



ATS vs AI: What You Need to Know

WHAT IS AN APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEM (ATS)?

When you apply for a position through an online portal or a company website, your application will most likely be processed by an applicant tracking system (ATS). Not all companies use these systems; many small businesses and non-profit organizations may lack the resources to implement ATS software. In these instances, applications are typically directed straight to a talent acquisition manager's inbox. That said, most larger organizations, particularly those with multiple open positions and a high volume of applicants, rely on ATS to streamline the hiring process.

ATS software is designed to assist talent acquisition and recruitment professionals in tracking and managing candidate pipelines. Its primary function is to store and organize candidate application information, streamlining the hiring process. The system includes various stages that allow companies to track a candidate's progress throughout the recruitment cycle. For instance, if you're invited for an interview, the company will update your status to reflect this step. This process continues through each subsequent phase of the application process. Some companies manage their ATS manually, in which case a human will review your application, decide whether to move you forward, and provide updates as necessary. However, many modern ATS platforms use AI tools to automate these tasks.

WHEN IS AI USED IN AN ATS?

Not all ATS tools use AI, although many do. These systems are increasing in popularity as companies aim to become more technologically driven and efficient in their hiring processes.

When you apply for a position through an AI-managed ATS, the system will "read" your resume by scanning for key qualifications and relevant information to assess whether you're a strong match for the job. Candidates who meet the criteria are highlighted for the recruiter to review, and from there, the recruiter can easily select which candidates to invite for an interview. Depending on the company's hiring process, AI tools may handle the entire screening process (resume review, invite to interview, screening interview). Some systems even use "solo" video interviews with algorithmic analysis of a candidate's emotions, word choices, and personality traits to assess their potential fit for the role. While each ATS offers its own set of advantages and challenges, it ultimately comes down to what each company values most in their hiring process and how they choose to implement these technologies.

TIPS FOR FORMATTING YOUR RESUME FOR AN ATS

- Only apply to roles you're qualified for (if you don't meet the required qualifications, you should not apply)
- Use keywords found in the job description in your resume (the ATS will be able to match these with the job description)
- Include simple formatting that is easy to read, and draws the employer's attention from left to right (an AI-powered ATS reads the same way we do)
- Use concise, clear language that reflects your experience and shows why you're a fit for the role
- Make sure your resume is spelling and grammar error-free

What is AI?

AI, short for artificial intelligence, refers to algorithmic technologies that enable computers to simulate "intelligent" learning, comprehension, and problem-solving.

Additional questions or need assistance with your resume? Email our team at tippie-careerservice@uiowa.edu or make an appointment with one of our Career Specialists on MyUI.