

Applying Online

Years ago getting your job application noticed used to mean drafting a crisp cover letter and resume on 24-pound, watermarked linen paper. But rising to the top of the pile is a bit different for the Job Boards and "Apply On-line" generation.

With job applications now more likely to be filled out online, it's trickier to get attention when you're filling out a form on a website. To stand out from the crowd, you'll have to get into the mindset of a recruiter and work the online system.

Many companies use resume scanning software. This software generally identifies and sorts resumes by looking at certain "keywords" in the document. This ranking system helps them to decide who is a good match for the advertised position and who isn't. Using the right resume key words can get you the interview!

To make sure you aren't filtered out, adjust your resume to mimic the language in the company's job listing. If the job description uses the words "accounts payable," "accounts receivable" and "general ledger," make sure those phrases are tailored into your resume.

Which keywords are right for the position you're interested in?

Here are a few tips...

- ★ Look closely at the job ad or posting. See which words are used. If you can, look at a number of other ads for that company and see if there are certain words that keep popping up.
- ★ Go to the company website and identify some of their key values. A good place to look is their mission statement. The annual report is another great source of key values.
- ★ Visit O*NET online to identify key skills and abilities for the desired position. Then select resume key words from that list.
- ★ Try to use any keywords you select at least three times, in both your resume and cover letter.
- ★ Use the most important keywords within the first line or two of each job description section of your resume.

A Few Resume Key Words to Avoid

There are also some words that can detract from the overall effectiveness of your resume. You don't want to use confusing jargon, vague phrases or clichés.

Unless you're trying to convey your ability to function as an integral part of a team, words like assisted, contributed and supported are not going to be very effective. These words basically say you helped, but not how. If you must use these words, follow them with a more complete description of your role.

Successfully is another meaningless resume key word. Rather than using it, give concrete examples of your accomplishments that prove your success at your past jobs. The phrase "responsible for" takes up unnecessary space on your resume and should be avoided. Your resume is the place to list your accomplishments, not your job duties or responsibilities.

You also need to avoid "flowery" speech and words. By trying too hard to sound intelligent or "in the know," you may convince your reader of just the opposite — or even worse, confuse them.

Proper Formatting

If you're e-mailing or uploading your resume, keep it simple. Ornate fonts and bullets get lost in translation.

If you're cutting and pasting your resume from a Microsoft Word document to an online form, create it in Rich Text Format or with .txt after the name. (Do that while "saving as.") That will keep your formatting from being garbled. However, if you're sending it as an attachment, there's no need to save it differently.

Other tips: Recruiters receive hundreds of resumes per week, with many named "resume.doc." Make it easy for them to find you by adding your name to the resume file. Also, if you're e-mailing your resume, paste it in the body of the e-mail in addition to attaching it. If you have technical problems, don't give up. The job boards all have customer service numbers you can contact. Call them even if they take you to the actual company's website.

If you've posted your resume on a board like Monster.com or Yahoo! Hot Jobs, refresh it every 90 days. If you wait any longer, employers wonder why you haven't been able to secure a new job.

Of course, one thing about resumes hasn't changed: spelling errors. Don't make any.

Source: Your Career Connection