

What ECE Students Need to Know About Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) and Resumes

As an ECE student, you know that in the academic arena, grades, scores, and rankings matter. Once you leave the classroom and enter the business world, however, you'll need to translate what shows up on your transcript into what matters most to employers: experience and skills. Understanding the job application and hiring process will help you leverage your course work, co-op/internship, TA, research, and volunteer involvement so that you can write a highly effective, employer-focused resume that will land you an interview and a job.

Compatibility is the name of the game when it comes to the job application and hiring process. Think in terms of matchmaking. Employers are looking for applicants with specific qualifications and skills. Companies advertise what they are looking for in the job requisitions and position descriptions, so pay close attention to the keywords and language! Your resume tells them how compatible you are with the job.

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) use software to score and rank individuals primarily based on keywords. Knowing how this process works will allow you to tailor your resume for specific jobs. This handout is designed to help Georgia Tech ECE students understand the "what" and "how" of ATS.

What are Applicant Tracking Systems?

An ATS is an online software application that accepts and stores information that job candidates input. They are designed to search resumes the same way a recruiter or hiring manager would. Once collected, the data provided by candidates for each position can easily be reviewed by recruiters and others involved in the hiring process. The ATS can sift through the applications and help companies determine which candidates may be the most qualified for a given position based on criteria set by the employer. Some ATS rank applicants by keywords (skills, job positions) and filters (i.e. location and education). So, as an applicant, you should optimize your resume to specifically fit the job(s) you are applying for.

Candidate	Step	Selection Status	Last Activity	Assets	Education Level	Program
Candidate, Wonder (2678065)	Offer	Accepted	Aug 17, 2016	0 / 0		US
Hero, Big Six (2695625)	Offer	Rescinded	Aug 17, 2016	0 / 0		US
Mouse, Minnie (2615645)	Screening Request	Background	Aug 17, 2016	0 / 0	Technical Diploma (±12 years)	COMMUNICATI IONS
Mouse, Minnie (2676345)	Offer	Extended	Oct 19, 2016	0 / 0		COMMUNICATI IONS
Pan, Peter No (2695487)	Hire	Hired	Aug 29, 2016	0 / 0		US
Pass, Second (2678046)	New	Rejected	Jul 29, 2016	0 / 0		Accounting US
Titov, Tester New (2712446)	New	To Be Reviewed	Sep 20, 2016	0 / 0		US

Figure 1: What the Recruiter Sees. This is how an ATS may make applications available to a recruiter (not all ATS look or behave the same). Clicking on the candidate's name will bring up all the data input into the ATS. The recruiter may also sift and filter the applications manually based on specific criteria.

Why Do Companies Use ATS?

Applicant tracking systems are used for two main reasons: (1) to help ease the workload of recruiters and hiring managers and (2) because it's the law. The U.S. Department of Labor requires by Federal Law ("The Internet Applicant Rule") that companies with 100 or more employees provide accurate recordkeeping and tracking of all applicants.

According to a 2015 report published by *Glassdoor for Employers*, a corporate job posting receives 250 resumes. Of those 250 applicants, 4 to 6 will be contacted for an interview. ATS help recruiters to hone in on top candidates. ATS can also organize and save resumes for later. It is not only a filtering database, but a great organizational tool. Hiring managers can send emails directly to applicants to either inform them that they didn't make the cut, or ask for an interview. Even if an applicant wasn't the right fit for a certain position, recruiters and hiring managers can go back into the system later and pull up an application for a different position.

How do Applicant Tracking Systems Work?

Applicants can enter their data into the ATS front-end located on the hiring company's website, or it can be extracted from applicants' information uploaded to job boards. Popular job boards have also created abbreviated application systems (i.e., Monster's "Apply with Monster" and LinkedIn's "Quick Apply"). When you apply through an ATS, you will start with "knockout questions" in the form of check boxes or short answers ("Do you have at least three years' experience as a marketing manager?" or "What is your GPA?") and pre-qualifiers to weed out applications that don't meet minimum criteria. Candidates who do not meet these criteria may be eliminated or their data placed into a "knock-out pile" for future consideration.

