Mastering ATS:
Optimize Your Resume and Stand Out in Your Job Search

What is an Applicant Tracking System (ATS)?

An ATS is software used by employers to filter job applications. It scans resumes for keywords and qualifications, ranking candidates based on alignment with the job requirements. Understanding ATS can help you ensure that your resume stands out and gets noticed by recruiters and hiring managers.

How ATS Works

1. RESUME SCREENING:
ATS scans and ranks resumes based on keywords and job requirements, narrowing a large applicant pool.

2. RANKING AND SELECTION:
The system prioritizes top-matching resumes for recruiters to review.

3. KEYWORD MATCHING
Exact job description terms are crucial. Even slight variations (e.g., "marketer" vs. "marketing") may cause a mismatch.

Resume Submission ➡ ATS Screening ➡ Manual Review by Recruiter

Optimize Your Resume for ATS

1. MATCH KEYWORDS AND TERMINOLOGY

- Use exact language from the job description for job titles, skills, and <u>action verbs</u>.
- Include full terms and acronyms (e.g., "Search Engine Optimization" and "SEO").
- Spell out degrees, followed by a comma and your major (e.g., "Bachelor of Arts, Social Ecology").
- Focus on hard skills and avoid keyword stuffing. Try to write naturally while maintaining an appropriate tone for professional business writing.

2. SIMPLIFY RESUME FORMATTING

- **Avoid complex layouts:** ATS struggles with images, tables, and unusual fonts. Avoid using graphic design tools like Canva or document typesetting platforms like LaTeX to create your resume template.
- **Stick to standard section titles:** Use "Experience," "Education," "Skills," etc. Avoid creative section names that could confuse the system.
- **Limit columns:** Use one or two columns to prevent parsing errors.
- **Save as a Word document or PDF:** Avoid complex file formats.
- **For more guidance, visit:** <u>Career Center Resume Samples</u>

DOC

PDF

3. TAILOR YOUR RESUME FOR EACH JOB

- Customize your resume for each application using job-specific keywords.
- Aim for **at least a 75% match** with the job description. If your resume matches 40-60% of the job's keywords, you can still use it. A partial match is still a chance worth taking.
- **Test your match percentage** using tools like Resume AI (accessible via our <u>Resume AI website</u>).

AI

4. OPTIMIZE YOUR COVER LETTER

- Include job description keywords in your cover letter to improve ATS recognition.
- **Download templates:** Cover Letter Resources

Tools to Optimize Your Resume for ATS

RESUME AI
by biginterview

Resume AI offers instant resume feedback and optimization tips. Free for UCI students.

ChatGPT & AI TOOLS:

Use the right prompts with ChatGPT to analyze job descriptions and suggest resume or cover letter keywords.

Jobscan

Jobscan compares resumes to job postings and provides match percentage (free for two uses/month).

ATS IN ACTION

- **Recruiters rely on ATS:** 97.4% of Fortune 500 companies use ATS. Large applicant pools make optimization essential.
- **ATS variations:** Different systems (e.g., iCIMS, Taleo) may parse resumes differently.

Master ATS to help you land that interview!