

Conquer Online Applications!

Three easy steps:

- Format your resume.
- Email your resume.
- Do your online application.



Step 1. Format your resume.

The key to formatting your resume is making it readable by an Applicant Tracking System (ATS.) Formatting has to do with the look of your resume, rather than the content. You could have the best-matching skills ever for your dream job; but if the ATS can't read your resume, you will not be hired. Fortunately, it's fairly simple to make your resume pleasing to both the human eye and to the ATS.

Most employers, large and small, are using ATS these days to scan and screen all resumes. Your resume, along with hundreds of others, will be scanned into a computer, which is programmed to identify the keywords. Keywords are the qualifications and requirements that you find in the job lead; they vary from one posting to another, one company to another, one job to another.

The more keywords the computer finds, the more likely the resume will be selected for attention from a Human Resources person. In a world where there can easily be 100 applicants for the same job, ATS makes it feasible for a small number of people to make the early-stage hiring decisions.

There are many types of ATS; no two are the same. In addition, it is a rapidly evolving field; next year, it will all be different. In the old days (2013), it was necessary to create a plain text resume; it looked as if it had been typed on a typewriter, and was ugly enough to cause job seekers to fear that employers would think they couldn't create a pretty resume. Thanks to ATS, resumes can be readable and beautiful at the same time.

Unfortunately, simple formatting errors can still make your resume impossible for the scanner to read. It's also easy to confuse them. Here are some general tips for successful scanning:

- **Follow the instructions you find in the job lead.** These are general tips; the job lead will give you the specifics you need.
- Use Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx.) Most employers do. Many ATS can't read PDF documents.
- Keywords from the job description and/or industry are crucial. They should appear in every section of the resume, as often as you can cause them to do so and still make sense.
- Use the same words as the job lead. Use the same form of the word that you find in the job lead (e.g., if they want "manager," you are a "manager," not a supervisor.)
- Use the same order as the job lead. If they ask for "Word, Excel and PowerPoint," you put exactly the same thing, even if PowerPoint is your best skill.
- On the resume, the job seeker's name should appear alone on the top line of the resume with no degrees (e.g. BA), quotes or symbols.

- Employment dates must appear to the right of the job title. If a line starts with dates, it will confuse the ATS.
- Section headings should be very standard, such as “Career Summary” or “Employment History.”

These formatting tools are okay to use:

- **Bold.**
- ALL CAPITALS.
- Bullets, as long as they don’t touch any letters.
- Graphic lines and borders, as long as they don’t touch any text/letters.
- Symbols found on a keyboard, such as @, \$, &, *.
- Standard fonts, such as Arial and Times New Roman; nothing unusual. If the employer’s computer doesn’t have the font you used, it will not be able to read your resume.

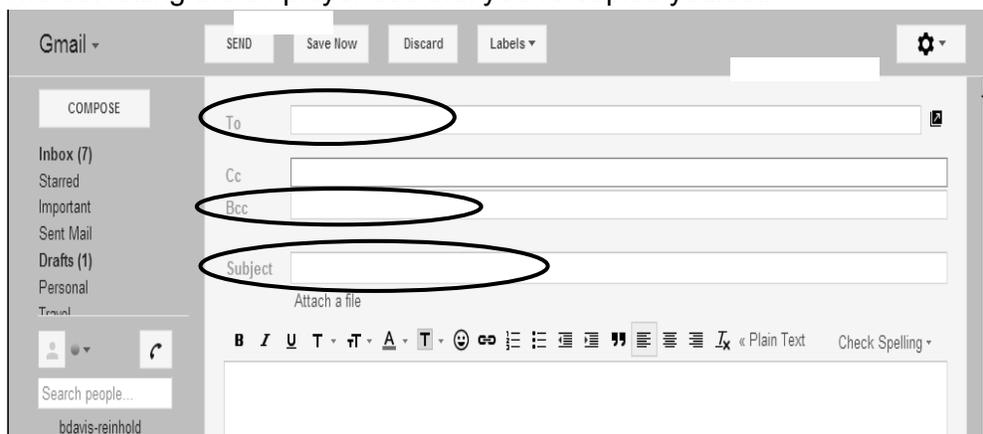
Don’t use these tools; they will make the surrounding text unreadable:

- Underlining, *italics*.
- Unusual bullets or any symbols not found on a keyboard.
- Accent marks, as used here in the word “résumé.”
- Columns, tables.
- Charts and graphs.
- Graphics, logos.
- Headers and footers on page 1; the contact information won’t be readable, and the employer will not call you for an interview.