Recruiters/hiring managers search the resumes stored in the ATS by using keywords. These keywords are typically the same words used in the job posting and are based on skills, experience, degree type, etc.

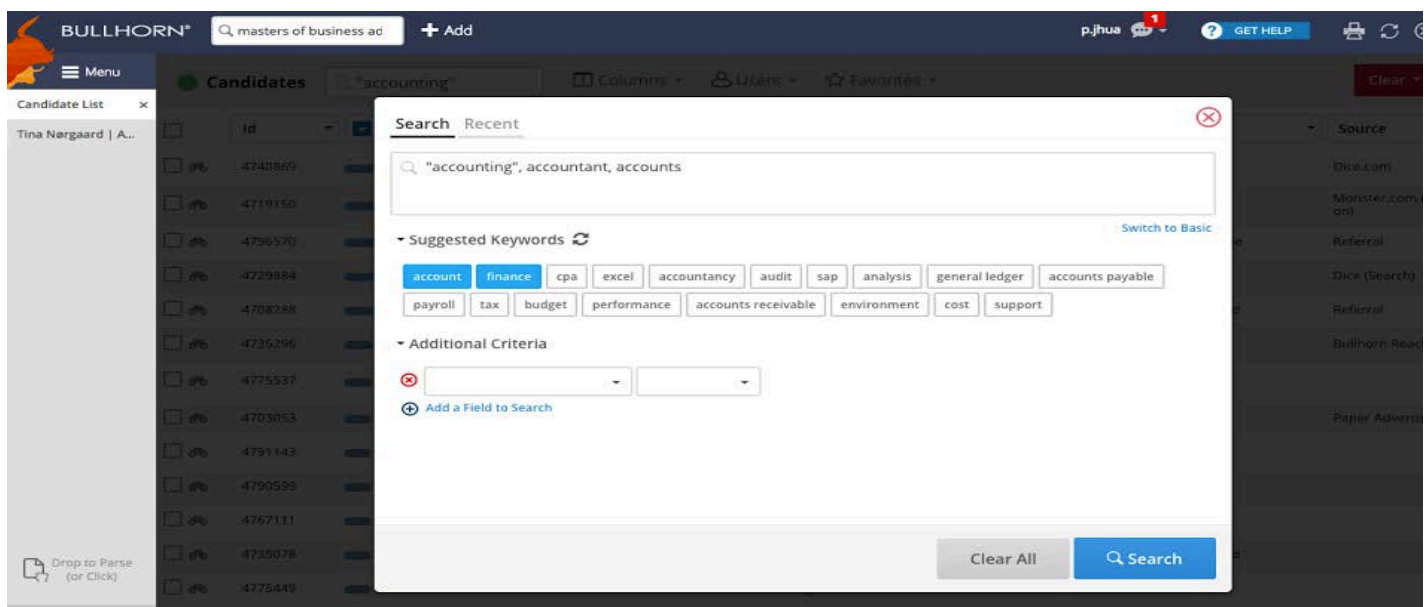


Figure 2: The Candidate's Search Window from the Perspective of the Hiring Manager. Keywords are the most important part of getting your resume through ATS. Many ATS use Boolean search capability and will rank candidates based on keyword matches.

Tips for Creating an ATS-Optimized Resume

If you are applying online for jobs, everything you type is being uploaded into the ATS. Start by filling in your profile carefully. Answer all questions. When you are asked to upload your resume, be sure that it is ATS optimized, scannable, and able to be processed using the latest document imaging technology (optical character recognition, or OCR).

Formatting Do's and Don'ts for a Scannable Resume

- ✓ Use MS Word. All ATS software can read basic .doc files. Most can read .txt and PDF files.
- ✓ Use standard, easy-to-read sans serif fonts such as Arial, Helvetica, Calibri, Tahoma, or Trebuchet.
- ✓ Use standard resume headings such as Objective, Education, Work Experience, and Skills.
- ✓ Use a font size of 10-12 and keep margins to 0.5 inches or above.

