

TAILORING YOUR RESUME AND COVER LETTER



Why Customize ?

TAILORING YOUR RESUME AND COVER LETTER

In today's highly competitive job market, customizing both your resume and cover letter to each individual position will differentiate you from other applicants and demonstrate that you are the ideal fit for the opportunity. This is often the difference between getting an interview and being passed over.

250+ MANY OPEN POSITIONS RECEIVE OVER 250 APPLICATIONS

Why tailor?

Hiring managers often rely on software to select the best candidates by scanning for keywords in resumes, cover letters and even LinkedIn profiles. Other employers look for keywords manually. If your materials lack the keywords they're looking for, you may get overlooked.

Here's how to do it: keywords.

Tailoring your resume and cover letter is all about including the right keywords. How do you do that? It's a simple two-step process.

Step 1

Identify how your background and skills align with the role.

Take a look at the job description. The keywords that relate to you will be pretty obvious. They will relate to things like:

- Wording used to describe the business and position
- Skills required
- Types of experience the employer is looking for

- **Customization helps you focus on the employer's specific needs.**

Dig deep into the job announcement, the company website, and other sources to figure out the specific problem or problems the organization is looking to solve.

- **Customization helps you pass applicant tracking systems.**

Analyze the job announcement—and even language from the organization's other marketing materials—to glean the relevant keywords and phrases.

- **Customization shows you're invested in the opportunity.**

A well-written, customized resume shows the hiring manager that you've done your research, that you understand the organization, and that know how you can contribute.

HOW TO CUSTOMIZE YOUR RESUME



The Importance of Skills and Keywords

Why should I focus on skills-based keywords?

Hiring managers often rely on software to select the best candidates by scanning for keywords in resumes, cover letters and even LinkedIn profiles.

If your materials lack the keywords they're looking for, you may get overlooked.

250

The average corporate job gets 250 applications

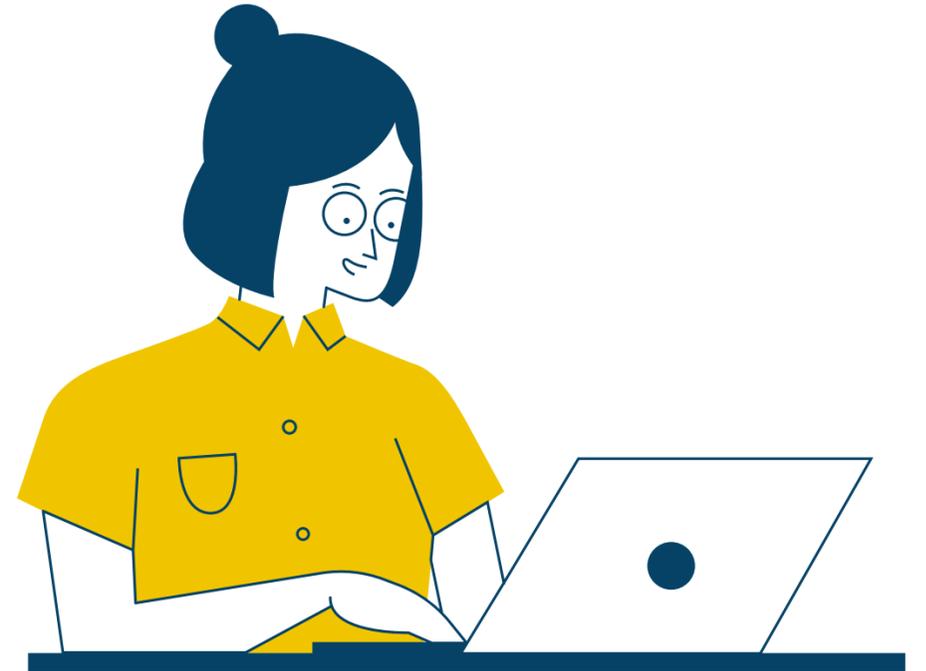
98%

98% of Fortune 500 companies use applicant tracking systems that scan for keywords.

30%

Only 30% of job applications are read!

The Importance of Immediacy



The design of your resume is a big factor in the reader's experience and comprehension.

You can labor over word choice and accomplishments to include, but unless you have considered the design of your resume, you risk the reader skipping over the most important content.

