PM 597: Cover Letters and Resume Development
Week Six

Cover Letters, Part 1

Hi. I'm Denise Johnson. I'm the Career Services Manager in the Career Center. Today we're going to be talking about cover letters.

Some of the things that we're going to talk about today are cover letter basics. We're going to go through some format and presentation tips. I'm going to tell you about some content that you want to make sure that you include within your cover letter and some additional tips. So therefore, you don't end up with your cover letter looking like the small, handwritten version right below.

We have seen some of these in the Career Center and basically we don't want you to be that desperate grad. We want you to make sure that you introduce yourself in your cover letter, you get out the key words and phrases that the employers need to know about you so that you can get in and get an interview.

So basically what is a cover letter? A cover letter is a statement that basically expresses and communicates your interest in a position or an organization. It will introduce you as the writer and explain the main points of your resume. You will also list your skills and abilities; maybe your qualifications that you have that really make you a perfect fit for the job. It'll talk about your experiences. And in the best light possible, it will market your talents to help you get the interview.

Now although you're writing the cover letter and it's introducing yourself, you never need to start your cover letter with: Hi, my name is Denise Johnson. You don't need to do that. That information will already be on your cover letter, and we'll talk about how you're going to do that in a second.

These are the cover letter basics that you want to make sure that you include within your cover letter:

You will have a heading on your cover letter. The cover letter heading should actually match the same heading that will be on your resume, as well as any references. If you are including a references list or your employer has asked for references, that will also have the same heading.

We're going to talk about salutations and how you open your cover letter. What the opening paragraph looks like. What the body paragraphs look like. The closing. And the signature and where that goes depending upon what type of cover letter you're presenting.

Basically when you're looking at your cover letter, you want to take a look at how long it is. Typically our cover letters are one page in length only. They definitely look like the same content as your resume in terms of how the heading is put together. The spacing will be single-spaced on your cover letter. You can take a look at some of the different versions here that we have on the screen. Some have the cover letter, that the heading is blocked to the left here. Some are blocked right. Some are in the center as this one is or the one over here. And then in the center of the page you have an e-email version of what you would do if you needed to apply to a job via e-mail. It's going to look like this one.

You can tell also from the body of the cover letter, some are more paragraph form, as in this one at the bottom right, as well as the one on the far left. Or you have other ones that have a bullet here that might show what you're doing in a bullet or within the e-mail, you can utilize those. However you feel you can best get your experiences and qualifications on paper, that's what you want to make sure that you're doing within your cover letter.

Your font size should be anywhere from a 10 to a 12. However, in the Career Center we would advise you that you probably want to go with the larger size font, maybe an 11 or 12. A 10-size font is a little small to read. Anything less than a 10 will most likely not even be looked at by a recruiter, because it's too small to read. You want to try to stay with a good font that's easy on the eyes. So you're looking at your Arials, your Helvetica font, your Times New Roman.

You want to avoid anything that's going to be really scripty or something that is a little difficult to read. Or even though you may have a favorite font, you may need to put that font at a size 16 in order for it to be actually legible, which diminishes the amount of qualifications and the area you can actually write on your cover letter.

As far as the paper for your cover letter goes, typically if you're going to be doing something online, submitting online, or perhaps even at a career fair, you can use regular printer paper from your printer. If you're going to be hard copy mailing this cover letter and resume package to an employer or perhaps you're giving it to a friend at an organization that knows the hiring manager, so that's a way to get in.

The paper for your resume usually makes all the difference. If you're applying online or potentially at a career fair, you can go ahead and use the regular paper that is in your printer and print it on that. That's not going to be a problem.

However, if you're going to mail your version of your resume and cover letter, if you're bringing a hard copy in for an interview, or if you're actually giving your package to someone that works at the company that you're interested in to give directly to the hiring manager, you want to make sure that that paper is a stronger type of paper, a more formal type of paper. It doesn't necessarily need to be card stock. In fact we in the career center would advise against having something that would be that hard, but it should be some type of parchment paper or more formalized paper that you're going to use.

When you're thinking about paper for your cover letter and resume, you want to make sure that you stay with the lighter colored papers. Specifically a white, a cream, a beige, ecru. If you want to use a blue, make sure it's a very, very light blue. If you're into charcoal, it needs to be a very, very light charcoal. It also needs just to be plain paper; no flecks, no little parchment pieces of paper. You need to consider what that might look like if someone were to copy that and then pass that out during an interview, it could look like black marks of ink on your cover letter, or your resume, which doesn't look very professional in the eyes of the hiring committee. So make sure that your paper works as well to market your skills and abilities.

