



American Society of  
Agricultural and Biological Engineers

## How To Sell Your Degree in an Age of Electronic Resume Screening

We're assuming you start the process with a particular position in mind. Several different positions? Make several different resumes, similar but each targeted to a particular position (but don't use several resumes to apply several times for one position).

### The Resume

Nearly all large companies use software to screen resumes and track applicants. The resume screening software searches your resume for the information and keywords that the employer wants. (Fill-in-the-blank application systems use similar software.) Your task is to give it the basic information it needs, and to be sure that it recognizes your experience and qualifications in words that it understands. If you are qualified for a job opening, your resume should pass this initial, automatic screening, but without care it won't. Making a resume that passes this screening and then also satisfies the person who sees it later is key to getting the interview.

The screening software is reasonably smart, but can overlook things that a person would understand. Here are some tips to make it easy for the software to "see" your qualifications.

#### Keep it simple

- Submit an MS Word file or a PDF (but not a PDF of a scanned document, which is an image). Include your name in the file name.
- Use common, plain fonts (Times New Roman, Arial).
- Avoid graphics of any kind.
- Important text should NOT be captured in text boxes, headers, footers, or images, as these parts are likely to be missed by the screening software.
- Do not use multiple columns or sidebars.
- Do not use vertical lines ( | ) as separators.
- Short, bulleted lists or paragraphs ( $\geq 5$  lines) are better than stand-alone paragraphs. Be consistent with grammatical format: bulleted items should be either all phrases/no period, or all sentences, ending with periods; the subject (you) may be unstated.

#### Remember to include all the necessary parts, in this order

- Your name alone on the top line, in big and/or bold type (omit PE, BS, etc., behind your name as it might be misinterpreted as part of your name);
- Your address, including zip code (if you're moving soon, include the address and effective date);
- One phone number where you can likely be reached during business hours;
- An email address, one that looks professional and includes your name, and LinkedIn URL (Twitter and Facebook can be included but only if they offer a positive, professional image);
- Your objective, which uses the job title from the posting you are aiming for, or a summary of the skills you offer;
- Education—where, what, when, under a heading in big and/or bold type;
- Experience or employment—where, what, when, under a heading in big and/or bold type; and
- Additional credentials, technical proficiencies, professional society memberships, etc., likewise under a heading.



### Use keywords

- Find the right keywords—words that describe you in terms they are looking for—and be sure these words are in your resume.
- Keywords should be specific, as well as general. For example, state that your degree is in biosystems engineering (spell it out, not just “BE”) and also that you had classes in CAD, soil physics, etc.
- Use your best keywords early in the resume and repeat them. Use keywords throughout the resume, not in a list of keywords.
- Use synonyms. If your degree is in agricultural engineering, be sure that *biological engineering* is somewhere in the resume. The screening software might not know all the synonyms.
- Where you can, use nouns instead of verbs. The screening software might catch *project manager* but overlook *managed projects*.
- If you’re not sure everyone, including the screening software, will know the abbreviation, use both the spelled-out word and the common abbreviation, i.e., *professional engineer (PE)*.

Gather the best keywords from the job description itself, with priority to words used in the title and headings and to words used repeatedly. However, don’t copy long phrases from the job description.

Other sources of good keywords are words used in similar job postings, job titles, technical terms, industry buzzwords, brand names, company names, professional organizations (ASABE), and certifications. Browse the company’s website: what words do they use often? If they tout their sustainable corporate culture, and you did a project in sustainable livestock housing, don’t shorten the topic to “livestock housing.” Talk to people who hire or who work in similar positions; what words do they use to describe the skills and qualifications they look for or have? The ASABE mentoring program will help match student members with experienced professional members in their interest area. Log into the members-only page on the ASABE website for more details.

### For fill-in-the-blank application systems

You may be given the option to upload a file or paste (or type) material into a box. If so, choose the upload because the document will look better: Using the box limits your formatting options.

If you need to paste parts of your resume into boxes, be aware that most special formatting will be lost or garbled. So, convert your Word file to a plain .txt file by pasting it into Notepad (Programs > Accessories). Then, look at the current appearance of any special formatting: tabs, curly apostrophes and quotes, dashes, superscripts and subscripts, bullet marks, boldface, italics, etc. (About anything you do using the plain keyboard will be okay.) Make substitutes for these as best you can, for example using ===== to emphasize headings and + for bullets. Paste the repaired material into the box.

### And of course...

Resume-screening software does not mean that all the older resume and job-hunting rules are outmoded. After you pass the initial screening, a person will see your resume.

Make sure that it will look good regardless of the kind of computer the person uses to open your file. Use white space, boldface, and short lists or paragraphs to make your information easy to find. Use correct capitalization, spelling, grammar, and punctuation and ensure that there are *no errors* (have several people check it for you).

There’s no single best resume format. The general advice is to use equal margins of 0.5 to 1 inch, and black text in Times New Roman or Arial font mostly sized at 10 or 12 points. Use larger text, boldface, and italics sparingly and consistently.

[Click here](#) for an example of a good resume  
[More career resources](#) from ASABE



Your resume must be accurate. There's no need to inflate your qualifications; if you are fresh out of school you aren't expected to have acquired in-depth expertise.

Put relevant numbers and details in where you can (how many tractors did you maintain, what makes, what rank in the competition?).

When you interview, have several paper copies of your resume with you. Print these on heavy, high-quality white or nearly white paper. You may use a slightly distinctive font and more complex formatting, but only one page.