0:06

On average, recruiters spend only **six seconds** reviewing a resume.



People read screens in an **F-shaped pattern** that consists of two horizontal stripes followed by a vertical stripe.

Your goal for the resume is to make it easy for the reader to scan VERY quickly for the most relevant and important experience and skills.

Use formatting— boldface, type scale, strategic use of white space—to make key information easy to find.

Showcase

Be sure your job title stands out and clearly describes your role.

White Space

Use white space to create chunks that ease density and help the reader skim vertically.

Relevant Examples

You can include class projects in your experience section. Format it like a job description.

Formatting

Use white space and formatting techniques like **bold**, *italics* and columns—make it easy to zero in on specific information for busy readers.

LAVONN POWELL

555-227-9841 | lpowell@email.com | lpowell

EDUCATION BA, Philosophy | DePaul University 2020
Minor in Economics | 3.75 G.P.A.
Relevant Coursework: Digital Communications, Marketing, Writing for Social Change

EXPERIENCE

Data and Design Intern | Dallas Herald News 2019

- Collaborate with reporters, editors, and photographers to produce products on deadline to help explain and visualize breaking news stories.
- Conceptualize and build stand alone and complementary data v interactive graphics, and story presentations using HTML, CSS, a JavaScript/JQuery

Community Health Researcher | Active Citizens 2018

- Designed a health awareness survey and collected 200 response Pilsen community.
- Surveyed data from the City of Chicago, collecting demographic policy information
- Created data visualization that illustrated the disparity between community health awareness and access to medical services

PROJECTS

Press Release and Media Kit | Lola LPC. 2018

- Wrote and edited a press release announcing a new infant appare line directed at millennial parents.
- Produced media kit promoting launch event. Contents included pr photos, bio of founders, and company profile.

TECHNOLOGY

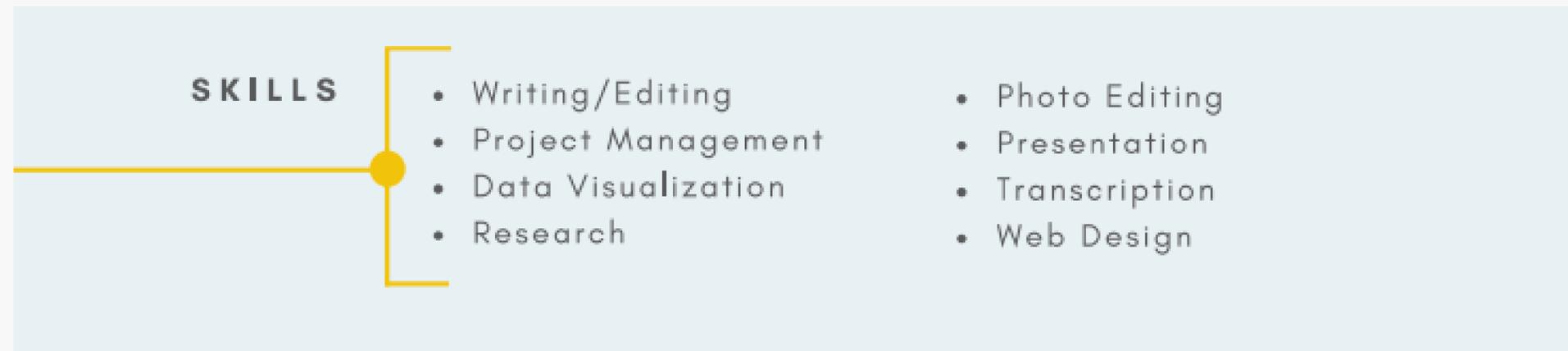
- Google Suite (Forms, Docs, Sheets, Slides)
- Microsoft Office (Outlook, Excel, Word, PowerPoint)
- Adobe Acrobat and Photoshop
- SPSS

SKILLS

- Writing/Editing
- Project Management
- Data Visualization
- Research
- Photo Editing
- Presentation
- Transcription
- Web Design

OTHER WAYS TO ADD CUSTOM KEYWORDS

- **Add a skills section!**



- **Use a resume summary! (more about this in the next slide)**
- **Feature projects or class assignments in your experience section! (also more below!)**

CUSTOMIZING WITH A RESUME SUMMARY

A resume summary, usually placed at the top of the document, introduces your major qualifications and alignment with the role.