So typically when you have your heading on your cover letter, you want to make sure that it similarly matches what's on your resume. So you want to include your contact information, so whatever you've included on your resume, you want to make sure is included within your cover letter. There's an example where Tiffany Traveler here has a traditional block cover letter, where everything is going to be blocked left. Or you can go ahead and do whatever your resume is on. Maybe you have a single-line on your resume so that would also be on your cover letter as well. You want to make sure that the date is included in your cover letter.

You also want to make sure that you have the contact information for the organization. Sometimes you may not get anything. You may get the name of a company. You may get a location or the city that they're located in. Part of the research behind applying for a job is to actually do your homework and find out where that company is located. Maybe you can find out who is actually recruiting for that position.

As long as the job description doesn't tell you that they don't want phone calls, feel free to call the employer, find out who is hiring. Be really nice to the person that answers the phone, whether that's the office manager, the receptionist, the HR person that's posted the position. And try to discern who is actually the person who is doing the hiring, trying to get their name and information so that you can put that on your cover letter so it looks a little bit more professional, as in what a company would send to another company when they do business.

As far as the salutation in your cover letter you want to make sure that you're always professional. And in all cases, if possible, you want to make sure that you're addressing this to a specific individual. So for men, clearly you're using Mr. and their last name. If it's a feminine person that's hiring, then you want to make sure that you use the Ms., the Ms., not Miss, not Mrs. And the reason we do that is because there's no difference in discerning a married vs. unmarried man through Mister. The same is true with Ms., you're not discerning between a married person or an unmarried person.

If you don't know, or you don't have a name at all, you can either address your cover letter to the Hiring Manager, perhaps the Recruiter. Or if you don't know either or you feel more comfortable, you can address it to the position title. So you would just use regarding, as if you were sending a memo. So it is R (capital) E (capital) with a semicolon, and then the position title. Hopefully that would get your information to the correct person that was going to be looking at your cover letter.

Additionally if you can't discern the gender of the person that you want to send your cover letter to, make sure you use their full name. So if it's a Chris, and you don't know if it's male or female, or if it a gender neutral name like Dana, you want to make sure that you would put Dear Dana Smith, because you don't want to say Dear Ms. Smith, if Dana is masculine. In fact one of my best friends is named Dana and he does do HR. He doesn't read cover letters if they come in to Mrs. or something like that. You want to make sure that if you don't know and you're uncertain of whether it's male or female, that you use the whole name.

The opening paragraph of your cover letter should most definitely reference the position that you are referring to and what you're applying to. It's also got to have who you know that told you about the position or how you heard about the position. If you do have a contact person in the company that told you of the position or perhaps a faculty member or someone that referred you to the position, you want to make sure that that person gets their name in the cover letter as well for the hiring manager.

If you need to put in your educational background feel free to do that. If you want to explain why the position or the organization, maybe they do something in the environment that you want to work in, or they have a mission that you feel very similar view points on, you want to include that as well.

This little information graphic here at the bottom of the screen is basically taken directly from our cover letter hand out that is available online on our website. Basically it's doing all of the things that we're supposed to be doing in an opening paragraph.

It talks about meeting this person during internship week, which is an event that we did on campus, giving the date that it is. Why this person is very interested in the internship and why this person thinks that they would be able to utilize it to the best of their abilities as well as helping the company at the same time.

The second paragraph in your cover letter is basically where you're going to showcase your skills, your examples, your qualifications as to why you're qualified for this position. For many students, they unfortunately use the last summer internship that they had or the last job that they had, which may not actually showcase the exact skills or qualifications that the employers looking for.

This opening paragraph, this second paragraph, paragraph two, you want to make sure that you are highlighting your talents and abilities based on your experience. Even if that experience was two summers ago or perhaps it was a job that you did in the beginning of your junior year or in your first year of a graduate program. You want to include that so the employer knows what background you have, what skills you have that would allow them to bring you in for an interview and find out and explore a little bit deeper why they should potentially hire you.

The third paragraph of the cover letter is basically where you're going to show your fit. This is where you sell yourself to the employer showing why you are qualified. Typically this is the

paragraph where we would tell you to make sure that the important words from the job description, the buzz words, or the words that maybe you did a word cloud, or you did a list when you were putting your resume together to determine what skills and abilities and what knowledge base you have, for that particular job. You want to make sure that you include that here in the third paragraph.

Typically your first read of a resume and cover letter if you apply online is actually going to be through the database system. So whatever system they are applying to, whatever utilization of software they are using, that's going to be the first screen. So hopefully once you get through that first screen you'll have enough keywords, enough strengths, enough words that show why you should be qualified, that, that computer system will actually spit it out so hopefully a human will actually be able to look at it. So you want to make sure that you keep that in mind when you're building both your resume as well as your cover letter.

