

## **Resume Checklist: Follow these best practices to ensure your resume gets through the spam filter, applicant tracking system, and to the recruiters and hiring managers.**

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What's the difference between a computerized ATS ([Applicant Tracking System](#)) and a black hole?

Not much, if you don't know which aspects of your [resume](#) give you a good ranking vs. what makes these software programs choke.

The people who work with these tools say it best: “[They’re] a wonderful tool (if utilized correctly) for recruiters and hiring managers; however, they can be a black hole for the applicant if their resume is not accurately targeted to the open position with appropriate [keywords](#) and/or highlighted experience,” according to Laurie M. Winslow, principal at [Talent Innovations Group Inc.](#) Winslow has worked with a slew of vendors’ ATSes over her 20-plus years in human resources, as an executive search consultant, an in-house corporate recruiter and as a career coach and professional resume writer.

[TheLadders](#) spoke to ATS vendors and people like Winslow — the professionals who use this technology — to unlock these mysterious black boxes to figure out how they handle your resume. We also spent time with these pros to figure out how your resume gets handled by other computer systems, including e-mail security screening.

Use this list to ensure your resume gets where it needs to go and that it receives as high a ranking as possible, optimizing your chances of getting an [interview](#).

### **Checklist**

1. Do not apply to a company multiple times if the positions do not match your experience and skills. Recruiters notice multiple submissions, and it reflects poorly on a candidate if he or she applies for [jobs](#) that aren't a good fit.
2. Don't send your resume as an attachment. To avoid getting caught by security scans, paste it into the body of the e-mail.
3. When e-mailing a resume, keep exclamation marks out of the subject line and body of the text.
4. When e-mailing a resume, don't use words in the document or headline that could be misinterpreted by spam filters. For example, use “graduated with high honors” instead of “graduated cum laude.”
5. Include a professional or executive summary at the resume top, followed by a list of bulleted qualifications and/or achievements.
6. Customize the professional/executive summary and bulleted list(s) with keywords that match a given job.

7. Make sure the keywords in the executive summary and bulleted qualifications and achievements replicate those in the job posting.
8. Keywords alone aren't enough. State-of-the-art ATS technology relies on contextualization as well. Frame keywords with descriptive material that demonstrates experience and familiarity with the subject.
9. Do not use abbreviations such as "Mgr" instead of "Manager." It is unlikely that the ATS has been programmed with a list of abbreviations to stand in for keywords.
10. Avoid misspellings. A misspelled keyword is a keyword that the ATS will miss, lowering your ranking.
11. Use standard capitalization, not all lowercase or full capitals. Improper capitalization annoys recruiters.
12. Fill in all the information requested by an online application process, even if it's listed as optional. [Recruiters](#) often sort by optional information to filter out applicants, and filling in all fields will ensure you don't erroneously get caught in a screening filter.
13. Fill in all information requested by an online application process, even if it's included in your resume. This information can be used to filter out applicants before a hiring manager comes to the point of opening the resume itself.
14. If you're being referred by an employee, make sure the ATS knows it, because it's smart enough to care and will rate your resume higher.

### **Career Advice from TheLadders**

- [Getting to the Point Gets the Job](#)
  - [The Right Search for the Right Job](#)
  - [An Introvert's Guide to Resume Self-Promotion](#)
  - [What Employers Really Think About Functional Resumes](#)
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15. If the ATS offers options, opt for uploading your resume instead of cutting and pasting. This feature often parses information and saves it in the optimal format, ensuring the cleanest presentation.
  16. To avoid choking an ATS with a highly formatted resume, make sure your resume is in a clear, concise format, with your contact information located at the top instead of in the header or footer.
  17. Do not include graphics or logos on a resume; they can garble the information the ATS processes.
  18. Respond within 24 hours after hearing back from a company.
  19. Keep an eye on spam folders. Filters are so sensitive today that they can recognize e-mail that's automatically generated — a category which both spam and [follow-up](#) e-mail generated from an ATS program can fall into.
  20. Adhere to instructions provided in follow-up e-mail. If the follow-up e-mail lacks a phone number but directs you to respond with your availability, respond via e-mail, not by calling. This will likely get you the fastest response.
  21. If you receive an automatically generated rejection e-mail, immediately contact the recruitment office of the rejecting organization or a sympathetic administrative assistant — anyone who can advise you as to the best way to

replace the resume currently in the ATS with one containing better keywords and phrases.

22. When [reapplying after an initial rejection](#), tweak executive summaries and bulleted lists of key skills and achievements. Don't alter your work history elements.
23. When reapplying, don't try to use a different e-mail address from the one you used on your first try. This isn't enough to avoid a duplicate record in advanced systems such as Taleo, which use multiple candidate identifiers, so make sure to follow Step #21.
24. Once your customized resume has been resubmitted, contact the appropriate recruiter (or sympathetic administrative assistant) and request that your updated resume be reviewed for the open position.