Step 2. Email your resume.

To send your resume within an email message:

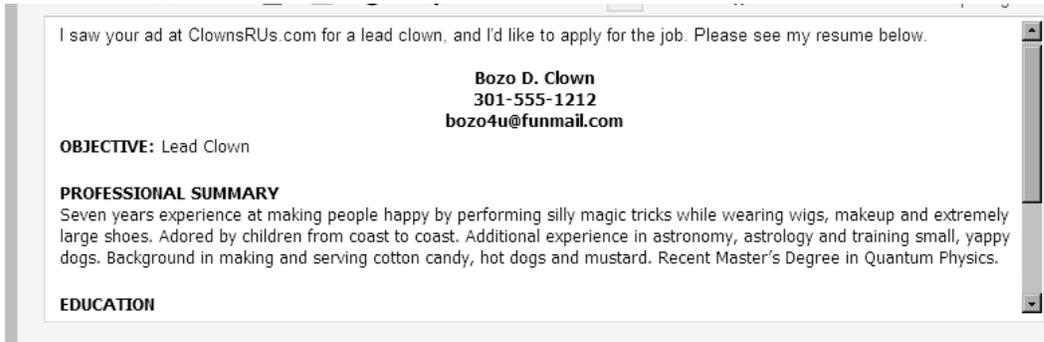
- Go to your email account and open a new message.
- Type in the address to which you’re sending your resume in the To line. You can also put your own address in the BCC (blind carbon copy) box; this will help you keep track of what you’ve sent out without letting the employer see that you’ve copied yourself.



Put the job title or number you are referring to in the **Subject** line.

- Type a short cover letter at the beginning of your message; be sure to mention that your resume is below the message. Hit the **ENTER** key on your keyboard a couple of times to create some blank lines. The blinking cursor should be at the beginning of a blank line. Minimize your email by clicking on the minus sign in the upper right corner of the screen.

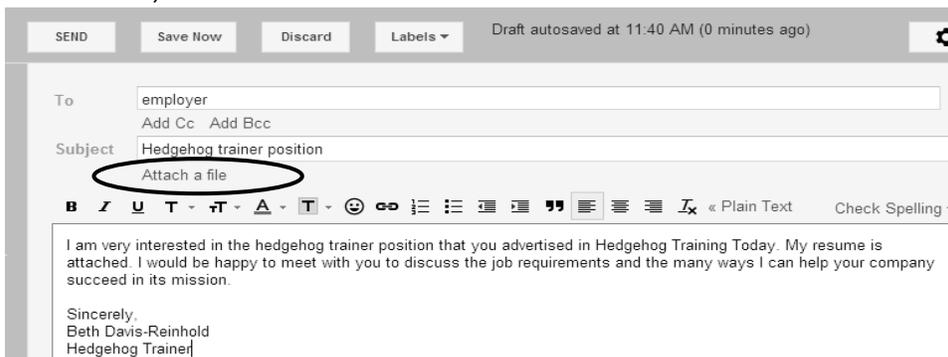
- Open your resume.
- Highlight your whole resume (on the Home tab ribbon, go to the Editing group at the far right; click the **down arrow** at Select, then click **Select All**. Then right click in the highlighted area. You'll get a menu; choose **Copy**. Minimize the resume.
- Go back to your email.
- Right click where your cursor is. Choose **Paste** from the menu. Your resume should now appear in your message.