Some additional things you might want to consider for your cover letter would be any activities that you're in. If you held management positions or leadership positions in those activities, you would want to include those as well. If you were an athlete on campus and you played a sport you really want to make sure that you include that as well. Because basically as an athlete, your sport is your full-time job on campus, so clearly that's what you're doing, maybe instead of internships in the summer because you're working out with your sport. It requires some strong time management skill sets. So those are the things you really want to make sure that you're showcasing with in this paragraph.

Also include some clubs or organizations. Perhaps you might want to include some course work, if it's specifically related to some things that you would be doing in the job description or at that place of employment. Then additionally if you have professional associations that might bode well for you, to list them here. If they want somebody that shows that they've got some interest in marketing and maybe as a student you joined the American Marketing Association as a student member. You would also want to include that so they know that this is not an "oh gee, I think I'm going to work in marketing this summer." This is something that you wanted to do enough that you joined a professional association as an undergraduate student for.

Cover Letters, Part 2

Finally, when you think about closing your resume you want to really make sure that this is your next opportunity to tell them exactly why they should hire you. You want to make sure that you're restating your interest in the position, that you're also indicating your next step or follow up. If there's nothing on the job ad that says you can't call them or you shouldn't email them, then you can even include something in the closing that says, "I will follow up with you on Thursday to confirm that you've received my materials." You're not following up to schedule an interview; you're just following up to make sure that they have your resume and your cover letter or whatever application materials they ask you to submit.

In this closing paragraph you also do, though, want to ask for the interview in a polite way. You want to use some terminology or framing it something like, "I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my qualifications further," or "I'm very interested in a face-to-face-meeting to talk more about the position."

What you don't want to do is be overly aggressive by requesting the interview, saying something like, "I will call you next Monday to set up my interview," or "I would highly request that you interview me at your convenience." Things like that don't bode well with employers, especially when they have multiple people, over hundreds of people that are applying for their positions. They want to make sure that this is someone that they're going to be able to work with and that they are going to like working with. You never want to say anything that would bring you up to be too aggressive for a job or to get on the wrong side of the recruiter or the hiring manager.

One of the final things that are actually most important when you are closing out your cover letter is to make sure that there is a signature. In the Career Center, we see many times that students will say, "sincerely" and they'll type their name and there will be nothing there. We want to make sure that you are actually following proper business letter writing procedures when you put your signature on your cover letter.

If it's a hard copy or it's something that you're going to be handing to them for a friend or even at a career fair or if you do happen to bring a hard copy of your cover letter in for an interview, you want to make sure that you have your sincerely, whatever closing that you're going to use, that you have 4 single spaces and then your typed name. In the spaces, those 4 spaces, that is where you will write your signature. Not below your name, not above sincerely, but right in the middle during that open space. That's where your name goes.

If you go by something different, if your name is Thomas, but you use your middle name, you could put your middle name, T, middle name, and your signature. Whatever it is that you use that you want them to call you, that's the information that you're going to have on your heading and that's that same information that you're going to have on your resume as well as your references as well as the closing signature area for your cover letter.

If you're submitting it online, you can do the same thing. Maybe you have an electronic signature that you can pop in there, you can go ahead and do that. If you don't, then you're just going to leave 2 lines between your sincerely and your typed name and then you're just going to have your name. It'll be, "Sincerely, Tommy Trojan," with no signature, no ink, no anything on the page. Everything is going to be single spaced, so there is only the 2 spaces between sincerely and the Tommy Trojan name.

Additionally, you want to really make sure that in your cover letter you are utilizing the employer's words. Those are the words that are going to be already in the employer's system, especially within the HR systems and the databases to scan for resume and cover letters on new incoming applicants. You want to make sure that you are connecting the job description and your qualifications and your experiences. Make sure those all meet the same thing; that you are able to show how you fit based upon your experiences within that job description.

You always want to make sure that you're using proper grammar and punctuation. Please make sure that you spell check and you also proofread because the computer will not spell check "oar", that's a correct word, but if it's supposed to be "or" then when the person reads it, they're going to go, "This is a type-o." Typically, when there are type-o's in your resume or cover letter that's an automatic disqualification. It doesn't even get looked at past that. That especially becomes important when you're looking at dates, so especially on your resume when you're looking at graduation dates, make sure it says 2015, 2016, not 20015. I've seen that before and that's no attention to detail and nobody wants to hire people that don't have attention to detail for things that they're doing in other organizations.