While optional, the resume summary can help establish an immediate claim about your skills and help the reader see your experience in context.

Name Name

Email@gmail.com | 612-555-1212 | LinkedIn: namename

Cinematographer, videographer, storyboard artist, producer, and editor with experience in feature film, documentary filmmaking, political media, and commercial advertising.

Summaries highlight the most relevant skills for the job, and often feature a claim about your interests or passions.

Emerging events and public relations professional with a passion for creating community and engaging diverse audiences in meaningful experiences.

Mental health professional passionate about impacting the lives of culturally-diverse communities via compassion and a commitment to high-impact professional development.

Featuring Projects (or Assignments) on Your Resume

Research projects demonstrate your skills in data analysis, problem-solving, and attention-to-detail.

Volunteer projects are a great way to showcase skills and the social or community issues that are meaningful to you.

Creative projects demonstrate your ability to create design and content relevant to a wide variety of careers.

Technology and design projects showcase your knowledge of software and other tools.

FORMATTING PROJECTS ON A RESUME



Many of your most valuable skills have been honed in a wide variety of non-job or internship experiences - including volunteer experiences, class assignments, service-learning, personal projects, student involvement, or even just as part of a hobby!

In order to fully capture your skills on a resume, you will want to feature these experiences in your resume in a way that shows their true value. Below are some samples that should help you:

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Research projects demonstrate your skills in data analysis, problem-solving, and attention-to-detail.

"Alternatives to Incarceration" | policy paper January 2020

- Collected data regarding recidivism rates for incarcerated males and females in European and US state prisons, with a special focus on Belgium.
- Analyzed and compared average prison time - as it related to the rates of repeat offenders.
- Surveyed legal statutes regarding mandatory minimum sentencing.
- Profiled several new initiatives in the US focused on Prisoner Education and drafted summary.

This is an actual DePaul course offered by Service-Learning.

Community Health in Pilsen | Active Citizens Spring 2020

- Designed a health awareness survey and collected 200 responses from the Pilsen community.
- Surveyed data from the City of Chicago, collecting demographic and policy information
- Created data visualization that illustrated the disparity between community health awareness and access to medical services

VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

Volunteer projects are a great way to showcase skills and the social or community issues that are meaningful to you.

Fall 2019 Run-a-thon for Life | Make a Miracle Foundation Fall 2019

- Provided day-of event support for a community fundraiser that had 1,200 participants.
- Collaborated with events committee to create social media posts promoting the event and its five corporate sponsors.
- Designed flyer that was distributed to college campuses and local businesses.

EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS

"Alternatives to Incarceration" | policy paper

January 2020

- Collected data regarding recidivism rates for incarcerated males and females in European and US state prisons, with a special focus on Belgium.
- Analyzed and compared average prison time - as it related to the rates of repeat offenders.
- Surveyed legal statutes regarding mandatory minimum sentencing.
- Profiled several new initiatives in the US focused on Prisoner Education and drafted summary.

