

What ATS Do and Don't Do, and Why it Matters to Know This

ATS are not what you should be focusing on

Meeting the role requirements, keywords, and clean formatting are

What ATS Do

- ATS parse resumes into structured fields ► name, contact, work history, education, skills, dates, and store it in a searchable database for recruiters to search by keyword
- Workday ATS uses knockout questions to auto-filter by yes/no criteria; this is why some resumes get rejected
- Greenhouse ATS routes every resume to a human reviewer, using no match score and no algorithmic ranking. It still parses resumes into structured data that lets recruiters search/filter/organize.
- Workday's parsed version of your resume is the one a recruiter sees, so parsing failures can work against you. Some parsing failures occur because of poor resume formatting ► columns, text boxes, tables, icons, etc.
- Of all the major platforms, only Workday auto-rejects resumes via knockout questions. Greenhouse, Lever, Ashby, and Teamtailor use manual recruiter/hiring manager review only.

What ATS Don't Do

- 92% of 25 surveyed recruiters said their ATS do not auto-reject for formatting, design, or missing keywords.
- ATS don't make final rejection decisions. They're built for tracking and efficiency, not to autonomously reject.
- Greenhouse clarifies their ATS does not give a match score, and does not auto-reject.
- ATS don't reward keyword stuffing or invisible/white text. It gets stripped or ignored by parsers.
- ATS don't have issues with ordinary PDFs. It is scanned/flattened images they can't parse.

Why It Matters to Know

- Believing ATS auto-reject based on formatting or keywords leads jobseekers to spend time on tactics that don't affect outcomes; keyword stuffing, invisible white text, "beating the algorithm", none of which improve "ranking", since ranking by algorithmic score isn't how most platforms work.

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