



GREAT  
RESUMES  
FAST

# 15 Keys To Getting Your Resume Through Applicant Tracking System

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*How to reformat your resume so it will cruise through  
screening systems and connect with employers.*

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# Great Resumes Fast exists because you deserve an **interview-worthy resume.**



## HELLO, I'M JESSICA HERNANDEZ

the founder of Great Resumes Fast

I remember the exact moment the idea for Great Resumes Fast first emerged in my mind:

I was at my desk in my former career in HR as a recruiter, and I was sitting across from a person who had stopped by to drop off her resume. A few minutes into our chat, I knew she was a perfect fit for the position.

Then I glanced down at the resume she had handed me. And I was shocked.

Nothing on her resume conveyed the professional she really was in person. None of the incredible skills and accomplishments I had discovered in a five-minute conversation were in writing.

Had I not happened to be there when she stopped by, I would never have called her in for an interview based on her resume.

We would have missed out on this amazing team member, and she would have missed out on this position that was so perfect for her. All because her resume wasn't doing her justice.

**That's why our mission at Great Resumes Fast is to make sure you get an interview - where you can really shine.**



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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.

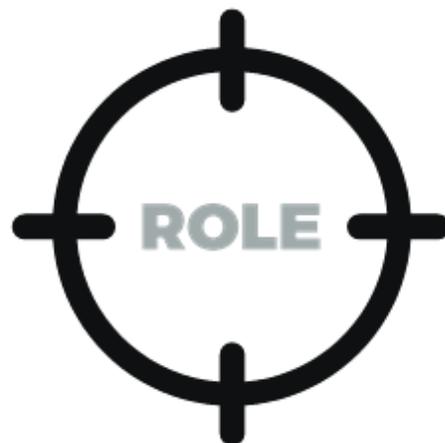
# KEY 1

## 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.

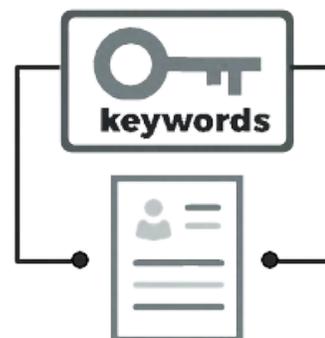
Grab a highlighter and look through the job posting for important qualifications, skills, and experience. These are your keywords. Be sure to include any keywords that you can claim on your resume for that job application.



# KEY 2

## KNOW WHERE TO INCLUDE KEYWORDS

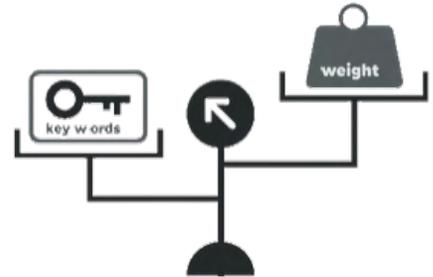
Keywords need to be woven throughout your resume in each section—from the career summary to the individual professional experience entries. When you are tailoring the resume to a specific posting, the easiest section to swap in keywords is a Key Competencies/Areas of Expertise section, which is essentially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

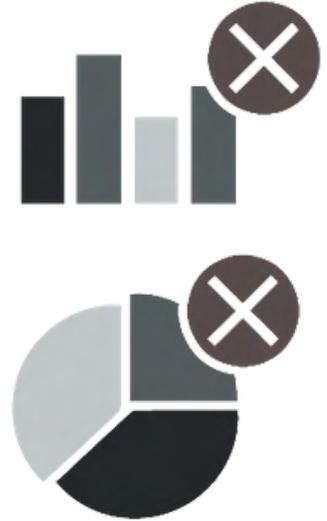
While you always want to include contact information including your name, address, email address, phone number, and LinkedIn URL, you can cause problems for yourself by making your email address or LinkedIn link live. Some ATS software will read a live link as a virus. (Not sure what constitutes a “live 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/ GRAPHICS

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.



## 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.



## KEY 14

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

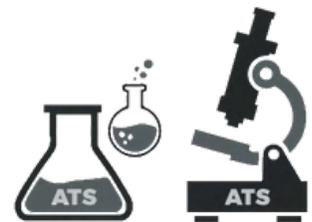
Again, erring on the side of caution with this approach since some ATS can handle PDFs or .docx files. For those that cannot, a .doc file is ideal, and will still look nice for a human reader (as opposed to plain text.)



## 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

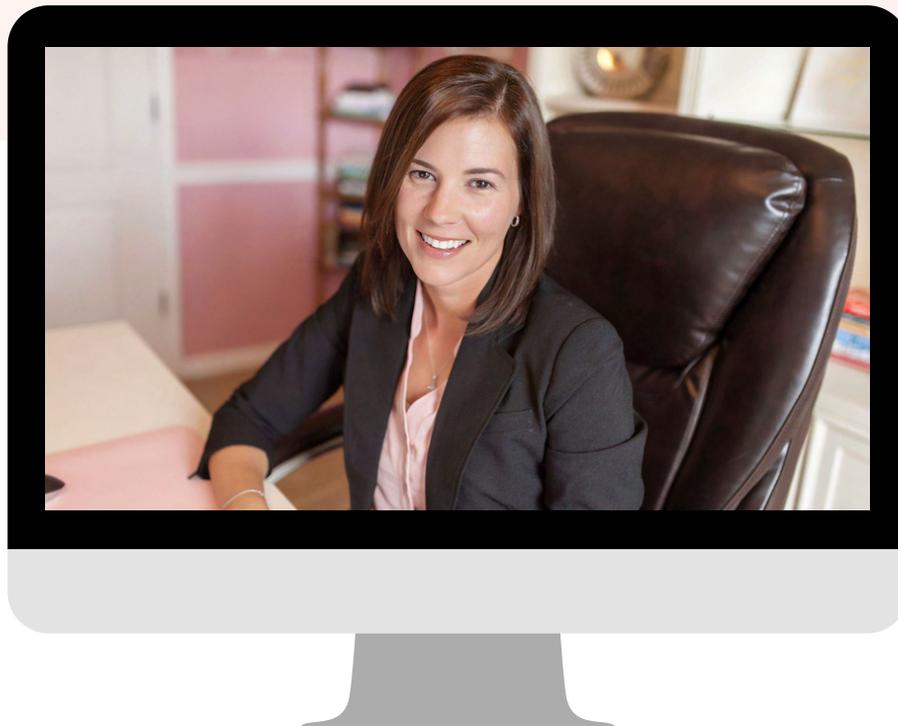
Many executives and C-level job seekers assume that at that level, they don't need to be concerned with Applicant Tracking Systems. However, it is important to keep in mind that many companies use ATS for regulatory compliance with fair hiring practices, so an ATS scan might still be a part of the process,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



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Skip the trial & error with our proven guides and  
templates

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# Let our executive resume writers uncover what makes you the only one for the job

“You’re exactly who we’ve been looking for.”

This is what the hiring manager at your dream company should say when they pick up your resume. (And then run to offer you a position before someone else can!)

If you’re not getting this type of response, it’s not that you’re not qualified, it’s that your current resume doesn’t reflect what you can really do.

Let’s fix that.

The secret to a stand-out resume?

A memorable career story & personal brand.

This is where many applicants (and other executive resume writers) go wrong.

Your resume shouldn’t simply funnel your experiences and job titles into a pretty template.

It should tell a memorable narrative about who you are and how your unique superpowers transform companies.

This is where our executive resume writers come in.

It starts with a phone call.



[SCHEDULE A CALL](#)