

HOW ATS VIEWS CVS

A practical guide to passing ATS for everyday jobs with examples

What Is ATS?

Most employers use a computer system called an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) to filter applications. ATS does not read your CV like a person. It scans it like a form and asks: "Do I see the words and requirements I'm looking for — yes or no?" For entry-level and essential roles, this is usually automatic filtering, not ranking.

How ATS looks at your CV

When you upload a CV, ATS immediately:

1. Strips away design. Only plain text remains. It ignores:

- colours
- tables
- columns
- icons
- logos
- graphics

2. Breaks your CV into fields - It tries to find

- Job titles
- Company names
- Dates
- Skills
- Certificates
- Location
- Availability

If it can't find these, it assumes you don't have them.

3. Matches words literally

Example:

- Job advert: Warehouse Operative
- Your CV: Logistics Assistant

The system may not match them, even though a human would.

4. Applies yes/no rules - For many jobs, one "no" = rejection:

- No SIA licence → rejected
- No right to work → rejected
- No availability → rejected

What ATS Actually Sees

You see: Friendly team player with great communication skills

ATS sees:

✗ Nothing useful

You write: Served customers at till, handled cash and card payments

ATS sees:

Skill: Customer service

Skill: Cash handling

Skill: POS system



CV examples: What AI sees vs What you write



1. Warehouse Worker – Amazon

What ATS is looking for

- Warehouse experience
- Picking & packing
- Scanning
- Manual handling
- Targets

What ATS extracts

Job title: Warehouse Operative
Environment: Warehouse
Skills: picking, packing, scanning, loading
Physical role: yes

ATS-friendly CV wording - Warehouse Operative – Amazon

- Picking and packing customer orders
- Using RF scanners
- Loading and unloading pallets
- Working to daily targets
- Following health and safety rules



2. Security Guard - Large Company

What ATS is looking for

- SIA licence (mandatory)
- CCTV / Door Supervisor
- Patrols
- Incident reports

What ATS extracts

Licence: SIA Door Supervisor
Role: Security Officer
Duties: patrols, access control, reporting

ATS-friendly CV wording - Security Officer, ABC Security

- Access control and visitor logging
- Site patrols
- Incident reporting
- CCTV monitoring

Certifications (Put at top of CV):

- SIA Door Supervisor Licence (valid to 2027)



3. Retail Assistant - Tesco

What ATS is looking for

- Customer service
- Till use
- Cash handling
- Stock
- Flexibility

What ATS extracts

Role: Retail Assistant
Skills: customer service, cash handling, stock

ATS-friendly CV wording - Retail Assistant, Tesco

- Serving customers at tills
- Cash and card payments
- Stock replenishment
- Shelf facing
- Supporting promotions



4. Receptionist/Administrator - School

What ATS is looking for

- Admin experience
- Phone/email handling
- Microsoft Office
- Safeguarding awareness
- Data entry

What ATS extracts

Role: Administrator
Skills: admin, phones, email, data entry
Sector: education
Safeguarding: yes

ATS-friendly CV wording - School Administrator/Receptionist

- Answering phones and emails
- Visitor sign-in and safeguarding procedures
- Data entry and record keeping
- Using Microsoft Word, Excel, SIMS



5. Care Worker

What ATS is looking for

- Personal care
- Medication support
- Moving & handling
- Care records
- DBS

What ATS extracts

Role: Care Assistant
Tasks: personal care, medication, records
DBS: yes / willing

ATS-friendly CV wording - Care Worker

- Personal care (washing, dressing, toileting)
- Supporting medication
- Meal preparation
- Updating care notes
- Companionship and emotional support

Why Simple CVs Work Best

ATS Likes

- ✓ Simple layout
- ✓ Clear headings
- ✓ Exact job titles
- ✓ Bullet points
- ✓ Plain language

ATS struggles with:

- ✗ Creative wording
- ✗ Fancy design
- ✗ Columns
- ✗ Icons and symbols