10 ATS Resume Mistakes Costing You Interviews

A Free Guide from All Resume Services

Introduction

You've spent hours perfecting your resume. Your achievements are impressive, your experience is solid, and your qualifications match the job description perfectly. Yet you're still not getting interview callbacks.

The problem isn't your experience—it's your resume format.

Over 98% of Fortune 500 companies now use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to screen resumes before they ever reach a human recruiter. These automated systems scan, parse, and rank your resume based on specific criteria. If your resume isn't optimized for ATS, it gets rejected automatically—no matter how qualified you are.

In our 18+ years of professional resume writing, we've helped thousands of Australians overcome ATS barriers and achieve a 96% interview success rate. This guide reveals the ten most common ATS mistakes we see—and how to fix them.

Mistake #1: Using Headers and Footers

Why It's a Problem: Most ATS software cannot read information placed in headers or footers. If you've put your contact details, name, or page numbers in these sections, the ATS will miss them entirely.

The Fix: Place all critical information—your name, phone number, email address, and LinkedIn URL—in the main body of your resume, preferably at the top of the first page. Keep headers and footers completely empty.

Example:

- ❌ **Wrong:** Contact details in header, page numbers in footer
- ✅ **Right:** All contact information in the main document body at the top

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Mistake #2: Using Tables, Text Boxes, or Columns

Why It's a Problem: ATS systems read documents from left to right, top to bottom. Tables, text boxes, and multi-column layouts confuse the parsing algorithm, causing your information to be read out of order or skipped entirely.

The Fix: Use a simple, single-column layout with clear section headings. Avoid any tables, text boxes, or graphics that interrupt the natural flow of text.

Example:

- ❌ **Wrong:** Two-column resume with skills in a sidebar table
- ✅ **Right:** Single-column format with skills listed under a clear "Skills" heading

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Mistake #3: Using Creative Fonts or Graphics

Why It's a Problem: While decorative fonts and infographic-style resumes look impressive to humans, ATS software can only reliably read standard fonts. Unusual fonts, icons, logos, and graphics are either misread or ignored completely.

The Fix: Stick to ATS-friendly fonts like Arial, Calibri, Georgia, or Times New Roman in 10-12 point size. Avoid using images, icons, logos, or decorative elements anywhere on your resume.

Example:

- ❌ **Wrong:** Resume with custom fonts, skill bar graphics, and company logos
- ✅ **Right:** Clean resume using Calibri font with text-based skill descriptions

Mistake #4: Using Non-Standard Section Headings

Why It's a Problem: ATS systems look for specific section headings like "Work Experience," "Education," and "Skills." If you use creative headings like "My Journey" or "Where I've Been," the ATS won't recognize these sections and will fail to categorize your information correctly.

The Fix: Use standard, industry-recognized section headings that ATS systems expect:

- **Work Experience** (not "Career History" or "Professional Journey")
- **Education** (not "Academic Background" or "Qualifications")
- **Skills** (not "Core Competencies" or "Areas of Expertise")
- **Certifications** (not "Professional Development")

Example:

- ❌ **Wrong:** "My Professional Evolution" as a heading
- ✅ **Right:** "Work Experience" as a heading

Mistake #5: Saving Your Resume in the Wrong File Format

Why It's a Problem: Some ATS systems struggle with PDF files, especially older versions. While modern ATS can usually handle PDFs, Word documents (.docx) remain the most universally compatible format.

The Fix: Unless the job posting specifically requests a PDF, submit your resume as a .docx file. If you must use PDF, ensure it's created from a Word document (not scanned or image-based) and use standard fonts.

Example:

- ❌ **Wrong:** Submitting a scanned PDF or image file
- ✅ **Right:** Submitting a .docx file or text-based PDF created from Word

Mistake #6: Keyword Stuffing or Missing Keywords

Why It's a Problem: ATS systems rank resumes based on keyword matches with the job description. However, simply stuffing your resume with keywords in a hidden section or repeating them unnaturally will trigger spam filters. Conversely, missing critical keywords means your resume won't rank high enough to reach human eyes.

The Fix: Carefully read the job description and identify 10-15 critical keywords (skills, qualifications, software, certifications). Incorporate these keywords naturally throughout your resume in context—in your professional summary, work experience bullet points, and skills section.

Example:

- ❌ **Wrong:** Hidden white text with keyword list, or no relevant keywords at all
- ✅ **Right:** "Managed cross-functional teams using Agile methodology and Jira to deliver projects 20% ahead of schedule"

Mistake #7: Using Acronyms Without Spelling Them Out

Why It's a Problem: ATS systems search for both acronyms and their full spellings. If you only include "CRM" without writing "Customer Relationship Management," you might miss matches when the job description uses the full term.

The Fix: Use both the acronym and the full spelling on first mention, then use whichever is more common in your industry throughout the rest of the resume.

Example:

- ❌ **Wrong:** "Experienced with CRM systems"
- ✅ **Right:** "Experienced with Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems including Salesforce and HubSpot"

Mistake #8: Including Irrelevant Information

Why It's a Problem: Every word on your resume should serve a purpose. Including outdated skills, irrelevant hobbies, or unrelated work experience from decades ago dilutes your keyword density and makes it harder for ATS to identify your core qualifications.

