

CAN A ROBOT READ YOUR RESUME?

Applicant Tracking System

A growing number of organisations use an **Applicant Tracking System (ATS)** in their recruitment process to screen/scan job applications to quicken their shortlisting process. Applications are scanned for key words and can be rejected if the system cannot read the content.



What you need to know

- **Keywords:** Identify keywords and skills from the job advertisement, position description and the employer's website. Include these words in your resume, cover letter and 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 overdo it, consider using each keyword 2-3 times across your resume, cover letter, and selection criteria or written response. 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.

How to beat the bots

- **Research:** ensure keywords exactly match the words mentioned in the position description and job advertisement; use the employer website for keyword guidance – research company culture and employee values.
- **Use full words:** do not use abbreviations in applications – the software won't read them – it can read acronyms however (i.e. electronic medical records – EMR, Content Management System - CMS).
- **Avoid using:** tables, columns, borders, photos, charts, images/clipart, infographics, fancy fonts. – the scanner may not read these and your application could look blank or unreadable.
- **Bullet points, bold text and tabs** are recommended. As is placing dates alongside your work experience: e.g. *Jan 2024 – Dec 2024: Student Liaison Officer, James Cook University*
- Use **sans-serif fonts** such as Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma, Calibri.
- Keep your application **simple, clean and uncluttered** to increase the likelihood the ATS will be able to read it (e.g. bullet points instead of paragraphs, avoid creative wording and descriptions, information in headers and footers may be ignored by the algorithms).

Tip: JCU Employability Edge has more on job applications in the **Master Written Applications** module.
<https://www.jcu.edu.au/careers/employability-edge>