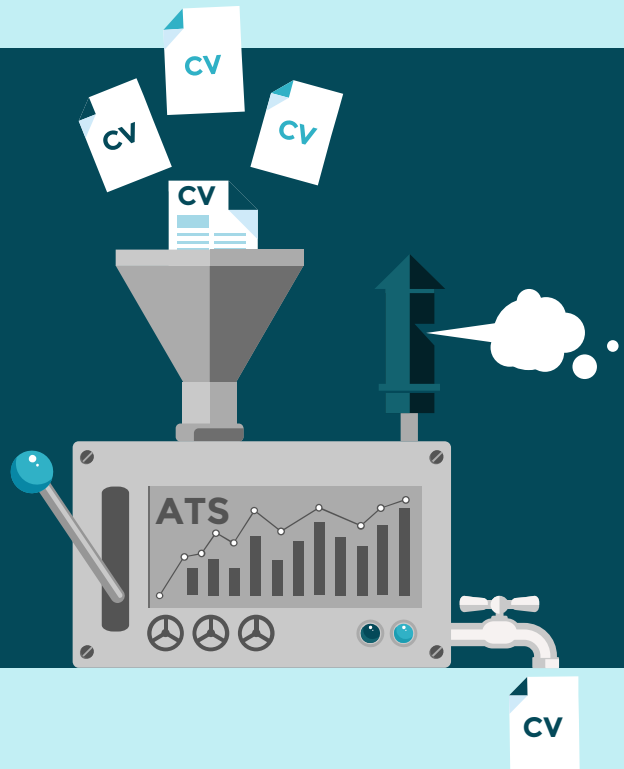


15 KEYS

TO GETTING YOUR RESUME THROUGH

APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEMS



Like you, I understand how frustrating it can be to submit your resume only to be rejected by applicant tracking systems over and over again. With more than 98% of Fortune 500 organizations utilizing applicant tracking software it's important that your resume is formatted to advance through to be seen by the hiring manager. I've put together this list of 15 keys to getting your resume through applicant tracking systems to help you reformat your resume so it will cruise through screening systems and connect with employers.

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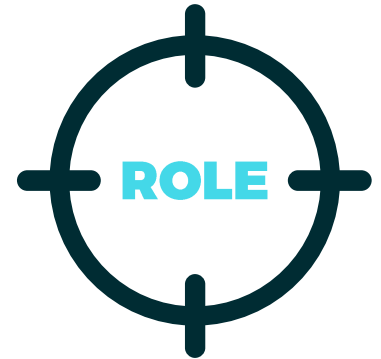
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KEY
1**TARGET YOUR RESUME TO A SPECIFIC ROLE:**

Applicant Tracking Systems are built on the idea that a great candidate will have a very targeted, focused resume full of relevant keywords. Once you have a strong, achievement-based resume, some tailoring is still required based on the specific job posting.

Review the job posting for important keywords and key phrases.

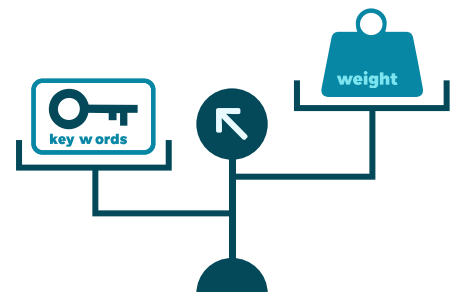
Grab a highlighter and look through the job posting for important qualifications, skills, and experience. These are your keywords. Be sure to include any keywords that you can claim on your resume for that job application.

KEY
2**KNOW WHERE TO INCLUDE KEYWORDS:**

Keywords need to be woven throughout your resume in each section—from the career summary to the individual professional experience entries. When you are tailoring the resume to a specific posting, the easiest section to swap in keywords is a **Key Competencies/Areas of Expertise section**, which is essentially just a list of keywords anyway.

KEY
3**DIFFERENT KEYWORDS CARRY DIFFERENT WEIGHT.**

Remember that not all keywords are equally weighted in **ATS!** Some common keywords like “full-time” or “collaborative” won’t be as important as specific technical skills or job functions (for example, “risk mitigation” for a financial services position).



KEY
4

PLAY IT SAFE WITH YOUR CONTACT INFO; AVOID HEADERS / FOOTERS.

Some versions of **ATS** cannot “read” content that appears in the headers/footers of a Word document. Avoid putting your name or Contact information in the header to prevent **ATS** from dismissing your resume.

KEY
5

PLAY IT SAFE WITH YOUR NAME; LEAVE OFF POST-NOMINAL TITLES.

Some versions of **ATS** will read Post-Nominal Titles or abbreviations (i.e. **Ph.D.**, **RN**, **CFP**) as part of the candidate’s name and cause issues with the system. Leave these qualifications to the Career Summary and Education sections instead.

KEY
6

USE STANDARD SECTION HEADERS.

ATS needs to recognize section headers to scan each section correctly, so be sure to include standard headers such as “**Professional Experience**” and “**Education**”. You should also label your Certifications as such to get credit for them.



