

Can a robot read your resume?

Applicant Tracking Software

A growing number of organisations use robots i.e. **Applicant Tracking Software** (ATS) to screen applications from prospective employees. Many applications are rejected because the software cannot read the content.

What you need to know

- **Keywords:** Identify the keywords from the employer's website, job advertisement and position description. Include these words in your resume, cover letter and response to selection criteria. The higher the number of keywords, the higher your application will rank. **Remember** a human will end up reading it, so don't over-do it.
- **Contextual Searches:** Some of the ATS programs use contextual searches. This is a more sophisticated method and can include looking at the keywords and the words on either side. It is very important to ensure your documents are tailored to the employers' application material.
- **Application Date and Time:** Applications can be ranked by the date and time they were received, i.e. a first in line approach. This is not a common method, but is still used.

Recommendations

- **Tailor:** maximise the number of keywords in the content of your application.
- **Research:** ensure keywords exactly match the words mentioned in the position description and job advertisement.
- **Count:** use "**control+F**" to count the number of times you have used a particular keyword.
- **Use full words:** do not use abbreviations in applications – the software won't read them.
- **Avoid the following:**

Tables	Columns	Borders	Clipart	Fancy fonts
Photos	Charts	Headers/Footers	Colours	Infographics

The scanner cannot read them and it could make your application look blank or unreadable.

- Bullet points, bold text and tabs are **recommended**.
- Submit your application as a **Microsoft Word** document – PDF won't protect your document from the scanner. If you are emailing directly to a person, use PDF to preserve formatting.
- Keep your application extremely **simple, clean and uncluttered** to increase the likelihood the ATS will be able to read it.

More resources:

- During semester – get feedback on your resume, cover letter or LinkedIn profile from our **Drop-in desk** – check our website for times on your campus.
- During vacation, contact the Careers and Employment Team for an appointment.
- The **JCU Career Development Program** has a suite of self-help, online modules including one on Resumes and Cover letters – jcu.edu.au/careers
- For feedback by email – send your resume through to careers@jcu.edu.au