

Formatting a Resume for Applicant Tracking System (ATS) Compliance

1. **Open** the file in MS Word. Under the "File" menu, choose "Save As." **Rename** the file in this suggested format: **LastNameJobTitle.txt** and save as "Text Only" (.txt) format
2. **Close** the MS Word window. **Open** the .txt file in MS Word
3. **Fix** any obvious formatting issues
4. **List** your contact information at the top of the document; stack each piece of information on a new line; label the phone number with "Phone:" and email address with "Email:"
5. **Create** section headings which can be "Summary," "Work Experience," and "Education." **Format** these sections in ALL CAPS to make it easy for the ATS to categorize the information.
6. **Use** one heading per section; do not combine sections. **Enter** a hard return between sections
7. **Arrange** your current and previous jobs exactly like this:

Company Name	Date
Position	
Description	

* **Dates** should always appear to the *right* of the company name for optimal reading by the ATS. Dates can be in nearly any standard format, such as January 2013, 01/2013, or Jan. 2013

* **Descriptions** under each job should include the skills you've used in that job, such as relevant computer software and hardware

8. **Use** simple bullets (•) or keyboard characters (*, -, or >). Don't use dingbats or other special characters, as the ATS will be unable to properly "read" them
9. **Highlight** the text and choose more attractive font than Courier, such as Arial, Georgia, Tahoma, Trebuchet, or Verdana
10. **Resave** the file as a .doc or .docx: under the "File" menu, chose "Save As." Choose "Word Document" under the "Format" option

Applicant Tracking System (ATS) Compliance Checklist

The resume:

- Is saved and submitted in a .doc, .docx, or .txt (PDF, RTF, and JPG formats are not ATS-friendly)
- Doesn't use fancy templates, borders, or shading
- Is in a single column format: no tables, multiple columns, or text boxes
- Uses a single, standard font, such as Arial, Georgia, Tahoma, Trebuchet, or Verdana, 10 point size or above; does not mix fonts or point sizes.
- Doesn't have extra spaces between letters, because the ATS can't "read" it
- Includes clearly-defined sections: Summary, Work Experience, and Education in ALL CAPS
- Doesn't contain images or graphics
- Doesn't have any information in the headers or footers of the document
- Has been proofread, spellchecked and is error-free; the ATS won't recognize misspelled words
- Doesn't contain special characters or accented words: i.e., the word "résumé" isn't ATS-friendly; it will be read as "r?sum?"
- Contains proper capitalization and punctuation: both affect how information is parsed and assigned within the ATS database
- Uses spelled-out versions of a designation or term, along with its abbreviation or acronym, e.g., Certified Public Accountant (CPA)
- Incorporates relevant, targeted keywords and phrases for the position i.e., "Photoshop" instead of "image-editing software"
- Has been customized for the position you're applying for; "one-size-fits-all" doesn't work with applicant tracking systems.

Parting words of caution: Do not submit multiple versions of your resume to the same company. An ATS will retain all of your previous submissions. You can apply to many related positions within that company; however be sure the resume information is consistent for all submissions, i.e., number of years in a particular job, because the hiring manager will have access to all versions you've submitted.