Make sure that you're highlighting your experiences. Don't repeat everything verbatim from your resume; just make sure that you're highlighting what the employer needs to see in order to bring you in for an interview. Always make sure that you keep your cover letter to 1 page. We don't want to read a 2- page cover letter because the reality is, if you need more than 2 pages you need to condense your words and really make sure that you are showcasing your experiences and qualifications in a much stronger way.

If you need to email your cover letter or whatever, your resume, your references to an employer, always do a short message in the email, and then attach your resume and cover letter in a PDF if possible. The reason we always suggest that you attach anything that you're sending to an employer as a PDF is nobody knows what types of computer systems people are using. Maybe you don't have the newest operating system. Maybe you have more than the employer would have. You never know. You want to make sure that you always list something as a PDF so that you know for certain that the way that you've situated and organized your resume and cover letter is the exact way that the employer is going to look at it.

For example, once when we were hiring someone at the Career Center I received a resume and a cover letter where every bullet on each was a dollar sign. I know that no one in their right mind would use a dollar sign on a resume or a cover letter, but it was just how the system

translated that when I opened it in Word, that's what I got. It was very shocking to me, but I figured, okay that's just the work experience. That's how it comes out from the system. Really make sure that you pay attention to what it is because remember, once you put something in a PDF, if there's a type-o, it's there forever until you create another document and save that and then send that again.

Lastly, really make sure that you're tailoring your cover letter to a specific position, making sure that you're addressing their needs and showing them how you can fix their needs or make their organization run smoother or have a better experience because you're there.

Finally to sum up, really make sure that you're looking at the proper format and presentation for your resume. You only get one chance to make a first impression and this is going to be it. You want to make sure that everything is as perfect as you can get it, so you want to make sure that you're always using the same format and presentation for the entire package that you submit for an employer.

Make sure that you sell yourself by showing fit for the job position. That you're targeting that letter to that specific position and that when you go through your cover letters, if you've sent out multiple cover letters, really make sure that if you're using the company's name anywhere else in the cover letter, that you change that. It's not fun to have company ABC get a cover letter that's addressed to company XYZ. You really want to make sure that you look at all the details of your cover letter to make sure that you're representing yourself in the best light.

Finally, really make sure that there are no grammatical errors. Make sure that you proofread explicitly over the spell check. Have someone else look at it. Have your roommate look at it. Have a faculty member look at it. Bring it into the Career Center. Have someone look at it that is not familiar; that does not see this as much times as you do because the eye has a tendency to proof itself and so some words like "of" may have been typed "fo" and it still looks like "of" to you because you've seen it so many times.

Really make sure that you're bringing something in that we can look at and then if we need to mark on it, we'll mark on it, and then you'll be able to send that out. For additional information or if you have other questions regarding your cover letter or resume or any other professional information that you need, please feel free to reach out to us at the Career Center. We're located on the main campus in the Student Union building. Our website is careers.usc.edu. Feel free to come by whenever you need. Thanks.

Resumes, Part 1

Hi, I'm Jen O'Connor from the USC Career Center and I'm here to talk a little bit about resumes today. Today we're going to break down a resume, and we're going to talk about how to break down your resume in accordance to a job description that the employer might have to make sure that you are speaking the same language as the employer. We are going to make sure that you organize your resume as effectively as possible to make sure the employer can find the information they are looking for. Finally, we are going to make sure that we have bullet points on your resume that effectively communicate the skills that you are trying to prove to the employer as quickly as possible.

I like this infographic here; it talks a little bit about some of the process that happens with resumes. First of all, you need to think about who you are and why the employer should care. You need to talk about your relevant experience. You need to think about why hiring you is a no brainer and how you're going to communicate that to an employer. Finally, you're going to have to think about how you can help the employer make money. Believe it or not, we can get your resume to communicate all of these and we are going to talk about that in a moment.

What is an effective resume? An effective resume communicates your unique brand for a specific position. Yes, that actually means that you're going to want to tailor your resume for every job description that you see. It's going to market your professional brand. If you're lucky, the resume might lead to an interview, and it might actually help you qualify for scholarships or grad school.

What are not effective resumes? We get a lot of students who feel that they can have a resume that they can use for every single employer that they ever meet, any employer that they're looking for, any internship, any job. That is absolutely not the case. A resume should not be a running job history. It should not be a list of all the accomplishments you've ever had in your life, including your kindergarten best art show prize, and it should not be a one size fits all document.

For us, it's very critical that you take your resume and that you make it to fit you and to the employer. To have one resume for your entire internship search, your entire job search is really not a good choice, and we will highly recommend that you take the time to make your resume count. In our opinion, that one piece of paper called a resume, could be 50, 60 thousand dollars' worth of salary should you get through the entire hiring process. We want to make sure that one piece of paper really, really shines.