"Staycation" | social media campaign

March 2020

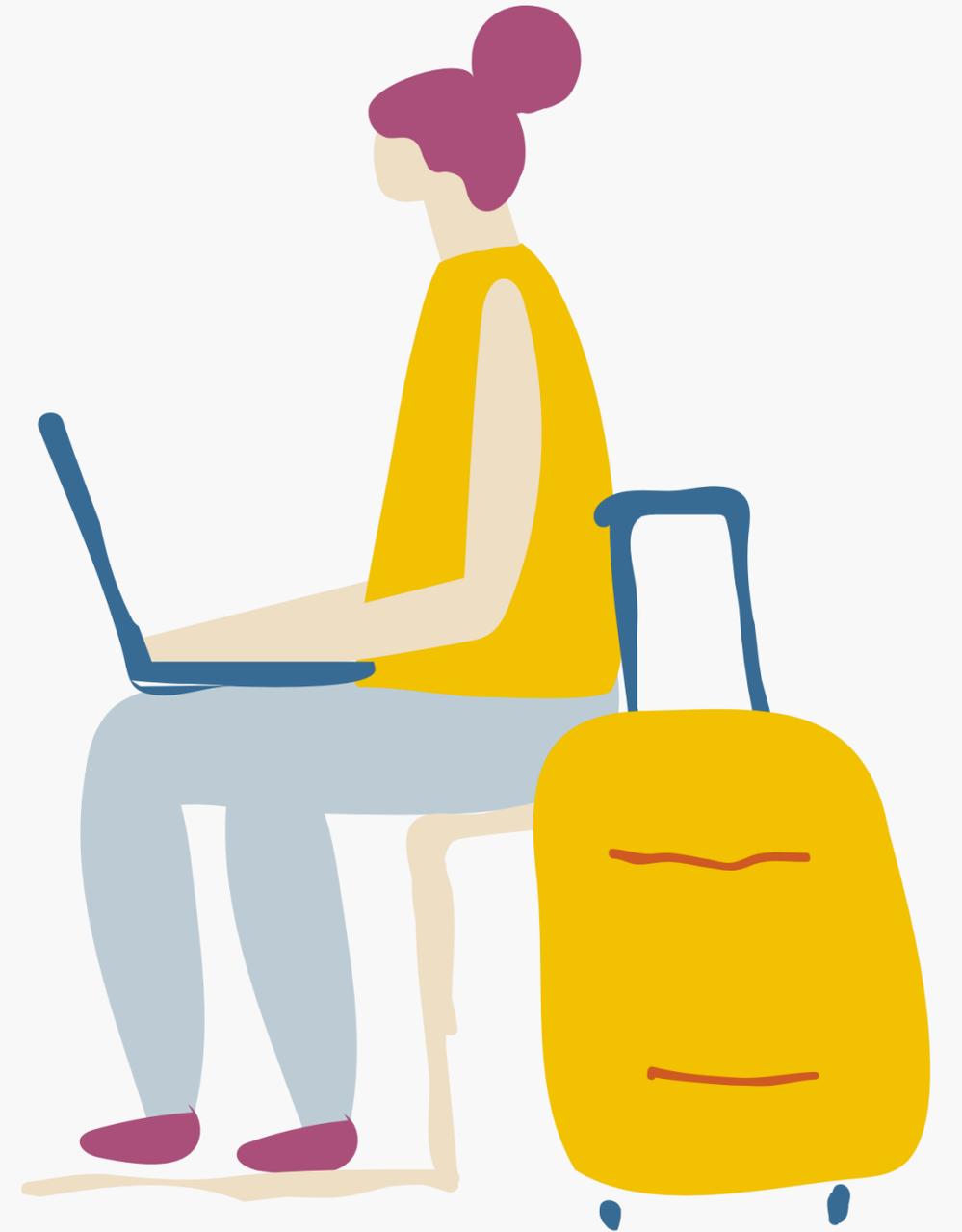
- Created Instagram and TikTok campaign promoting safe social distancing practices for GenZ college students in Chicago.
- Wrote copy and produced video content focused on inspiring followers to post their own shelter-in-place workouts and playlists under the hashtag "staychicago."
- Cultivated 300 followers on Instagram in one month and had 700 retweets of a single post.

"Otters and Their Habitats" | 90 second animation | Shedd Aquarium

October 2019

- Animated educational video that introduces aquarium visitors to the native habitat of Pacific Sea Otters as well as the dangers climate change poses to their survival.
- Designed script-driven storyboards and edited audio track to align with motion graphics.

HOW TO CUSTOMIZE YOUR COVER LETTER



Why Customize ?

When you customize a cover letter, you can increase the odds that you land an interview, and decrease the time it takes you to find a new job!

Instead of applying to 10 jobs with a generic cover letter, you will have more success if you apply to five jobs with more personalized documents.

Customizing your cover letter for each application doesn't mean you have to create a new cover letter from scratch for every opening!



WRITING YOUR COVER LETTER

The cover letter you include with your resume is incredibly important—it's your opportunity to make a strong case for yourself and demonstrate your super powers!

Your cover letter is where you make your pitch—summarize the skills and experience that make you perfect for the job, and express your passion for the field and interest in the company.



Write your brand statement:

MY _____, _____, AND _____
MAKE ME AN EXCELLENT CANDIDATE FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

Think about how your experience, background, skills and passions/interests align with the specific job description. Make a list. This will guide your letter.