Use your LinkedIn profile to provide more information than can be included in your resume. LinkedIn is for a more general audience and may be informal, showing more of your personality. Include a highlights section. Make your LinkedIn URL include your name (to do this, edit your profile). You may also use Facebook and Twitter similarly.

## Useful resources

<http://career-advice.monster.com/>

<http://resume.theladders.com/resume-advice>

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/resumewriting/qt/writeresume.htm>

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/networking/a/linkedinprofile.htm>

Your college career center

Also look at what potential employers see when they go to the job sites, including the ASABE Career Center...[url]

## Some sample keywords

Agricultural Systems Management	Computer Aided Design (CAD)	Finite Element Method
Air Pollution Control	Computer-Aided Engineering	Fluid Mechanics
Animal Environments	Control Systems	Fluid Power
ASTM Specifications	Crop Processing Machines	Food Process Design
Automation Hardware and Software	Drivetrains	Forest Engineering
Bio Applications	Dynamic Simulation	Foundation Engineering
Biological Materials	Electrical Components	GIS Software
Biological Treatment Processes	Electrical Engineering	GMP Quality Management
Bio-Pesticide Formulation	Electrical Systems	Systems Environment.
Bioremediation	Electrohydraulic Controls	Heat Transfer
Biotechnology	Embedded Systems	Hybrid Transmissions
CAD/CAM	Engineering Design	Hydraulic Systems
CAN Control Systems	Engineering Properties	Hydraulics
Chemical Engineering	Environmental Compliance	Hydrology
Circuit Analysis	Environmental Engineering	Industrial Engineering
Circuits and Controls	Environmental Organic Chemistry	Instrumentation and Data Acquisition
Civil Engineering	Facilities Design	Internal Combustion Engines
Clutch Design	Feed Processing Machines	Irrigation Systems
	Finite Element Analysis	ISO

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Lawn Care Equipment  
Machine Systems Engineering  
Mass Transfer  
Material Handling and Logistics  
Material Processing  
Materials Science  
Matlab/Simulink  
Mechanical Engineering  
Mechanics  
Microbiology  
Mobile Hydraulics  
Mobile Power Systems  
Natural Resources Engineering  
Noise Control  
Off-Highway Vehicle Design  
Off-Road Machine Design  
Optics  
Physical Properties of Bio  
Materials  
Power Electronics  
Power Engineering

Power Generation and  
Distribution  
Power Transmission  
Precision Farming  
Pro/E, ProEngineer  
Process Engineering  
Process Engineering of  
Renewable Resources  
Product Design  
Product Engineering  
Product Validation and  
Verification  
Quality Assurance  
Refrigeration Systems  
Reliability Analysis Software  
Remote Vehicle Control  
Robotics  
Safety Engineering  
Sensors and Controls  
Servomechanisms  
Simulations (such as FEM Lab)  
Soil Mechanics

Soil Sensors  
Solid Modeling  
SolidWorks  
Standard Operating Procedures  
Statistical Modeling  
Storm Water and Drainage  
Structures  
Supply Chain  
Surface Water Quality  
Surveying  
Systems Engineering  
Systems Management  
Test Engineering  
Test-Driven Development (TDD)  
Thermodynamics  
Transport Processes  
Urban Hydraulics  
Waste Disposal  
Water Quality Modeling  
Water Systems  
Welded Structures

## A sample job description and resume

This was pulled from the ASABE Career Center and slightly modified. The best keywords are highlighted in green and others in yellow.

### Why John Deere

More power. Lower emissions. Record-setting fuel efficiency. Cleaner air. You make it happen as an employee of **John Deere** Power Systems. It takes groundbreaking **powertrain** technologies to satisfy the performance needs and environmental regulations of tomorrow. You'll meet these challenges as part of a global **team** working together to integrate engines, **drivetrain** components and electronics into machines that are worth more than the sum of their parts.

Working with the latest technology, collaborating with the best and brightest in the field, expanding your knowledge and honing your skills--all are key components of unmatched career satisfaction as a member of the **John Deere** product engineering **team**.

### What You'll Do

As a **Product Engineer – Drivetrain Design** for John Deere Coffeyville Works in Coffeyville, Kansas, you will plan, coordinate and perform product **design**, **testing** and/or **analysis** work for **heavy duty transmissions** and **axles**. In this position you will have the opportunity to:

- Evaluate possible **design solutions** to improve cost, quality and performance while operating in a

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**team** environment.

- Assign, coordinate and review portions of the work to support personnel.
- Compile and furnish necessary information to document the **design solution** required for building of **prototypes** and adoption of the **design** with possible collaboration with other functional groups.
- Provide **technical support** to marketing, manufacturing, quality and supply management organizations.
- Develop and/or execute **test** or **analysis plans** for product verification and validation.
- Apply knowledge of company products, policies and practices to provide economies through standardization of parts and products.
- Willingness to travel up to 25% both domestically and internationally.

### **What It Takes**

We need an excellent communicator, who thrives on solving problems and working in a **team** environment. Ideally you will have a **Bachelor's** degree in **Mechanical, Agricultural/Bio engineering,** related discipline or equivalent experience. In addition we require:

- Experience with **Pro/E** or other 3D computer aided design (**CAD**) systems.
- Strong understanding of **engineering principles** and ability to **independently** use knowledge
- Demonstrated strong **mechanical** aptitude
- Experience working with cross-functional projects/**teams**
- A fundamental understanding of **off highway equipment and machinery**