One of the things that you need to think about before you even start looking at resumes and employers and things like that, is that you want to make sure you are assessing your knowledge and skills and abilities, what we call KSAs. You want to know what you know. I know that sounds very simple, but you do. You want to know what you know. You want to know what skills you're bringing and you want to now the abilities that you have. The reason that you want to know that is that you are going to need to use those KSAs to understand what different

positions you might be qualified to apply to. You need to understand what the jobs are looking for, how you can communicate those and make sure that's very clear that you possess those KSAs, not only at a very basic level, but as advanced as possible.

Here's an example of how we instruct our students to understand how to communicate their skills. We will have our students look at a job description that they are interested in, and we have them read those job descriptions very closely, so they can understand more about the job and what the employer is looking for. Now, when I look at this job description for a volunteer coordinator, I see a lot of words. I see a lot of information. I see a lot of detail. Believe it or not, this is a really, really good thing. This is a really, really good thing because there's a lot of clues as to what you should be talking about in your resume.

What I like to do with my students, and all of us do the same thing, as career counselors. We will have our students convert this job description into, whether it's a word cloud, list or something, so you can kind of look at the bare bones of what that employer is looking for, then create a list of the words that you need to make sure is in your resume. This is an example of how we went from this, to this. These are now the key words that need to be in your resume. It is really that simple, believe it or not. This is how you do it.

Then what you need to do is you need to make sure that your resume is performing as best as possible. Again, we are going to scan those job descriptions for key words and qualifications and we're going to make sure those key words are in your resume. We're going to make sure that we spell out any acronyms that the employer that you're applying to, may not understand. USC for example, we have a lot of acronyms happening on campus. We do not want to use those acronyms unless we know that they understand what that is. If your industry understands the acronyms, then feel free to leave those, but if you're switching industries, or you're looking to do something, maybe a scholarship from somebody who might not understand your industry, you're going to want to spell out those acronyms as best as you can.

You want to make sure that the critical information in your resume is the top third of your page, just like the graphic is showing. You do want to make sure that you're thinking about your resume as prime real estate. The first third of your resume is the most critical piece. Of course, you're going to put your name at the top and your education and things like that. It is your job to figure out what the most critical information is and then how to put that in your resume, in relation to the rest of the content.

Finally, you want to make sure that you are aware of SEO and ATS technologies when you are putting together your resume. I don't know if any of you, but SEO and ATS are not acronyms I understand. That's a perfect example of why you need to spell out acronyms. SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization. That is basically the type of technology that you use when you do a Google search for different key words. Believe it or not, employers use the same technology when they are looking through your resumes. ATS is Applicant Tracking Systems, which I will show you in a second how those work. Basically, what that system is, it's a system that will walk the employer through your resume, in terms of the qualifications that you have.

Let me show you the next slide here. The next slide here is an infographic that demonstrates a little bit about how SEO and ATS work for the employers. Basically, a lot of students are shocked to hear that an employer's eyes are not what actually read the resume first, it's actually technology. Basically what happens is, you find the job online that you are interested in and then you start applying. You start putting in your resume. You start putting in your computer skills, your technical skills, whatever skills, education you might have, etc., etc. The computer that is behind that database of the website is actually starting to hone in on the key words that you are putting into the computer.

Basically, what's going to happen is, that resume goes in. It starts getting coded by the SEO and ATS technologies, and then it will tell the hiring manager, who is looking for a specific person, which resumes have the most buzz words, key words, descriptors, experience, etc., etc., than most of those that they are looking for. Basically what happens then, then the hiring manager takes that batch of pre-screened resumes that the computer screened. They take those resumes, they look at themselves with their own eyeballs. Then, they decide who they are going to bring in for an interview. Based on that, they might bring in, I mean, who knows, it depends on the employer, XYZ number of applicants. Eventually, you will wind up getting the final round interviews and then one person will be offered the position.

Employers need to use the technology these days to go through the piles and piles of resumes they get. This is why it is imperative to start using search engine optimization to your benefit.

Let's go through a little bit about the sections that we will want on your resume. Of course, obviously we need your name. If you have a nickname that you prefer to be called, as long as it's appropriate, feel free to use that for your name, your first name and last name. Middle names are not required, unless you prefer to use that, even an initial, whatever. Contact information, you want to make sure they know how to get a hold of you. For example, usually it will be an address and a phone number. Some people are not using mailing addresses anymore. They're only using phone numbers. Whatever you are comfortable giving, is what we want you to give.

