

How to get your resume past the robots

Did you know that many recruitment agencies rely on automated computer software to pre-filter [resumes](#)? Known as Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS), the software uses what can essentially be thought of as robots to scan through candidate applications. Resumes uploaded to an ATS are only viewed by a human if the ATS matches the resume to the job ad. The others get dumped into an electronic black hole.

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First, it's worth understanding that an ATS is are programmed to scan for keywords as well as other information such as former employers, experience, universities, and qualifications. They categorise candidates automatically in order of potential interest for the recruiter. An ATS may reject more than half the resumes they scan.

Many a great candidate misses out when an ATS is used, says Karl Smart, state manager, Staffing Services Queensland at Chandler Macleod Group. He recommends asking old colleagues and other contacts at organisations to put in personal recommendations for you as a way of cutting through the automated grading system.

DO:

- **Sprinkle keywords from the advertisement throughout your resume.**

Each organisation has its own terminology, which you should repeat back in your resume says Smart to ensure it passes the [litmus test](#). To do that, familiarise yourself with the language the company uses in all its publications and communications with the outside world.

- **Use text.**

It can be tempting to jazz up your resume with graphics, but the ATS won't see these.

- **Put in straightforward headings such as Education, Qualifications, Experience, Hobbies, and References.**

It's best to use recognised sections such as these rather than making up clever new

ones. “Play” instead of “Interests” isn’t going to impress an ATS.

- **Spell out acronyms.** AFA may be the acronym you use in your industry. But the ATS may be programmed to look for “Authorised Financial Adviser”. Likewise, include both Bachelor of Commerce and BCom, so that the machine understands.
- **Include an elevator pitch.**
Replace your “career objective” with an [elevator pitch](#) that includes the [key criteria](#) for the role as well as your skills and achievements. This will also be a great read if it makes its way to the hiring manager.

DON'T:

- **Go overboard and stuff your resume with keywords.**
A good ATS will spot this. What’s more, your resume will be read by a human if you’re successful. That person may not be as impressed as the software was.
- **Use images, pictures, symbols, and shading and try to stick to well-known fonts.**
Some older systems prefer web-safe fonts such as Times New Roman, Arial, and Courier.
- **Answer mechanically.**
Sometimes when you apply for a job you will be asked to complete a series of questions in addition to submitting your resume. Often an ATS will use your responses to these questions to filter candidates. To increase your chances of being found, don’t just click ‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘yes’, ‘no’ to questions posed, says Smart. If there are text boxes, fill in other skills and attributes that could be relevant for the job.
- **Leave out the lingo.**
Whatever the common words are in your profession are it’s likely that the ATS is looking for some of them. So sprinkle these in lightly, keeping in mind that the human who eventually sees your resume might not be as impressed as the tracking system.
- **Make spelling mistakes or typos.**
Computers are smart. But they can be dumb too. They won’t necessarily understand what you’re saying if you say “tow years expreince” or “peple persn”.

Once you’ve scanned your resume to ensure that it’s set up to get past the robots, head over to your [SEEK Profile](#) and make the same updates. Recruiters and employers are increasingly relying on technology and keywords to help them scan resumes and SEEK Profiles, so make sure that you’re set up to stand out.