



# UNSOLVED MYSTERIES OF RESUME WRITING

## Episode 3 – Key Words

- 1 Keywords are essential, whether your resume is for the federal government or the private sector.
- 2 Most private-sector companies with 100+ employees use some version of Applicant Tracking Software (ATS) to scan resumes for keywords; resumes which have the most keywords are likely to "score" the highest and be seen by hiring officials.
- 3 USAJOBS is not an ATS; nonetheless, Human Resources (HR) professionals are reviewing your resume to ensure it includes keywords and qualifications.
- 4 Keywords are located in job postings. If there is not much information in the job posting, private-sector, job searchers may want to look at O\*NET (<https://www.onetonline.org>), a compendium of occupations with great descriptors. Federal job searchers should look at the Classification Standards: (<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/occupationalhandbook.pdf> for white collar positions and <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/occupationalhandbook.pdf> for blue collar ones.) Whether you are targeting private-sector or federal positions, you can also look for similar job postings where the descriptions are more robust, and you can mine keywords.
- 5 Do not apply for lower-level positions "to get your foot in the door" unless you are genuinely willing to accept the duties and salary of that position—and be prepared to stay in that position, perhaps longer than you hope. Keep in mind most private sector companies will not fire people at lower levels, so looking to get in below your level doesn't make the job search any easier and can prolong your search. Best practices are to network and apply to jobs you are qualified for and can contribute to the company.
- 6 If you do not have the qualifications stated for the position, you should not apply; most job postings receive hundreds if not thousands of applications. The qualifications and requirements are stated for a reason.
- 7 If you are applying for federal positions, it is not uncommon to apply for the same job multiple times—while applying for other jobs, even in that same agency. In the private sector, you should be cautious about over applying for various positions in the same company.