My suggestion is not to give multiple addresses. I don't suggest the permanent versus present addresses. I think you should just give them one address. I think you should give them one phone number, whether it's your house phone or your cell phone. Whatever phone that you're going to be using, that you will answer in a professional way should they call you, is what we want you to use. We want you to include your education, and then your work experience with dates and locations. We also want you to include activities and any specific skills, whether they be technical, language, lab skills, whatever specific skills, maybe CPR certified, whatever you have that they specifically need to see, we would then consider that to be required, because without those things you won't get the interview.

That's the first set and that's definitely required. These should be in the upper third of your resume, as I said, prime real estate. These sections are optional. The objective, if you do choose to use one, it goes under your name and your address. Basically what an objective is, is

a way to state what you're looking for. Some people love them, some people hate them. They are definitely optional.

I would always suggest people consider using an objective if it is for a career fair, where you're going to meet a lot of different people, where you're not going to have a chance to tailor your resume. If you do choose to use an objective, I want you to be very solid and say, I am looking for a full time, summer internship focused on research, or focused on programming, or focused on volunteer coordination. I don't want an objective to say, I am looking for a challenging job where I can use my skills to my benefit, or to the organization's benefit, any of that. Not good. You want to keep it very simple, to the point, what am I looking for specifically so the employer knows what direction to point your resume to.

Most people do not use objectives and that's absolutely fine. The next piece is that some people are putting in personal websites, portfolios, blog addresses, whatever you feel ... For example, if you are looking to be a writer and you have a blog that you are really, really proud of, that has really great writing samples, we would suggest using a blog address. If you are an artist or an architect and you are looking to show off some of your work, it's absolutely fine to put the web address of your portfolio on your resume. We would usually stick those right under your contact information as one of the first things they can read.

Some people will include a LinkedIn URL. I think that's a really huge trend right now that I think will not be going away any time soon. I would recommend trying to put your LinkedIn URL. You can find your LinkedIn URL on your Linked In page under your profile picture. We suggest honors, awards and scholarships, if they're appropriate. Sometimes you start running out of room at some point. It depends on the employer whether you think they will want to see the honors, awards and scholarships. Some people put leadership in there, other people don't.

Academic projects and presentations. Some people have work experience that's not so related to what they've learned in school. What they do is they'll put their academic projects that were related to the job they want. For example, if you're very interested in working for an embassy, and you did a really great project on the currency in Finland that you think they'd really like, why not stick a project in there on your resume to talk about that. I can show you some examples of that in a moment.

Resumes, Part 2

Formatting, a lot of this is a little instinctual, but ideally you'd want to keep your resume to one page. Why is that? Because we're trying to make this easy for the employer to read. Again, this is not your work history; this is not your whole life story. This is your one page to show why you are qualified for the specific position that you're applying to.

If you have a Master's Degree or a Doctorate or a lot of work experience and you choose to go to two pages, we would suggest that you make sure that the second page has information that's least important in comparison to the first page. The first page needs to be how you showcase the most critical work that you have.

If you choose a second page you'd probably want to make sure that you number the pages to make sure that they don't get lost. If you bring a two-page resume to a career fair, I would recommend stapling the pages together. If you are going to a job interview, and you have a two page resume, I would recommend using a paper clip for the resume because chances are they will probably scan your resume in once they meet you into their database.

I get these questions all the time. A lot of people get very nervous about resumes and things like that. Little things like staples and paper clips aren't a big deal, but just thought I'd bring it up since I do get questions on that.

As for spacing, you do want to make sure there's a reasonable margin on your resume. Some people go for half an inch; some people go for an inch. I would not go over one inch because I think it definitely starts showing up that you don't have a lot of content on your resume. You want to make it comfortable to the eye.

I view this as when you're looking at a textbook, would you rather go for the page that has really nice graphics, really nice bullets, or would you rather go for the page that just has words all over it? That's how I want you to think about your resume.

I want it to be organized. I want you to have nice headings. I want you to make sure that the employers can look through your resume in a very organized way and know what they're looking for. In terms of font we want you to use more simple fonts. Stick with the Helveticas or the Arials, Times New Roman. You don't want to really use fonts that are a little bit more trendy or more off because the computers that they use to scan your resumes might not accommodate those fonts.

In terms of size, you're going to want to stick to, I prefer a size 12. You do not want to go to a 10. Ten is really starting to get very, very small. You're trying to make the employers want to read your resume, not scream because they don't want to read it anymore. You do want to make sure that the font size is appropriate.

As for paper, if you're presenting your resume in a job interview or anything like that, I do believe in using a nice resume paper. You can get resume paper from any stationary store, Office Depot, the book store, anything like that. If you are making copies for the career fair it probably is okay to just use regular printer paper. That's not a big deal. You do want to make a nice presentation for yourself.

