

Resumes: Keywords

WHAT ARE KEYWORDS?

Do employers see your resume when you submit your resume online? Unfortunately, no. When you submit your resume online for a job opening, most resumes are screened (reviewed and selected) through a computer that performs a “keyword search” before that resume is given to the employer. Keywords are **important words or phrases (group of words) related to the job opening** that help the employer find the best applicant to hire.

To perform a keyword search, the computer program: 1) Searches all resumes to find if correct keywords are in the resume. 2) Selects resumes which contain correct keywords as a keyword-match resume. 3) Gives keyword-match resumes to the hiring employer. 4) REJECTS resumes that do not contain correct keywords for the job opening. Therefore, your online resume needs to pass the Keyword Test in order to be forwarded to the hiring employer. What are the correct keywords to use? The correct keywords depend upon the job. There are no correct keywords for all jobs. For example, a job opening for a nurse will require different keywords than a job opening for a mechanic.



#1 — TO FIND KEYWORDS — READ JOB OPENING!

You must carefully read the **job opening advertisement** to find keywords. Keywords may include name of **skills** required, **education** required, **software programs** workers must know, **certificates** or **college degrees** required, and **technical words** that apply to that job (for example, "computerized diagnostic equipment" and "pneumatic wrench" for the job of mechanic — "merchandise" and "inventory" for the job of retail sales worker). 1) Read the following job opening for Bank Loan Officer. 2) Then read the keywords to use when you apply for the job of Bank Loan Officer.

JOB OPENING FOR BANK LOAN OFFICER

- Knowledge of Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook.
- Basic ability to read business financial statements.
- Exceptional customer service skills.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Telephone sales experience preferred.
- Two years work experience in banking position.

Keywords to use on your resume and cover letter are:

- Bank Loan Officer
- Microsoft Word
- Excel
- PowerPoint
- Outlook
- Customer service skills
- Communication skills
- Telephone sales experience
- Read financial statements



#2 — TO FIND KEYWORDS — READ THE "OOH"

Go to the Occupational Outlook Handbook website (www.bls.gov/oooh) to read job descriptions. Discover skill and education keywords that describe the type of job in the job opening for which you want to apply. For job of computer technician, you read words like: troubleshoot, network, coding. For nurse, you read words like: patient care, record, catheters, intravenous drips. For graphic designer, you read words like: design layouts, select colors, font, Photoshop.

**#3 — TO FIND KEYWORDS — READ YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE**

Write down keywords to describe the **skills** you needed and **job duties** you performed on your paid and unpaid jobs. For job of restaurant crew, you may write down words like: cashier, customer service, food prep, stock supplies.

What keywords do I use in my cover letter and resume?

It takes hard work to create a cover letter and resume that can pass the Keyword Test. Here is the work you need to do. **FIRST:** Make a list of the keywords used in the job opening advertisement. **SECOND:** Make a list of the keywords you discovered on the OOH website for that job. **THIRD:** Make a list of the keywords that describe your work experience. **FOURTH:** Rewrite your resume and cover letter to include most of the keywords from your first, second, and third lists. **FIFTH:** Then, your cover letter and resume will pass the Keyword Test!

Try to use the keywords in an “organic” way (natural way of talking) in your cover letter and resume. The keywords need to **flow naturally** into the words of your resume and cover letter. And, keyword need to **flow throughout** the resume and cover letter. For example, include some keywords in headings and other keywords within the paragraphs.

**QUICK CHECK:**

- Do employers see your resume when you submit your resume online?
- a) Define "screened"? b) What does the computer perform before resume is given to the employer? c) What are keywords?
- To perform keyword search: a) For what does the computer search? b) Which resumes are selected? c) Which resumes are given to hiring employer? d) Which resumes are rejected?
- a) Upon what do correct keywords depend? b) Are keywords for nurse the same as keywords for mechanic?
- a) What must you carefully read to find keywords? b) List 6 things keywords include.
- List examples of keywords for mechanic.
- List 5 keywords to use on your resume for the job opening of bank loan officer.
- Where may you go to read job descriptions?
- List one keyword for: a) computer technician. b) nurse. c) graphic designer.
- Write down keywords to describe what 2 things from your paid and unpaid jobs?
- What does it take to create a resume that can pass the Keyword Test?
- a) What do you do FIRST? b) What do you do SECOND? c) What do you do THIRD?
- Why do you rewrite your resume?
- What does it mean to use the keywords in an "organic" way?
- What 2 things do the keywords need to do?
- a) Do you think it is fair that employers use computers for a Keyword Test and read only the resumes that pass the Keyword Test? b) Give a reason for your answer.
- Why do you think keywords are important to employers? List one or more reasons.

Keyword Search Activity

From each job description, select keywords and keyword phrases that you may include on your resume. Keywords and keyword phrases need to flow naturally all through your resume headings and paragraphs.

JOB OPENING — GROCERY CLERK

Job Duties: Provide friendly customer service. Receive product deliveries. Check accuracy of invoices. Stock and organize shelves. Maintain stockroom. Excellent communication skills. Ability to work as a team member. Assist with the following duties as needed: cashier, customer carry out, cart runs.

Knowledge, Skills, Abilities: High school diploma. Reliable. Dependable. Able to follow directions. Able to receive constructive feedback. Excellent communication skills. Friendly personality. Ability to multi-task. Ability to stay organized. Excellent customer service. Positive attitude. Punctual. Reliable.

I can include the following 7 keywords or keyword phrases on my resume for Grocery Clerk:



JOB OPENING — SALES ASSOCIATE

Job Duties: Meet sales goals. Upsell warranty contracts for electronics. Provide prompt, courteous customer service. Sell products by demonstrations. Instruct customers in product operation. Maintain store by dusting, cleaning, organizing, stocking shelves, ordering products. Process customer payments.

Knowledge, Skills, Abilities: Sales experience. Excellent customer service skills. Basic math skills. Ability to meet goals. Enthusiastic. Friendly. Positive energy. Interpersonal skills. Teamwork skills. Communication skills. Enjoy working with people. Ability to work flexible schedules.

I can include the following 7 keywords or keyword phrases on my resume for Sales Associate:



JOB OPENING — RESTAURANT CREW

Job Duties: Demonstrate friendly greeting techniques. Warm, genuine smile. Operate cash register. Process customer payments. Keep work area clean and organized. Use proper phone etiquette. Work multiple stations: counter, food prep, cook, dining room attendant. Able to work evening shifts.

Knowledge, Skills, Abilities: Ability to make accurate decisions under pressure. Communication skills. Customer service skills. Ability to listen and remember information. Teamwork skills. Reliable. Dependable. Punctual. Positive attitude. Ability to speak Spanish is not necessary but an added plus.

I can include the following 7 keywords or keyword phrases on my resume for Restaurant Crew:

