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Customizing Application Materials

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CUSTOMIZING YOUR APPLICATION MATERIALS

Customizing your application materials means utilizing space, action verbs and keywords strategically to demonstrate that you have the knowledge, experience, transferable skills, and personal attributes necessary to perform well in the position.

Your application materials, including resume, cover letter, supplemental questions, and application, need to be organized and customized to each position.

Strategies for Customizing Your Resume

Scan the Job Posting for Keywords

- Job Title
- Job Description
- Duties and Responsibilities
- Preferred Qualifications

Prioritize the Qualifications

Review how the job posting lists and describes the qualifications, responsibilities, and requirements.
Next, structure and organize your materials in a manner that a 10-20 second scan reveals that you exceed the minimum requirements.
- Prioritize experiences that reflect your transferrable skills to match the duties and responsibilities of the role
- Mimic the posting's language for action verbs, competencies, and experience titles (if they are similar)

Sample Job Description

Full Job Description

The New York Times Editing Center, 40-person editing and production operation based in Florida but working remotely, seeks an experienced copy editor to join a team delivering content through the New York Times News Service and producing dozens of publications, including The New York Times International Weekly. Taking the tasks seriously without taking yourself too seriously would separate the top contenders for a position that comes with high expectations and responsibility.

Responsibilities:

- Edit and trim New York Times stories for a global audience, while adhering to Times procedures and standards.

- Slot other editors' work and prioritize being the first or second edit on a story.

- Update stories as news develops.

- Compile story budgets and edit others' budgets for accuracy and completeness.

Qualifications:

- At least 5 years' experience as an assigning/copy editor for a professional publication.

- Bachelor's degree in journalism or a related subject.

- Preferably a background leading process and/or personnel.

- Strong news judgment and a deep understanding of world events and how The Times covers them.

- Ability to work on multiple projects, on multiple deadlines, with clarity and consistency.

- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, both written and verbal.

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Assess for Potential Fit

When customizing your application, determine how you can infuse elements of the job description, your knowledge about the organization, and your unique experiences into the following:

- Supplemental Questions
- Resume
- Cover Letter
- Other Application Documents

Below you will find ideas for customizing and personalizing your application materials.

Values

An organization's values are principles that guide an organization's day to day operations, beliefs, and culture.
- Demonstrate how your behaviors contributed to the success of your previous organizations or teams by using strong action verbs that mirror the values listed in the job posting or on the organization's website.

Interest

- Start with the why.
- What specifics can you provide that show you want to contribute to this organization and the work that they do?
- Where are you highlighting specific attributes, accomplishments, and skills that show how you can contribute?

Competencies and Skills

- What evidence are you providing that you have the knowledge, skills and personal attributes detailed in the job posting and organizational research to perform well in the required capacity?

Resources

- C3 Resume Template (see Resume Samples Guide)
- http://jobscan.co/
- https://cultivatedculture.com/tools/
- https://skills.emsidata.com/resume

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Putting It All Together

- Search for a job description for a career path that interests you
- Write down five skills and/or key-words you find

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

- Format five bullet points that would highlight these skills and/or incorporate the key-words in your resume

Example:

Coordinated	20 programs per academic year	to foster community in the residence hall and increase familiarity with campus services
Action Verb	**Task**	**Result**

One:

_____	_____	_____
Action Verb	**Task**	**Result**

Two:

_____	_____	_____
Action Verb	**Task**	**Result**

Three

_____	_____	_____
Action Verb	**Task**	**Result**

Four:

_____	_____	_____
Action Verb	**Task**	**Result**

Five:

_____	_____	_____
Action Verb	**Task**	**Result**

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Applicant Tracking Software (ATS) Compatibility

If you are submitting an online application to a job, chances are you will be submitting your documents into an Application Software System (ATS). ATS are tools used by recruiting teams to streamline the hiring process.

Many organizations use software to scan and parse your resume- essentially, to pre-screen your application materials before a recruiter ever sees them. The parameters of the software are set by the organization, but your application may be ranked or disqualified based on appropriate formatting, keywords that align with the desired education, skills, knowledge and experience for that specific role. Some programs are sophisticated enough to evaluate your resume's match percentage rate with the job posting. The organization sets the threshold for applicants to move through further screening.

Keep your formatting simple to ensure that your resume can be parsed accurately. It is likely that your resume will be parsed into a candidate profile that is easily filtered and searched. These common and seemingly harmless mistakes could cause errors with the software and disqualify you from consideration:

- Any kind of template including Canva, Word, Google etc.
- Tables and columns – as the content could be removed or distorted
- Using acronyms in place of keywords and skills
- Submitting in alternative document formats other than .docx or .pdf

ATS Checklist
- Applicable Keywords from the job posting appropriately demonstrated in job titles, hard skills, technical skills, soft skills (personal attributes)
- Usage of headings for education, relevant experience categories
- Reverse chronological formatting
- PDF to preserve the formatting
- Passes the .txt test – a quick test to see if your resume is scannable when all formatting is removed

Quinncia

Quinncia is a virtual tool that provides personalized feedback for resumes and mock interviews using artificial intelligence (AI) technology. Quinncia is a free resource open to all UF students and alumni with Gator CareerLink credentials. To get started with Quinncia, follow the steps below:

1. Navigate to www.quinncia.io
2. Click "Sign In/Up" button
3. Sign in using your UFL Email and GatorLink login information

Additional Reading

- The Dos and Don'ts of ATS
- A Guide to Applicant Tracking Systems
- Resume Outline