- × Do not use resume templates, which are a combination of fields and tables.
- × Do not include images, columns, tables, fields, text boxes, or graphics.
- × Do not create "Headers and Footers" or use page numbers.
- × Do not use special/fancy fonts, font treatments, and colors.
- × Do not use special characters or bullets.
- × Do not use white font or text boxes to "keyword stuff" your resume.

Content Do's and Don'ts for a Scannable Resume

- ✓ Use the same tone, verbiage, phrasing, and spelling as the job description. Don't get creative and use alternative phrasing.

- × Do not spell out common, industry-standard acronyms
 - R&D, MCUs, security IPs, industrial IOT applications, RFID, BLE, WiFi, Zigbee, IEC 62443 standards, IEEE 802.15.4/Thread, TLS/DTLS, IC design cycles, Matlab, 2D and 3D multi-material and hybrid deposition tools (FDM, SLA, SLS), EDA tools, DC, transient, and SOA techniques, TCAD simulation, LEDs, SiGe, SiPM, CMOS, BiCMOS, VHDL

- ✓ Spell out titles, organizations, programs, scholarships, etc. and include the acronym
 - Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP), Vertically Integrated Projects (VIP), Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI), Women in Electrical and Computer Engineering (WECE), Campus Recreation Center (CRC), National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship (NSF GRF)

Example 1: Verbs Tense and Phrasing

If the job description says, "Responsible for *recruiting, selecting, training, scheduling,* and *evaluating* employees,"

and you write

"Assisted with *recruitment, hiring process, schedule creation,* and *annual performance reviews,*"

you might miss opportunities for keyword matching because the ATS is looking for "recruiting" not "recruitment".

Example 2: Job Titles

If the job requisition says, “[Research Engineer](#)” or “[Technical Project Manager](#)” or “[Web Developer](#)” and you write

Seeking a position as a... “[summer research intern](#)” or “[Project Coordinator](#)” or “[Website Designer](#)”

the ATS may not match your application to the right job opening if it is programmed to look for exact keywords.

Example 3: Punctuation, Capitalization, Spelling, and Abbreviations

Check the job requisition to determine how the company spells, capitalizes, punctuates, and abbreviates technical jargon, degrees/education, etc.

--ultra-low power circuits, ultra low power circuits, ultralow power circuits

--MBA, M.B.A., Master of Business Administration, Masters of Business Administration

--Javascript, JavaScript, JS

How Can I Test If My Resume is ATS-Optimized?

There are lots of free, “professional” online services available that promise results “100% guaranteed”. **Use these tools and resources with caution!** They are all data mining! Always protect your personal information and be aware of how it may be used (without your consent). It can be instructive and useful to try these tools out, but don’t waste your money on these services!

- ❖ ATS simulators, like Jobscan, give you a practice run against the ATS before actually submitting your resume. They allow you to insert the job posting alongside your resume and compare the two documents using the same factors the ATS uses to scan resumes. Try Jobscan out here: <https://www.jobscan.co/#>
- ❖ Websites like [TagCrowd.com](https://www.tagcrowd.com) and [Wordle.net](https://www.wordle.net) can be used to help you identify keywords. Both tools generate “word clouds” based on the text you provide.
- ❖ Online services like TopResume.com (<https://www.topresume.com/six-second-test>) and Resunate.com (<https://www.resunate.com/>) will evaluate your resume for free, but they will ALWAYS recommend that you purchase one of their professional resume writing packages.

Some information provided in this handout is derived from the following sources:

HireRight.com blog post (March 6, 2017), “**The Truth about Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)**” <http://www.hireright.com/blog/2017/03/the-truth-about-applicant-tracking-systems-ats/>

Lisa Rangel, LinkedIn.com article, “**The Easy How-To Guide to Formatting Resumes for Applicant Tracking Systems**” <https://premium.linkedin.com/jobsearch/articles/the-easy-how-to-guide-for-formatting-resumes-for-applicant-tracking-systems>

Hloom.com online article, “**ATS Resume Templates: Classic or Modern Resume Designs Optimized for Applicant Tracking Systems**” <http://www.hloom.com/ats-resume-samples/>

Jobscan.com online article, “**Guide to Applicant Tracking Systems and How to Optimize Your Resume for Them**” <https://www.jobscan.co/applicant-tracking-systems>