The Fix: Tailor your resume for each application. Remove or minimize irrelevant experience, focus on the last 10-15 years of work history, and only include skills and achievements that directly relate to the target role.

Example:

- ❌ **Wrong:** Including your 1995 retail job when applying for a senior IT role in 2025
- ✅ **Right:** Focusing on your last 15 years of progressive IT leadership experience

Mistake #9: Using Special Characters or Symbols

Why It's a Problem: ATS systems can misinterpret special characters like %, &, ★, •, or → as errors or fail to parse them correctly. This can corrupt your data or cause the ATS to skip entire sections.

The Fix: Use simple hyphens (-) or standard bullet points (•) for lists. Spell out symbols: write "percent" instead of "%," "and" instead of "&," and avoid decorative symbols entirely.

Example:

- ❌ **Wrong:** "Increased revenue by 25% using A&B testing ★★★★★"
- ✅ **Right:** "Increased revenue by 25 percent using A and B testing methodologies"

Mistake #10: Failing to Customize for Each Job

Why It's a Problem: Sending the same generic resume to every employer is the biggest ATS mistake of all. Each job description contains unique keywords, required skills, and qualifications. A one-size-fits-all resume will never rank highly enough to pass ATS screening.

The Fix: Create a master resume with all your experience, skills, and achievements. For each job application, customize your resume by:

- Adjusting your professional summary to match the role

- Reordering or emphasizing relevant experience

- Incorporating keywords from the job description

- Highlighting achievements that align with the company's needs

Example:

- ❌ **Wrong:** Sending identical resumes to 50 different job postings

- ✅ **Right:** Tailoring your resume for each application to match specific job requirements

Your ATS Resume Checklist

Before submitting your next job application, run through this quick checklist:

ATS Requirement	✓ Check
Contact information in document body (not header/footer)	☐
Single-column layout with no tables or text boxes	☐
Standard fonts (Arial, Calibri, Georgia, Times New Roman)	☐
Standard section headings (Work Experience, Education, Skills)	☐
Saved as .docx or text-based PDF	☐
Keywords from job description incorporated naturally	☐
Acronyms spelled out on first mention	☐
No irrelevant or outdated information	☐
No special characters or symbols	☐
Resume customized for this specific job	☐

The Bottom Line

Beating the ATS isn't about gaming the system—it's about presenting your qualifications in a format that both software and humans can easily understand. By avoiding these ten common mistakes, you'll dramatically increase your chances of getting past the initial screening and landing in front of a hiring manager.

However, creating an ATS-optimized resume that also appeals to human recruiters requires expertise, industry knowledge, and a deep understanding of what hiring managers are looking for.

That's where we come in.

How All Resume Services Can Help

At All Resume Services, we've spent over 18 years perfecting the art and science of resume writing. Our professional resume writers know exactly how to:

- **Optimize for ATS** while maintaining readability for human recruiters
- **Identify and incorporate** the right keywords for your industry and target role
- **Highlight your achievements** in a way that demonstrates measurable value
- **Tailor your resume** to pass screening and win interviews

Our clients achieve a **96% interview success rate** because we combine ATS optimization with compelling storytelling, professional formatting, and industry-specific expertise.

Our Services Include:

Professional Resume Writing – ATS-optimized resumes that highlight your achievements and get you noticed by hiring managers. Tailored to your industry and career level.

Cover Letter Writing – Compelling cover letters that complement your resume and demonstrate your enthusiasm and fit for the role.

LinkedIn Profile Optimization – Transform your LinkedIn profile into a powerful personal brand that attracts recruiters and opportunities.

Selection Criteria Responses – Detailed responses to government and corporate selection criteria using the STAR method.

Career Consultation – One-on-one guidance from experienced career advisors on your job search strategy and interview preparation.

Why Choose All Resume Services?

✅ **18+ Years of Experience** – We've helped thousands of professionals across all industries and career levels

✅ **96% Interview Success Rate** – Our clients consistently land interviews and secure their dream roles

✅ **100% Satisfaction Guarantee** – We work with you until you're completely satisfied with your documents

✅ **Fast Turnaround** – Standard delivery in 2-3 business days, with express options available

✅ **Australian Expertise** – We specialize in Australian resume formats and understand the local job market

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Ready to Get Started?

Don't let ATS mistakes cost you your dream job. Let our expert writers create a resume that gets you noticed.

Get Your Free Resume Review

Upload your current resume for a complimentary evaluation. We'll assess its ATS compatibility and identify areas for improvement—at no cost and with no obligation.

Visit us at: www.allresumeservices.com.au

Call us: 0410 934 371

Email us: admin@allresumeservices.com.au

About All Resume Services

All Resume Services is Australia's leading professional resume writing service with over 18 years of experience helping job seekers land interviews and secure their dream roles. Our team of expert writers specializes in creating ATS-optimized resumes, compelling cover letters, and powerful LinkedIn profiles across all industries and career levels.

With a 96% interview success rate and a 100% satisfaction guarantee, we're committed to delivering documents that showcase your professional value and open doors to new opportunities.

This guide is provided for educational purposes. For personalized resume assistance, contact All Resume Services.