YOUR EXPERIENCE

What you've done that fits the job:

Job/internship experience, class projects or self-driven work and volunteer experience

YOUR BACKGROUND

How your background makes you a great candidate:

Academic background, cultural background or personal interests

YOUR SKILLS

Job-relevant skills you've demonstrated:

Writing, adaptability, research, time management, event planning, project tracking, etc.

YOUR PASSIONS

Don't be afraid to show some enthusiasm!

Why are you excited about the position? How do you want to contribute to the professional field or the company mission?

How to Customize Your Cover Letter

If we think of your brand statement as the "thesis" of your cover letter, it's important to start by thinking through what particular argument about your distinctive experience and skills aligns best with the specific opportunity you're applying to!

Write your brand statement:

MY _____, _____, AND _____
MAKE ME AN EXCELLENT CANDIDATE FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

Other customizing tips!

- **Don't duplicate your resume!**

A cover letter gives you the chance to sell yourself as the best candidate for a particular job. Use your cover letter to clarify your resume, but don't repeat it. Instead, explain how your work experience uniquely qualifies you for the job.

- **Do some research!**

Before you even think about your cover letter, do some research. Understand what the company does, what the company culture is like, and the key characteristics of the job you are applying for. Review the company's website, then explain why you are interested in working for *them*.

- **Make yourself a distinctive candidate!**

Clearly articulate how you are particularly equipped (based on your skills and experience) for this opportunity, and describe your enthusiasm for this role. Sometimes this involves explaining or translating a non-traditional skillset or career pathway.

SIMPLIFYING THE CUSTOMIZING PROCESS

Organizing the search process can help you maintain the quality of your job search documents while minimizing the time you put into your resume and cover letter customization.



Using a Search Spreadsheet

Creating a spreadsheet (with the tabs below) can help you organize your resources, connections, and jobs.

- Jobs
- Skill Training
- Webinars
- Networking Targets
- Professional Organizations
- Articles
- Resources

See our "Organizing Your Internship and Job Search" handout for more tips!



ORGANIZING YOUR INTERNSHIP & JOB SEARCH

Landing that job or internship can be a numbers game. You'll want to take an organized approach to keep track of all the details—here's how.

It's a good job search strategy to identify and apply for as many relevant opportunities as you can. The reason? Pretty obvious—the more you can apply for, the better your chances of getting an interview. And the experience of pursuing multiple opportunities builds valuable research, project management, application and interviewing skills. Not a bad thing!



It's a process Identifying opportunities, assembling your materials and submitting your applications is a process that takes time, and requires an organized, step-by-step approach.

- 1 DO YOUR RESEARCH**
Search the web for opportunities. Use this as a chance to become informed on typical titles, common keywords, requirements and desired skills.
- 2 CONNECT!**
Reach out and network with people and professionals who can provide insights on career paths and opportunities in your area—or areas—of interest.
- 3 TAILOR YOUR DOCUMENTS**
Create and customize your application documents for each position. Highlight the mix of skills, experience and passions that make you, you.
- 4 APPLY!**
Apply to any and all opportunities that appeal to you. Managing multiple applications and positions is a challenge—stay organized!

Interest Level

Rating your level of interest will help you prioritize your applications.

Deadline

Most job postings have a rolling deadline, so it's to your benefit to apply sooner rather than later!

Status

In this area, you can track date submitted as well as any progress towards an offer.

Interest Level	Job Title	Employer	Posting Date	Deadline	Status	Link	Type of Role

Posting Date

Jobs that have been posted for a long time have a higher chance of closing or being already filled, so this date will help you decide which applications to work on first.

Link

While you might find a role on a jobs platform, when possible, it's a good idea to apply on the employer's website.

Type of Role

Label the type of role (example: "nonprofit social media"—or "museum PR") so you can quickly identify similar roles and use the related documents as a template.

Pro-Tip #1:

LABELING!

Remember, the "Type of Role" we referenced earlier?

Type of Role

Label the type of role (example: "nonprofit social media"—or "museum PR") so you can quickly identify similar roles and use the related documents as a template.

You will save a **LOT** of time by labeling each opportunity carefully in your search spreadsheet so you can easily adapt a previous resume or cover letter that matches the new role you're applying to.

policy research

community outreach

fundraising and events

data and policy research

community outreach



OTHER PRO-TIPS!



Pro-Tip #2:

USING A FUNCTIONAL RESUME

Writing your resume is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. There are several different types of resumes to choose from to fit your story to the target industry, position, and your specific circumstance.

Functional resumes organize different types of experiences according to skill-based experience sections, which provides you the ability to highlight the most relevant experience at the top of the resume.

FILM PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE

B - Camera Operator | Tiger Queen | 3 minute
Production Company: LegoTrend

Producer and Editor | Honeywell Media

- Digital media file management (logging/tagging)
- Create and edit digital storyboards from a script

Caffer (Instagram Ad) | DinoBarbie - Birthday
Production Company: Manhattan Toy Association

MARKETING EXPERIENCE

Event and Marketing Intern | Patina | Minneapolis

- Assisted the Event Manager with event planning
- Collaborated with the Sales Team to increase sales

Pro-Tip #3:

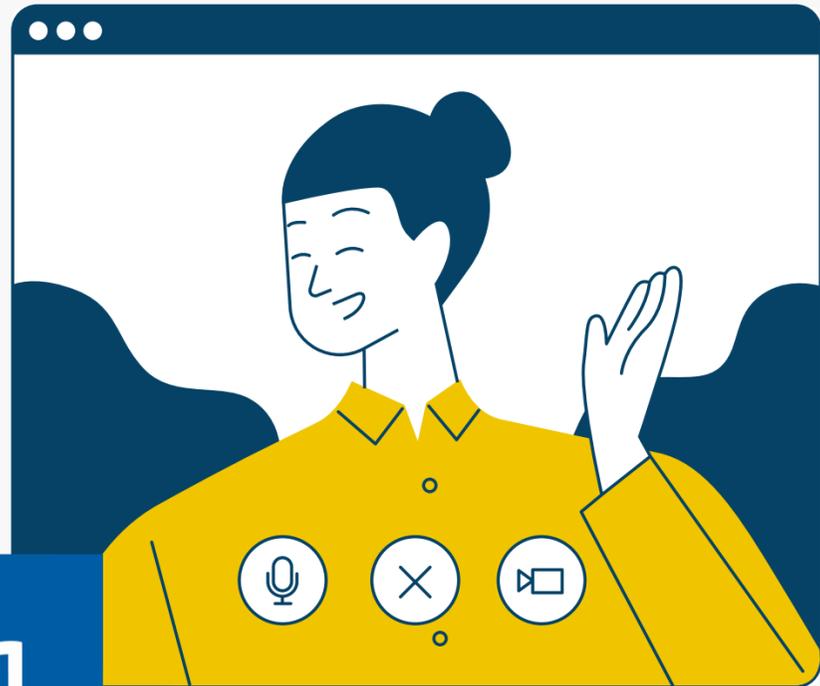
SEND YOUR APPLICATION MATERIALS DIRECTLY TO THE HIRING MANAGER



- Scan the job description to find out who the position reports to
- Look on the company website for a staff directory or org chart
- Browse the company's LinkedIn and search for their employees with specific keywords in their title
- Once you've identified a likely target, try to figure out the employer's email naming convention
- Email your the presumed hiring manager a message like this sample with your resume and cover letter attached!

*Dear Ms. Smith,
I recently applied for the Marketing and Social Media Assistant role, and I wanted to share my application materials directly with you. I am very excited about this opportunity because I have deep skills in analytics and I enjoy crafting engaging digital stories. Thanks for your time!*

WHAT CAN THE CAREER CENTER DO FOR YOU?



- [Drop-In Career Coaching](#) (no appointment necessary!)
- [Virtual Appointments](#) with Career Community Advisors
- [Email Resume Review](#)
- Access a [Career Library](#) of 50+ Handouts and Videos
- Search for opportunities on [Handshake](#), our careers platform
- Network with Alumni on (ASK) or [Alumni Sharing Knowledge](#)

careercenter.depaul.edu

CAREER LIBRARY



The DePaul Career Center recently created a library of 50+ handouts and 14 two-minute videos focused on every career readiness topic, ranging from resume basics to exploration to building your brand!

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Informational interviews are a low-pressure, highly productive way to learn about a field, get career advice, build your network and hone your interviewing skills. Reach out! It's easy and fun.

Informational interviews are an opportunity for you to talk with professionals about their career path, profession, organization and industry. These conversations can take place via phone or email, but it's much more fruitful when conducted in person.