KEY
7

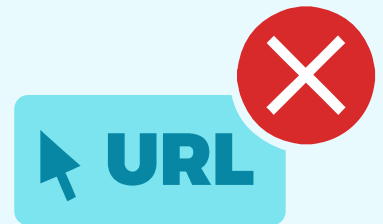
HOW TO INCLUDE DATES IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE ENTRIES:

Include months with years; this is particularly important if you held jobs for less than a year. **ATS** systems calculate the dates, so if they see a single year (2013) it will calculate **ZERO** time in that role, as opposed to a certain number of months (5/2013 to 12/2013).

KEY
8

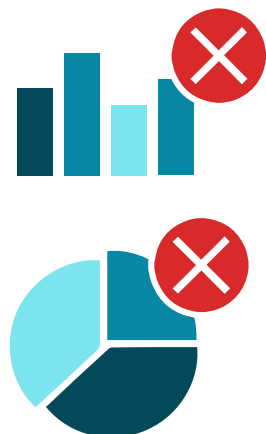
AVOID TRIPPING ALARM BELLS WITH LIVE LINKS.

While you always want to include contact information including your **name, address, email address, phone number, and LinkedIn URL**, you can cause problems for yourself by making your email address or LinkedIn link live. Some **ATS** software will read a live link as a virus. (Not sure what constitutes a “live link?” If it is underlined and in color, it is live.)

KEY
9

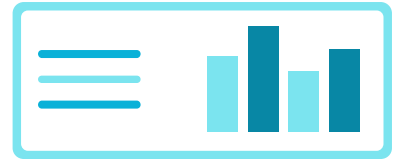
REMOVE GRAPHICS/CHARTS/GRAPHS/TABLES FROM THE ATS VERSION.

While some of the more-modern and cutting-edge versions of **ATS** won't be affected, older versions can react poorly to **charts, graphs, and graphics in general**, causing the resume to land in the reject pile. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't have a visually engaging and modern resume that does use these elements. It's important to consider when it is appropriate to use a visually engaging resume and when you should use an **ATS-optimized** version.



KEY 10 IF YOU INCLUDE CHARTS/GRAPHS:

If you know the version of **ATS** your target company uses and it can handle **charts and/or graphs**, you should still be sure that the content conveyed in the image is also conveyed in a resume paragraph or bullet. You can also research Taleo since it's the **ATS** system that **30%** of employers use (the most highly used system of them all) and you'll be able to find specifics for this type of **ATS**



KEY 11 PLAY IT SAFE WITH SYMBOLS.

Stick with symbols that are on the keyboard such as “*” or “-” to avoid funky changes to your resume’s look when being scanned by **ATS**.



KEY 12 YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE INORDINATELY RESTRAINED, HOWEVER.

Some design elements are safe. We spend a lot of time dissecting what might **NOT** work with **ATS**, but some things are completely safe such as **bolded text, lines and borders, and color shading**. Your resume doesn't have to look “blah” to be compatible with **ATS** software.

- ✓ **BOLDED TEXT**
- ✓ **LINES**
- ✓ **BORDERS**
- ✓ **COLOR SHADING**

KEY 13 HOW TO HANDLE ABBREVIATIONS:

The best practice is to spell out a term the first time you use it, such as “**Client Relationship Management**.” For additional uses, the abbreviation “**CRM**” is fine.

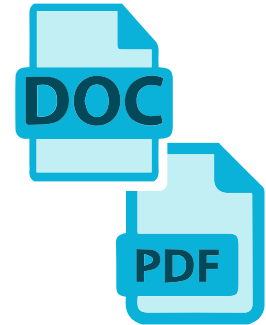
ABBREVIATIONS



KEY
14

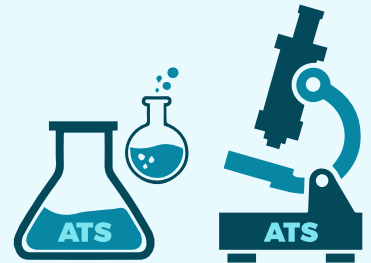
SEND IN YOUR RESUME AS A .DOC FILE FOR ONLINE APPLICATIONS.

Again, erring on the side of caution with this approach since some **ATS** can handle **PDFs** or **.docx** files. For those that cannot, a **.doc** file is ideal, and will still look nice for a human reader (as opposed to plain text.)

KEY
15

TEST YOUR RESUME FOR ATS.

Since **ATS** essentially converts your resume to plain text to “read” it, you can double-check on your resume’s success by saving it as a plain text **ASCII** file and seeing how it looks. If you see a blank page or everything is out of order, you need to revisit your Word version before submitting.

KEY
16

DON'T ASSUME YOU ARE ABOVE ATS.

Many executives and **C-level** job seekers assume that at that level, they don't need to be concerned with Applicant Tracking Systems. However, it is important to keep in mind that many companies use **ATS** for regulatory compliance with fair hiring practices, so an **ATS** scan might still be a part of the process, even for high-level employees who network their way to an interview.

