

You've completed your "Pre-Job Application" resource and have an idea of what types of jobs and companies you want to apply to. You've also gone through (or are going to go through) your "100 questions to consider when applying to your first job" to ensure you've *really* considered where you're applying to. *Awesome!* Now, it's time to make sure you've got everything in line to submit a solid application.

What we've done for you is put together a list of our **top tips** for putting together your resume and cover letter. We recommend you review these tips prior to creating your resume and cover letter. At the same time, we encourage you to look at these tips after you've put together your initial drafts of your resume and cover letter to ensure it aligns with our recommendations. **Now, let's get into the tips!**

Resume

- A. **Tell a story** - In one of our recent posts, we discussed [the importance of effective storytelling](#) for your personal and professional development. We talk about capturing your listeners' attention by using vivid details to keep them engaged. We also explain how storytelling enables you to influence others. **We want you to think of your resume like a story.** You don't want to bore recruiters or hiring managers reviewing your resume. You want to excite them by using powerful details and attention-grabbing language to capture your experience.
- B. **Keep what's most relevant at the top** - On average, recruiters spend 7.4 seconds looking at your resume. That's not a lot of time. Therefore, you've got to make sure you stand out and keep recruiters' attention. With that in mind, you want to make sure the **most important information is up top**, so recruiters see that first. The most important information should include experience that's most relevant to the position.
- C. **This isn't a list of your job responsibilities** - As we said, your resume should *tell a story* about you. Nobody wants to read a grocery list of your job responsibilities. Instead, you want to highlight your accomplishments and the skills you've gained in your experience. We encourage you to **use metrics to quantify your successes**. When you provide measurable accomplishments examples in your resume, you provide facts and figures to define your achievements.
- D. **Get rid of what's irrelevant** - One of our biggest peeves is when applicants insert irrelevant content into their resume just to take up space on the page. We're referring to information that doesn't improve your application. For instance, during your freshman year of college, you might've joined 1392 clubs and then once you found your niche, you stuck with one, two, or three and put your energy into them. If you can barely speak to your contributions to a club, why would you put it on your resume? Recruiters and hiring managers don't want to see or hear about you simply attending club meetings. *No!* They want to know what your participation is like and what value you add - *just like you'd add to their organization*. Also, please leave out your high school experience (unless continued through college). Recruiters and hiring managers are interested in learning about what you did in college not in high school. By the time you're a senior, it's three to four years past your high school graduation.
- E. **Formatting** - You have flexibility to format a resume however you'd like. However, your format should be visually appealing. Margins should be consistent, and your resume should be divided into easily deciphered sections (i.e., contact information, education, professional experience, leadership, skills and interests, etc.). Your font should also be readable. There's some of us, who are/were pretty involved in college and have a solid amount of professional experience. Please, don't make your font 8.5 pt. Recruiters and hiring managers shouldn't need to take a magnifying glass to your resume (they won't). You have to determine what's most relevant to the position and cut-out what's not.
- F. **Use the right tenses** - If the experience you're listing out happened in the past, please use the past tense to outline your accomplishments in the position. If the experience you're listing out is happening in the present, use the present tense to describe your work. Pay attention to these details, as recruiters and hiring managers pick-up on them. If you don't use the right tenses, you're not making yourself out to be detail-oriented.

- G. Have different versions of your resume** - When I applied for my second job out of college, I learned about the importance of having multiple versions of my resume. I applied to different positions. In my case, it was sales and field marketing. The relevance of my professional and leadership experience was dependent on the position I applied to. The responsibilities for each job were different. I had to highlight my accomplishments that were applicable to the various positions.
- H. Please, proofread** - We know you're exhausted, and we know you've been looking at the computer screen for hours. It takes a decent amount of time to put a resume together, and by this time, you want to be done and submit your resume with your application. Ideally (pending you have time), we recommend you close your computer and come back to review your resume either later in the day or the following day. That way, you look at it with a fresh pair of eyes and will be more likely to catch errors. We also encourage you to have someone else review your resume and provide you with feedback on how to improve it. It's always good to get another opinion. Now, we understand time isn't always on your side, and sometimes, you need to submit applications with little time to spare. We still suggest you take time to do **at least one read-through** of your resume before submitting it.

Cover Letter

- A. Remember, you're a human** - That means, **you aren't a robot**, and your cover letter shouldn't sound like it was written by a computer. You should let your personality shine through your letter. Recruiters and hiring managers want to get to know you and understand if you're a good fit for the position and company you're applying to. Obviously, you should be **professional**. You shouldn't swear or use slang in your cover letter. It should be a representation of your best self. *We also recommend you stay **weary of using templates**. Recruiters and hiring managers go through oodles of cover letters. They can tell which ones are created from a template. I can speak for myself having read a solid amount of cover letters. I can tell which ones are a copy and paste from a template. Templates can also get you into trouble if they aren't tailored to the position you're applying to. If your template is geared towards sales, but you're applying to a marketing position, you're not going to be an appealing candidate. It's perceived as you didn't put effort into submitting a thoughtful cover letter.
- B. Don't echo your resume** - Your cover letter **shouldn't parrot what's on your resume word for word**. It should **not** be a replica of your resume. Please, don't take the best bullet points from your resume and reiterate them in your cover letter. Please, don't simply describe your experience in your cover letter either. Your cover letter is meant to complement your resume. The benefit of a cover letter allows you to use full sentences versus bullet points. What we recommend is taking a few key accomplishments from your experience and expanding on them in depth. Let your cover letter highlight your skills and why you'd be ideal for the position you're applying to.
- C. Don't babble** - Your cover letter should be concise. We encourage you to keep them to one page long and divided into four paragraphs. Be mindful of being repetitive and avoid rambling. We suggest you limit your adverbs and adjectives. Adverbs and adjectives shouldn't be used as fillers. Use your cover letter as an opportunity to highlight and expand your achievements and skills you've developed.
- D. Tie it back** - Recruiters and hiring managers want to know why you're the best fit for the position you're applying to. They're trying to determine the value you bring to the organization while also hoping to see you connect your accomplishments and skills to the position. Whenever you expand on a skill or achievement in your letter, you should tie it back to why and how it relates back to the position.
- E. Again, please proofread** - We can't reiterate this point enough! We get it. We know you want to hit submit on your application, shut your laptop, and go to bed. Before you click submit, you best believe you should reread your letter (at least once), check for spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors, and make edits accordingly. You also want to make sure the letter has a nice flow and emulates your best self. Again, you don't want to sound like a robot! At Unraveled, we prefer to reread aloud, as we want to hear how the letter sounds to someone reading it. That way, we ensure it makes sense!