

How to tailor your job applications

Before you apply

- What is your work search goal? Are you looking for a specific job type? For work in a specific field/industry? For skill development opportunities in any position?
- Reflect on your skills, knowledge and abilities, and remember that skills can come from anywhere (work experience, volunteering, academics, extracurriculars, lived experience, etc.)
- Practice job description analysis: what is the employer looking for (identify key words in the required skills and responsibilities), and what is the best evidence that you have it (where and how have you gained these skills)?

How to practice “smart tailoring”

On your resume:

- Consider a summary of qualifications to offer a “highlight reel” of your resume, and tailor these 4-6 bullet points to the job(s) you apply for
- Consider creating multiple different versions of your resume for different job types or industries
- What do you want the employer to read first? Order the sections of your resume based on relevance to the job. Consider a “relevant experience” section to group different experiences together under one heading.
- Use the WHAT-HOW-WHY framework to write structured, impact-based bullet points and incorporate key words from the job description (i.e., what you did, how you did it, and why it mattered – purpose, outcome, impact, quantification)

In a cover letter:

- Use your introduction paragraph to catch the employer's attention – devote 2-3 sentences to show you've done your research, understand the job, and draw connections between how your skills/interest/values align with the organization.
- Choose 2-3 key skills from the job description you wish to focus on. Consider drafting multiple middle paragraphs on different skills/qualifications – swap these in or out and reorder as you see fit to align with the opportunities you're applying for.
- Instead of summarizing your resume, consider telling “stories” about your skills. Use the STAR approach (Situation, Task, Action, and Result) to explain how you've applied your skills in previous experiences.

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