

CAREER

HOW TO MAKE YOUR RESUME BYPASS ATS

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The job market, with each passing day, is becoming more competitive. As if that wasn't making things difficult enough for job seekers, the inclusion of Applicant Tracking System (ATS) software in recruitment practices is making the feat of landing a job even more difficult.

An ATS is a recruitment software that streamlines the hiring process by storing, organising, and filtering job applications. Today, companies have increasingly started using ATS tools to quickly identify qualified candidates based on keywords, skills, or experience, saving recruiters time and reducing manual workload.

ATS also automates routine tasks like sending acknowledgement emails, scheduling interviews, and tracking candidate progress through each hiring stage. As competition for talent increases and hiring timelines tighten, businesses are growing dependent on ATS technology to improve efficiency and make faster, data-driven hiring decisions.

One of the primary tasks of the ATS is to screen potential candidates and compare how suitable they are for the job by comparing their resumes with the job description. Under this new hiring practice, no matter how relevant your skills, qualifications, or experience are to the job at hand, if your resume is not ATS-friendly, you are automatically dismissed from qualifying for the next stage of the hiring process. This happens before a human actually gets to see your resume.

However, if you know the right tricks to make your resume more appealing by ATS standards, you have nothing to worry about. Here's how you can do that.

Use the right keywords

ATS's main screening technique is to extract key details, such as the applicant's skills, educational background, etc., and use them as keywords to see if there is a match between the job description and the resume being checked.

So, if the job you are applying to has role-specific terminology, whether it's "data analyst", "proficiency in Excel", or "content management", naturally incorporate these keywords into every section of your resume. However, don't overdo this. You don't want to just stuff keywords in your resume, as it will look and read a bit weird. Instead, maintain a balance and make sure that their placement makes sense.

Proper formatting

ATS-friendly formats follow the reverse-chronological format. You will start with your most recent job experience and then proceed backwards. This outlines the overall progress of your career and enables the system to detect any relevant details.

Go for traditional headings like "Work Experience", "Education" and "Skills" and keep one-inch margins on all sides to ensure a neat look. To make things easy for you, you can use ATS-friendly templates that are available online instead of starting from scratch.

Keep dates consistent

ATS scanners analyse dates to calculate your overall working experience. Hence, inconsistent dates are at greater risk of being misinterpreted, ignoring crucial work records, which may lead to unfair filtering. Pick one format, such as month, year (November, 2024) or MM/YYYY (11/2024) and stick to it.

Use bullet points

To include more information without cluttering the page, use bullet points for better organisation. ATS programmes struggle to parse large chunks of

information, meaning crucial details might get overlooked just because of the wrong structure. Thus, try to sprinkle bullet points throughout, especially in the work or experience section.

Go for three to five bullet points for each job, accentuating key responsibilities, skills and any relevant achievements. If possible, incorporate numbers to signify impact, such as "Increased customer engagement by 25 percent".

Keep it simple

Anything complicated will confuse the ATS. To ensure readability, keep your resume minimalist.

Go for fonts like Arial, Times New Roman, or any other traditional fonts in 10 to 12 point size. Avoid flashy graphics or overtly colourful templates as they make parsing difficult. Don't use multiple columns, as it will muddle your overall layout.

Remember, less is more. Try to use simple language throughout. A clean-looking resume makes it easy for the ATS to scan your resume.

Test your resume

After finalising all the details of your resume, test your resume to ensure that it is ATS-compliant. There are online tools such as Jobscan, Enhancv and Resume Worded, which will not only pinpoint places you went wrong but also offer comprehensive solutions.

If accessing such tools is difficult or expensive (as some of them do not offer free plans), you can also ask ChatGPT or Gemini to guide you by inputting ATS-specific prompts.

Ultimately, an ATS-friendly resume prioritises simplicity and relevance. As long as your resume consists of the right keywords, organised details, and a clean layout, you will have better chances of your resume not being guarded by a software and actually reaching the hands of a human recruiter.

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