

Making Your Resume Parser-Proof

Free for every job seeker. No catch.

Most resumes are read by software before a human ever sees them. Applicant tracking systems extract your text, and if the extraction is garbled, your qualifications land in the wrong fields — or vanish. This guide covers the formatting rules that survived real parser testing.

The work experience rule

Parsers read work experience best when each element gets its own line:

- Job title on its own line, bold.
- Company name on its own line.
- Employment dates on their own line.

Never combine company and dates on one line ("Acme Inc. | 2022–2025"). Parsers merge them or drop the dates entirely. Three separate lines parses cleaner than any combined format we tested.

Dates

- **Four digits.** Always use MM/YYYY with four-digit years: 03/2022, not 03/22.
- Two-digit years are not recognized as dates by most parsers.
- Be consistent. Pick one date format and use it for every role.

Bullets

- **Plain bullets.** Type the bullet character directly (•). Never use Word's automatic bullet list.
- When a Word file with auto-bullets is converted to PDF, the bullets can arrive as unreadable glyphs the parser cannot read — your bullet points effectively disappear.
- Each bullet should be one accomplishment, not one duty. Lead with the result when you can.

Headings

- **Use literal headings.** "Skills" fills the skills field. "Core Competencies" does not.
- Parsers look for standard section names: Summary, Work Experience, Education, Skills.
- Clever headings ("My Professional Journey") get swallowed into the adjacent section's text blob.

Layout

- **One column.** Single column only. Two-column designs parse as gibberish — text from both columns gets interleaved.
- **One page.** Keep it to one page. Content spilling onto page two parses unreliably.
- **Education.** School name first, degree second in Education. Reversed order can cause the parser to drop the school name.

Test before you send

Run your resume through a free parser before applying. The OpenResume parser playground (open-resume.com/parser) shows exactly what an ATS extracts from your file. If the extraction looks wrong there, it will look wrong in the employer's system too. Fix the file, not your qualifications — a low match score often means an unparsable file, not an unqualified candidate.

What never to do

- Never bundle your cover letter with your resume in one file. Parsers mistake it for resume content and it drags your match score down.
- Never use text boxes, tables, headers/footers, or graphics for critical information. Parsers skip most of them.

These rules were validated through real parser testing by the JYNX Candidate Resource Team — including a sample resume that achieved a 100% clean parse. Formatting is not about looking fancy. It is about making sure the software reads what you actually wrote.

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