

Customizing Your Resume and Cover Letter



Why take the time to customize?

Most Fortune 500 companies utilize Applicant Tracking Software (ATS) to identify candidates by scanning resumes, cover letters, and even LinkedIn profiles for keywords. If your materials lack the keywords, your resume may never even make it to a hiring manager's desk.

Focus on Keywords.

Customizing your resume and cover letter is all about identifying and incorporating the right keywords. How do you do this?

Step 1

Identify how your background and skills align with the role. Read over the job description and highlight the words that are used repeatedly and that connect to your experiences and skills. They could be to things like:

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

Exercise

Take a moment to review the job description, paying close attention to the specific wording used. Highlight and then write down the likely keywords.

List keywords:

Step 2

Incorporate the keywords into your resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile.

You're now ready to customize. Look for any opportunity to use the keywords—the specific words, as much as possible—throughout your resume and cover letter. Look for opportunities to use keyword language to describe your experience, skills, personal strengths, goals, and passions. Don't shy away from using the same keyword more than once.

- In your experience section
- In your skills section

Think about what might make you stand out from any other qualified candidate. Sometimes this is a specific passion you have, or something compelling about your background that seems relevant to the position. Be sure to make this claim clearly in the cover letter and audit the resume to make sure it supports your claim.