One thing about paper that you do want to be aware of is that you do not want to pick a paper that is too dark in color. I will give you a perfect example. My first set of resumes that ever went out to public, I picked a little bit of a darker gray color with a little bit of a gray fleck in it.

I was horrified when I saw what that resume looked like when it was photocopied because all the little flecks that I thought looked so neat and fun actually looked like, for lack of a better word, static when it got photocopied, so I do not recommend any form a fleck in your resume or any darker colors.

Even though to me it looked very, very nice, it did not photocopy well and an interview committee, they usually photocopy your resume for a lot of different people. I would not recommend doing that.

Our office will always suggest that you try to PDF your resume whenever possible before you send it to somebody because the PDF pretty much locks in that format that will be put out there so that if an employer opens up the attachment, it will always show up the same size, the same the same margins, etc, etc. The PDF pretty much safeguards your resume formatting for the employers.

That one was a little loose. Resume content-wise you want to make sure that you have concrete examples that are relevant to the position. I really like this infographic. It says what you say and what they want to know and in the middle here it says relevance. The relevant piece is what's going to be most critical for employers. That is the way you need to start editing your content.

We want concrete examples. We want to make sure that you give me dollar amounts, numbers, percentages. If you were able to save money, if you were able to make more money, if you were able to get more people for Facebook, etc., we want to hear that in your resume. We want you to elaborate on the results and the contributions and the purpose and your experience. We want you to elaborate when appropriate. Again, we're thinking about what is most relevant and cutting out the rest.

We want to make sure that you utilize the bullet points because bullet points will make this very, very easy to read. Again we're trying to think about reading your textbook again, would you rather read the big long paragraph or would you rather read the information table on the side? I pick information table on the side, which is why we're going to stick with bullets.

Let's start talking a little bit about what a really great bullet point looks like. You'll see from the first example here where it says "bad," we do not want you to do this. This happens a lot in our office. People come in for resume critique and they have things like this: handled AV request.

Now, they're like, "I have an action verb here. That was what you wanted, right?" Yeah, but you know what, let's give a little bit more detail. Really tell me what you did. Then we'll have a conversation and it turns out well, "Yeah, I was in charge of all of the AV requests and part of my job was to make sure that our inventory was under control." I'm like, "That is awesome. Ok, so tell me more. Why should the employer know about this? What is really critical about this?"

"Well, we're a really, really busy office." I'm like, "Well how are you going to show that you're busy?" Ok. "Well, I did over forty requests, daily basis and what I was doing was managing our inventory of twenty laptops and thirty two projectors." I think that is so much better than this.

All that took was a little conversation about why do you think the employer should care about what you did in your job as a student assistant. I think that is so much better and it really gives the employer a really good context about what type of work you've been able to do.

Let's talk a little bit about your contact information. In general, your contact information should be at the top. Once in a while we'll see a format where they have the heading, your contact information at the bottom. I am not a big fan of that. You should always, always put your information at the top.

Here's a perfect example of how to do that. You're going to want to put your name. Some people put their email next. Then your street address and then your phone number. That is one very, very typical way to put your information. You'll notice that it's centered, everything's in the middle, ready to go.

Let's talk about my friend Barry Bovard over here. He chose to make all of his information left justified, which I think looks really, really nice on the top of a resume. His name are all caps, not a problem. Then he chose to use his email address with his USC Alumni Association email, which is alumni.usc.edu. You are able to get that email address from the USC Alumni Association once you graduate and I highly recommend it. I think it's a really nice finishing touch on your resume.

Here's the phone number and here's an example of the LinkedIn URL that he gets from his LinkedIn profile when he goes online. Here's an example of his online portfolio, very, very easy to find. The employers have no problem looking around, and it might make them very interested in taking a look to see what does he have online in relation to his profile.

The final example I want to show you is this last one here. It's very long. One of the reasons why this heading is very popular is because it only takes two lines to accomplish all the information that you need to put in here. You've got your name. You've got your address, phone number, email. That is it. It takes two lines and that is it.

We would hope that you would use these headers on your cover letter as well so that the cover letter and the resume look like they match.

Also, one of the things I wanted to bring up is that these are formats that are related to formats that we use in the United States of America. However, you might want to consult our website called Going Global to check out different formats from different countries because some countries are asking for other information in relation to gender, birthdays, marital status etc., etc.

