



# Scannable Résumés

## Ready Reference ♦ E-10

College of Engineering, Architecture & Technology ♦ Career Services

Many employers now use electronic applicant tracking, or résumé scanning, to sort through candidate resumes. Since the typical Fortune 500 Corporation processes as many as 2,000 résumés a day, many of those employers hire data entry keyers to uniformly input e-resumes into databases. Ensure that employers who use this type of system see your résumé by following these guidelines to make a scannable résumé.

Here's how it works. Your résumé is scanned into the computer as an image. The optical character recognition (OCR) software looks at the image to distinguish each character, and then creates an ASCII text file. This file is stored in a central database. Rather than handling stacks of paper and reading through dozens or even hundreds of resumes, the recruiter searches the database using keywords to identify candidates meeting the required qualifications. Résumés are filtered and prioritized according to the percentage of "hits" or number of keywords matching the specified qualifications. The reviewer then pulls up the resume contents for each candidate he/she wishes to consider. What the reviewer sees looks similar to a business letter, with your information in paragraph form, with left justification and no graphic elements.

✓ **Hot Tip:** The recruiter won't see your actual résumé, but will instead see a document that looks significantly different than the resume you submitted. Remember, "scannable" = plain. Format your resume to be readable by a computer, not to appeal to a human.

Preparing a scannable résumé is not so difficult. Just like the traditional style résumé, you should focus on content and format. There are some "rules" to follow to increase your success with a résumé scanning system.

### Tips for Maximizing Scannability

- Use plain white, 8 1/2 x 11 paper and black print. Print on one side only.
- Provide a copy from a laser printer or inkjet printer. Computers and a laser printer are available in CEAT Career Services.
- Faxed documents are difficult for the scanner to read. If you must send your résumé by fax, set it to "high resolution".
- Do not fold or staple your resume.
- Use common plain fonts such as Arial, Courier New, Helvetica, Univers, Times, Palatino, and New Century Schoolbook.
- Use a font size of 12 to 14 points. Do not use 10 point Times.
- Do not condense spacing between letters.
- Use boldface type or all capital letters for section headings.
- Avoid fancy formatting such as italics, underlines, colors, shadows, and reverses. Make sure letters do not touch each other.
- Do not use pictures or graphics.
- Keep the length to two pages or less.
- Do not use vertical lines, horizontal lines or boxes.
- Do not use two columns or formats that look like newspapers or newsletters.
- Place your name at the top of each page.
- Use standard address format below your name and include your e-mail address. If you must list two addresses or phone numbers, include them on separate lines below your name. The scanner reads from

the left and may not pick up info on the right side of the page.

✓ **Hot Tip:** Anything e-mailed is scannable, as long as it is not an attachment. If sending your résumé as an e-mail attachment, save it as RTF (Rich Text Format) and make sure there is spacing between sections.

### Content

Recruiters and managers access the résumé database in many ways, searching for your resume specifically or searching for applicants with specific experience, skills, degrees, etc. Read the position description or check the company website to help identify the keywords and skills the employer is seeking. Be truthful! Do not include a keyword if you don't have that skill or experience.

### Enhancing Your Scannable Resume

- Describe your experience with concrete words rather than vague descriptions. For example, its better to use "managed a team of software engineers" than "responsible for managing, training . . ."
- Use two pages if necessary. A text-rich resume, full of skills and relevant accomplishments will maximize your potential for hits. You can provide more information on a scannable résumé than you would on a traditional resume. However, don't get carried away and fill two or more pages with information that is meaningless to the employer.
- Use jargon and acronyms specific to your industry. You may also spell out the acronyms for clarification.
- Increase your list of key words by including specifics; for example, list the names of

software you use such as Microsoft Word and Access.

- Use common headings such as: Objective, Education, Internships, Work Experience, Skills, Certifications, Licenses, Summary of Qualifications, Professional Knowledge, Accomplishments, Affiliations, Campus Involvement, Honors, Additional, etc.
- List complete school name, degree, and dates.
- Date ranges should be on the same line as your school name and degree.
- If you have extra space, describe your interpersonal traits. Keywords could include: skilled in time management, dependable, high energy, leadership, sense of responsibility, and communication skills.

### Other Things to Know

- Don't panic if required to send your résumé to a different location than the position you are seeking. Many companies contract with resume database management firms, or your résumé may be going to the company headquarters. It will still be available for all offices within the organization.
- Most companies scan the cover letters that are received with the résumés. Use your cover letter as an opportunity to include additional keywords. Cover letters carry more weight if addressed to a specific person or a specific position.
- Your résumé will remain in the database longer than a paper copy would be maintained in a file. Keep records of where you submit your résumés, and update your information with those companies. Updated resumes are flagged as duplicates. The reviewer receives both versions, with the latest one on top.
- Unsure if the company scans? If in doubt, make sure the résumé you submit will survive a scanner.

Oklahoma State University  
College of Engineering, Architecture & Technology  
Career Services Office ♦ 102 Engineering North ♦ Stillwater, OK 74078  
405.744.3920 ♦ [cathy.southwick@okstate.edu](mailto:cathy.southwick@okstate.edu)  
[www.hireOSUgrads.com](http://www.hireOSUgrads.com)