Follow these simple steps to get started:



Step 1

LOCATE THE PEOPLE YOU WANT TO MEET

Search for emerging, mid-career and established professionals in roles or organizations that interest you. Recent graduates that are emerging in their careers have first hand knowledge about existing pathways. Mid-level and advanced professionals have large networks and can share their views about how industries are changing.

- Definitely consider targeting DePaul alumni. They are often the most open to speaking with students and recent graduates of their alma mater.
- If you're still in school, DePaul faculty are an excellent place to start—ask your professors if they know of any contacts in your field of interest.
- DePaul's ASK (Alumni Sharing Knowledge) network and LinkedIn are excellent places to find professionals whose pathways align with your passions.
- Don't be afraid to be bold—is there a well-known person in your field of interest whose perspective would be helpful, interesting or inspiring? Reach out to them! You have nothing to lose and much to gain—the worst that could happen is you get a "no."

GRADUATE SCHOOL 101

In many fields, earning a graduate degree or certificate is a benefit and competitive advantage. In some, it's necessary for advancement.

Getting accepted into your preferred program requires research, differentiation and extreme project management skills. Here are some tips:



Selecting the right institution and program

Chances are, you'll want to apply to multiple programs to maximize your options. Which are the right ones? There are a number of factors to consider.

- 1 Faculty** Your relationship with faculty will be a huge factor in the educational experience. Learn the names, departmental positions and academic credentials of the professor or professors you'd be working with.
- 2 Resources** Research can require significant out-of-pocket costs. Find out if there are resources available at the institution that can reduce these costs.
- 3 Community/Location** Take a look at the on-campus and off-campus communities. Is the on-campus culture—faculty access, social life, etc.—what you're looking for? Does the local area have the amenities you want and need? Is it in a city or a small college town? Does the program offer online courses? How would these factors contribute to your quality of life?
- 4 Cost/Funding** The tuition and fees will be an obvious consideration, but you should also take into account living expenses, which can vary widely by region. What sort of stipends and funding programs are available? What are the work requirements?
- 5 Career Outcomes** What are the career outcomes for program alumni and how does the program support students and alumni in professional development?

PERSONAL IDENTITY AND YOUR BRAND

Your identity, whether based on your gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture, faith, or another element of your background, is fundamental to who you are. Deciding when and/or how to integrate your identity into your brand and job search can be a meaningful part of navigating your professional life.



In the Career Center, we often work with students and alumni who ask about the risks and benefits of sharing personal details about their identities. Whether it's a recent alum who is non-binary, or a single mother who returned to school to complete her degree after spending years caring for her children, every individual has the power to shape a specific and compelling authentic professional identity that includes (or does not include) personal information.

While we understand that identities are intersecting and not binary, below are some general tips that we hope are helpful in navigating discussions around career development.

Connect who you are to what you do.

If your identity or background links to why you have selected a career path or professional interest, you can differentiate yourself from other applicants with a "why statement," which illustrates your personal commitment to that role or career. For example, in a cover letter, you might include a statement like this:

"As a first generation college student navigating the opaque space of higher education without the insights of parents or a network of college-educated adults, I am passionate about providing support to under-resourced students, helping them succeed academically and thrive socially."

"I am particularly interested in this role because I recently returned to college to complete my degree in Health Sciences after providing care for my disabled sister for five years. This experience taught me the value of a holistic approach to caregiving, and I am eager to use these skills to enhance the patient experience at Good Samaritan."

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. That's why it's important to put careful thought into how you dress for job interviews and meetings with business contacts.



It's all part of your personal brand. It's the package you present—your qualifications, your preparation and, yes, your style—when you meet someone who can help advance your career. You know you're a person with great potential. Follow these simple guidelines to make sure you look the part!

General Guidelines

- Dress codes in the workplace have relaxed considerably in recent years, which can make it tougher, not easier, to decide what to wear. While it's definitely better to over-dress than under-dress, looking too formal for an interview can suggest that you're not a good fit for the culture. That said, here are some general guidelines:
- Clothes should be in good condition, fit correctly, and be clean and lint free
- Wear dress shoes that are comfortable and clean
- Hair should be well groomed
- Fragrance—a light touch is better
- Bring essentials only—a professional bag, briefcase or portfolio
- Cellphone off

HOW TO RESEARCH EMPLOYER DRESS CODES

If you have an interview or it's your first day at work or at business functions, look for everyday-type images (not dressy corporate events) to get a sense of the culture. Be sure to look for staff in functions similar to yours, as some teams' dress codes vary.

