

**So, how can we figure out  
what the magic words are?**

In other words what are the Key Words!



First, we know that in the vast majority of cases, they are nouns. Job-seekers have long been taught to emphasize action verbs in their job-search correspondence, and that advice is still valid.

But the "what" that you performed the action in relation to is now just as important.

In the following examples, the underlined nouns are the keywords that relate to the action indicated by the verbs:

- Conducted cross-functional management for initial and follow-up contact.
- Coordinated marketing campaigns and special events.
- Managed customer database, product updates, and upgrades.
- Functioned in project-management role.
- Oversaw procurement, allocation, distribution control, stock levels, and cost compilation/analysis.

Nouns that relate to the skills and experience are what the employer looks for in a candidate.

More specifically, keywords can be precise "hard" skills:

- ❖ job-specific/profession-specific/industry-specific skills,
- ❖ technological terms and descriptions of technical expertise (including hardware and software in which you are proficient),
- ❖ job titles,
- ❖ certifications,

- ❖ names of products and services,
- ❖ industry buzzwords and jargon,
- ❖ types of degrees,
- ❖ names of colleges,
- ❖ company names,
- ❖ terms that tend to impress,
- ❖ such as "Fortune 500,"
- ❖ and even area codes, for narrowing down searches geographically.
- ❖ Awards you've won and names of professional organizations to which you belong can even be used as keywords.



Ideally, keywords are tied to accomplishments rather than job duties, so a good way to make the leap from keyword to a nice, contextual bullet point to include in a profile section is to take each keyword you've identified as critical to the job and list an accomplishment that tells how you've used the skill represented by that keyword. For example:

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- ❖ Solid team-building skills, demonstrated by assembling Starwood's marketing team from the ground up to service Starwood International's 7,700 hotels worldwide.
  - ❖ Savvy in e-commerce marketing concepts, having participated in design of two company Web sites, and conducted a symposia series to instruct hotel executives in the value of Internet marketing.



Keywords should also appear in the rest of your resume beyond the profile or summary section.

Most applicant-search software not only looks for keywords but also ranks them on a weighted basis according to the importance of the word to the job criteria, with some keywords considered mandatory and others that are merely desirable.

The keywords can also be weighted and your resume ranked according to how many times mandatory words appear in your resume..



If your document contains no mandatory keywords, the keyword search obviously will overlook your resume.

Those with the greatest "keyword density" will be chosen for the next round of screening, this time by a human.

Generally, the more specific a keyword is to a particular job or industry, the more heavily it will be weighted.

Skills that apply to many jobs and industries tend to be less weighty.



Since you also don't know the exact form of a keyword that the employer will use as a search criterion, it makes sense to also use synonyms, various forms of your keywords, and both the spelled-out and acronym versions of common terms.

For example, use both "manager" and "management;" try both CRM and Customer Relationship Management.



And remember that humans can make certain assumptions that computers can't. A commonly cited example is the concept of "cold-calling."

People who read the phrase "cold-calling" in your resume will know you were in sales.

But unless "cold-calling" is a specific keyword the employer is seeking in the database search, search software seeking "sales" experience may not flag your resume.



To determine the keyword health of your current resume, highlight all the words in it that, based on your research of ideal positions in your field, would probably be considered keywords.

A good goal to shoot for is 25-35 keywords, so if you have fewer than that currently, try to beef up every section of your resume with keywords, varying the forms of the words you choose.



Use keywords in your cover letters, too. Most employers don't include them in resume databases, but a few do. And keywords in cover letters can be important for attracting the "human scanner."

If you're answering an ad, tying specific words in your cover letter as closely as possible to the actual wording of the ad you're responding to can be a huge plus

A noted author, Jeffrey Fox calls the best letters written in response to want ads "Boomerang letters" because they "fly the want ad words -- the copy -- back to the writer of the ad." In employing what Fox calls "a compelling sales technique," he advises letter writers to: "Flatter the person who wrote the ad with your response letter. Echo the author's words and intent. Your letter should be a mirror of the ad." Fox notes that when the recipient reads such a letter, the thought process will be: "This person seems to fit the description. This person gets it."