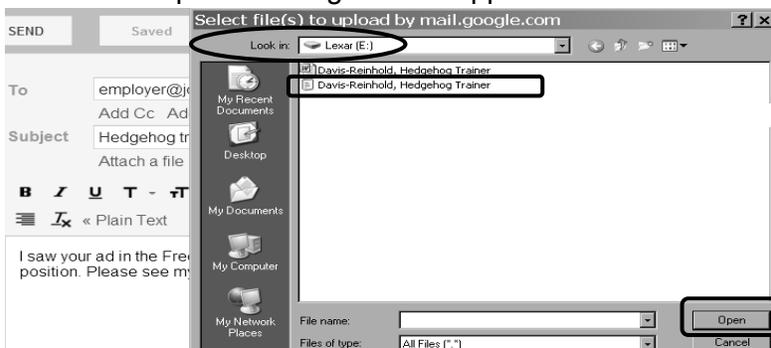
Note: You will probably be looking at the end of your resume. To view the entire document, you may need to use your vertical scroll bar to scroll up to the first line in your resume.

To email your resume as a Word Attachment:

- Start a new message, just as you did in the previous example.
- Type a brief cover letter at the beginning of your message, making sure to mention that your resume is attached.
- Click on the words **Attach a file**. (Your email system may have a slightly different method to attach files.)

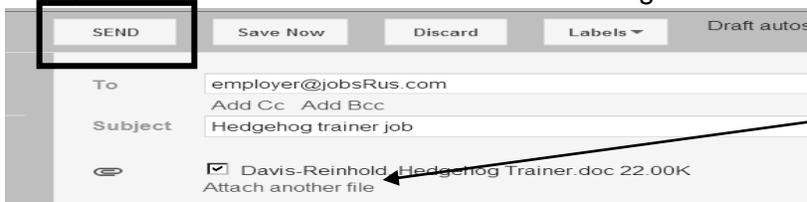


The “Select files to upload” dialog box will appear. Select the drive where your Word resume is saved.



Highlight the resume file and click **Open** in the lower right corner.

Wait patiently while the resume is attached to the message.



If you want to attach another file, like a cover letter, just click on **Attach another file** and repeat the process.

Now you're back in the message. **PROOFREAD IT!** Click on the **Send** button to send your resume.

Be sure to sign out of your email account when you're done!

3. Conquer the online application!

To post your resume to a company website:

The good news is that online applications generally ask for the same information that paper applications used to request. Here are some tips on how to apply online for the job you want.

- First, relax. Online applications are a lot like paper applications, except for the part about completing them on the computer. They ask the same questions they always have, because those are the things all employers want to know about candidates. And if your handwriting is less than perfect, using the computer may be an advantage.
- Research the company before you start the application. Though this seems to slow down the process, it will serve you well. If all goes well, you'll be spending most of your waking hours in that place for the next several years. Don't you want to know everything you can before you put a lot of effort into it? There are also many scams to avoid. At the very least, Google the company. Read and print out the company's home page; you may need it later.
- It's usually best to apply through the company website, rather than a job board like CareerBuilder or Monster.com. Using the company website gets you a little attention from the person in the company who knows what he's actually looking for.
- Have all the information you could possibly need at hand and organized before you start. That will include an electronic version of your resume, customized to the job of the moment. You may need your complete employment and education history, including dates, cities and states. You'll need information on any certifications or professional licenses you have, including the certifying organization. You may need your supervisors' contact information, reference list, military history, and even driver's license number. If you can imagine any other piece of information an employer might ask of you, have that ready too.
- Allow plenty of time to fill out the application. You have no way to know how long it may take. It could easily be more than an hour, even if you have good typing and computer skills. Some applications allow you to save your work; some don't. Some will "time you out," meaning that it will delete all your work if it's not done in the time allowed. Others include tests as part of the application. Some companies track whether you finish their application in one session or not; it may be held against you if you come back more than once.
- All online applications are different, just as all paper applications were different. They all ask for the same general information, but in a different order and format than any other site.

- Some applications work on Internet Explorer, but not Google Chrome. Some work on Google Chrome but not Internet Explorer. Sometimes they tell you, sometimes they don't. If the "Apply" or "Submit" buttons don't work, try the other browser.
- Read the directions; read the rest of the application (or whatever part of it is available); then read the directions again. Follow them to the letter!
- For each company you apply to, you will need to create an account. You'll need to establish a user name and password, just as you did when you signed up for the Maryland Workforce Exchange. Look for any directions as to how many characters are required, whether you need to include numbers or punctuation marks (also called "special characters.")
- The site will want you to create a profile, which includes your contact information, experience, education, etc. This is the information that stays the same, regardless of how many jobs you apply for in that company. It may be a lot of work at the beginning, but it saves typing in the long run.
- Many companies have several divisions or subsidiary companies. Some companies have offices/plants in several different states or countries. You will need to decide which ones you prefer. (This is where knowing about the company comes in handy.)
- If you're able to save your application, or even parts of it, do so and print it. In case something goes wrong with the computer, at least you won't have to begin again from nothing.
- Don't say, "See resume." Sometimes they have only the application; the resume is not available to them. In addition, that phrase may cause the employer to think you're lazy.
- As always, make your information match the job lead. The employer will put the most important factor first; you should do likewise. Use the employer's words and order.
- Be sure your information is complete and accurate. Incomplete applications tend not to lead to jobs. A small typo may remove you from consideration. Be sure all of it is consistent with all the other information you have provided, including what you've posted at sites like LinkedIn and Twitter. If it is not, that may be a reason to deny you an interview, or even fire you after you get hired.
- Often the application asks you what salary you want. Think about it ahead of time. (If you don't know what to expect for a salary, visit salary.com or glassdoor.com, or check in the Maryland Workforce Exchange.) If that information is required, you'll have to put in a number. Choose a range if you can. (This is another time that research comes in handy.)
- Sometimes you fill in a part of the application and hit Submit; the same page comes back, empty. When this happens, look at the top of the page. The site will probably tell you what it wants. Date formats are a popular way to go wrong with this.
- **PROOFREAD!** Make sure you answered all the questions thoroughly and accurately.
- Be prepared to take a test or an assessment. Many companies require an ethics test. If this is the case, they are not only checking to see that you answer the questions correctly; they also check how long it takes you to make your decision. Be cautious with the wording of questions on assessments. For instance, if they ask if you'd be uncomfortable telling an untruth for the good of the company, the answer is YES!
- If you have a question or run into trouble, save and print what you have, if possible. The staff member at the FCWS Resource Desk may be able to help you. If not, check the company website and the job lead; there may be a contact person with helpful advice for you.

General tips:

- Sometimes the computer breaks down or hangs up while you're working on the application. Some of your information may have been saved; log back into the website and look for your application. You may or may not have to start over from nothing.
- You should never have to pay for a job, or supply private facts such as your bank account or credit card numbers.
- You may have to supply your Social Security number. Sometimes you can get away with giving a series of ones or zeros, or the last four digits. If an application requires information that you are uncomfortable giving out, it may be best to get out of it and look for another job.
- Before you hit "Send," **proofread your information!** Get someone else to read it too. Some employers will reject you for even one small typo.
- Finally, keep a copy of whatever you send for your own reference. You don't have to job search very long before all that information runs together in your mind. You'll want to be able to identify the company when they call for that interview!

If you'd like to complete a practice application, you can go to
https://www.training.governmentjobs.com/js_login.cfm

You can also find an Online Employment Application Guide at:
<http://governmentjobs.com/agencyinstructions.cfm>

To see how your resume matches up with a job description, copy and paste both into this website:
www.jobscan.co

Online applications can be long and difficult. Fortunately, you don't need a degree in electrical engineering to complete an online application. Some companies use this as a screening process. They want to know if you are sufficiently computer-savvy to work there. Show them that you are!