✓ **Check out their social media accounts** Many employers post images of employees at work or at business functions. Look for everyday-type images (not dressy corporate events) to get a sense of the culture. Be sure to look for staff in functions similar to yours, as some teams' dress codes vary.

✓ **Call the hiring manager or HR department** You can ask explicit questions about an employer's dress code. Questions like: "How formal is the dress code?" or "Do most interviewees wear a suit?"

WORKING REMOTELY: THE BASICS

Working from home is common now, and with the pandemic, it's even more so. The number of remote roles has increased by 173 percent since 2005, and most experts expect this trend to accelerate. This is the future of work.



Here are a few tips to help you ensure that working remotely is productive and successful:

Set up your workspace for success.

Whether it's a home office, a commercial co-working space, or a table in a coffee house, your workspace has a lot to do with your effectiveness. Make sure your space:

- Is comfortable and ergonomically sound
- Is quiet and able to accommodate phone conversations or video conferencing without distractions
- Gives you room to move around—cramped quarters can increase fatigue!

Get the right equipment.

Make sure you have the right tools and technology to do your job well:

- A computer with a camera.
- A reliable internet connection—nothing is more disruptive to a video meeting than a connection that drops.
- Remote-work software
- LinkedIn Learning is an excellent source for technology tutorials and tips, including entire courses, to support remote-work success.

SOFTWARE SUGGESTIONS

Video conferencing/screen sharing: Zoom, Skype, GoToMeeting, JoinMe or others

Communication: Slack or others

Project Management: Asana, Trello, Mondays

Cloud Computing/team sharing: Basecamp, Google Drive, Microsoft Teams, Box

Check it out here: go.depaul.edu/careerlibrary

CAREER WORKSHOPS

These 45-minute workshops offer tactical advice for every stage of your career journey! Anyone who RSVPs on Handshake will get a recording of the session with supplemental materials!

RSVP on [Handshake!](#)

CAREER TOOLKIT:



**MASTER THE
INTERVIEW**



SKILLS LABS!



Join us for our weekly 30 minute skills-based sessions. Anyone who RSVPs on Handshake will get a recording of the session with supplemental materials!

SKILLS LAB



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HEALTH CARE AND SCIENCE



Public Speaking
**FOR
SCIENTISTS**



SKILLS LAB



Designing
**HIGH IMPACT
PRESENTATIONS**



SKILLS LAB



Introduction to...
**PRODUCT
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SKILLS LAB



Introduction to
**SURVEY
DESIGN**



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BUSINESS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP,
AND CONSULTING



Know Your Worth!
**SALARY
NEGOTIATION**



SKILLS LAB



Mastering the art of...
**GRANT
WRITING**



SKILLS LAB



intro to...
**DESIGN
THINKING**



SKILLS LAB

TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN



Agile
**PROJECT
MANAGEMENT**



INTERNSHIP PLUS

The Internship Plus program was established to support DePaul University students participating in unpaid internships that demonstrate financial need. This program awards up to \$2500 in financial assistance to eligible undergraduate students working in a quarter-long unpaid internship.

PRO TIP:

You can approach an employer (especially a non-profit you're passionate about) and tell them you're applying for internship funding, and ask them if they are willing to host you - should you receive funding.

This is what we call a "create your own internship" opportunity!



APPLICATIONS OPEN

- January 25, 2021

APPLICATIONS DUE

- February 28, 2021

Find more information [HERE!](#)

JOIN A CAREER COMMUNITY!

JOIN
NOW!

Opt into a Career Community to receive exclusive email alerts, targeted job & internship postings, tailored industry resources, career advising, and more.

Regardless of your chosen major, you can explore multiple Career Communities and attend events across all industries – you'll develop a great network for future opportunities and learn about a variety of career paths.

- Exploring Careers & Interests
- Business, Entrepreneurship & Consulting
- Education, Nonprofit & Government
- Health Care & Science
- Media, Communication, Arts & Entertainment
- Technology & Design



Thank You!