We do not do that at all in the United States of America, however other countries might do that. In fact some countries are still putting pictures on the tops of their resumes. We don't do that here, however if the country that you're applying to does do that, you're going to want to make sure that you accommodate what they're asking for and goingglobal.com which can be found through the resources tab on connectSC will help you try to figure out what the different countries might need in terms of all this information.

Resumes, Part 3

Now, we're going to talk about education. You'll notice that this person is working on their Masters of Public Health now, but they've graduated already with their Bachelors of Arts and Sociology. Resumes go in reverse chronological order.

Education is going to come first and you're going to put your intended graduation date over to the right. We like the dates on the right because we read left to right. The dates tend to be less important than the content. We will always stick to dates to the right. Even for the work experience, we will always put it to the right. The intended graduation dates going to be in the right. It's saying USC in Los Angeles 2016, and then your Masters of Public Health. If you're working on a thesis, you can put the thesis right underneath that Masters of Public Health. Dissertations, same thing, but the topic in there. Anything that you feel they need to know about your education, you can put under there. You'll note for the Bachelor of Arts for Sociology, the person mentioned that they were on Dean's List, they mentioned some honor societies. All of that is fine, as long as you have space for it and you think the employers will be interested. Go for it.

Now let's talk a little bit about work experience. If you'll notice, here's the heading for work experience and then right underneath, you'll see that the person put in their organization's name and then their position. Some people would recommend that you actually flip these and put the position first and then the organization. I don't care which way you do it as long as you hold it consistent. Some people will say the way that you know which way to go as what is more critical to the employer. If the employer is more interested in the research aspects of what the person's position was and they don't care about that was with this firm, then stick with this as the number one, right here. That's what you'd want to do. As long as you hold this consistent, it does not matter. You base it on what the employer is looking for.

Some of the information that's in here is really, really great. I want to pick on a couple, here. Let's pick on AmeriCorps right now. This person is AmeriCorps. They're a community coordinator. This person is saying that they planned, marketed, and oversaw a camp with 250 children. To me, that says not only are they organized, but they show a lot of really, really great leadership. If you had only put down in your resume, "Well, I was in charge of camp," which a lot of students do, I don't think you would've gotten this breath of information. You really wanted take care , look at the job distraction and figure out, what critically are they asking for this position?

Here's kind of a complement to that, as well. We have a lot of students who do the camp counselor thing in the summer. Very, very normal stuff. One of the things we'll recommend, and is perfectly fine, save space, if you did this for multiple years, feel free to say summers with the two years on here. Then, what we want you to do is really think back on what you were doing and think about how the camp counselor position relates to the next position you want. This person, yes, they're saying they taught volleyball. That's great. Look at this, sportsmanship. Sportsmanship is a fantastic transferable skill for employers. It shows that you are mature and it

shows that you can handle whatever comes your way on the workforce. I really like to see people mentioning sportsmanship.

I also like to see that this person thought about the fact that they met with parents. They knew how to set expectations and review progress. Again, these are transferable skills. This tells me that this person is mature enough, not only did they handle 20 middle school girls with sportsmanship, but it's also saying they were comfortable talking to the parents. They were comfortable talking about, "Hey, you know what? This is what we need to work on with your child: XYZ." I love this type of information. I know the employers do too. We're really just trying to show, "Yes. You put me in charge of this job, I will get it done and I will do it well." This is just something I've been working on for years.

This person chose to put the training sessions in there. I don't necessarily need that to be in there. I guess it really just depends on what the employer is specifically looking for. This person chose to keep it. I'd have to see the job description more to know specifically, but I'm fine with this as long as it makes sense.

This particular person decided to have an athletic section, which I think is very appropriate considering the amount of commitment that this put person put towards their sport. This person, this happens to us all the time of the office, is that they don't really realize how busy they've been until they have to talk about in their resume. This person decided to talk about the fact they were able to manage a full-time course load, while being a member of the team and doing some of the other things athletes do, which tends to be more public relations, they go out there, maybe they run a camp for a day, they do public service announcements, etc., etc. I think that's a really, really great way to show that they could balance a lot of really hard work all at once. This person is saying that they're a 12-time starter, meaning that they have a lot of responsibility and that they really tried to do as best as they could in their sport and that they really committed a lot to the sports as they were doing, and that the competed in 24 events over three-month period. That is a lot of time away from school. I always think that the athletes who do have a schedule like that should definitely highlight that, because I think it shows a lot of personnel management, shows a lot of time management, and just really shows that when they are really on task, they are ready to go. You would not love someone with that type of a skill set?

The next section we're going to talk about is the skill section. Some people are going to recommend that a skill section actually goes at the top after your education. For this person, it's not so mission-critical, but for some people are more technical careers, you are going to want put your skills section more toward the top. This person is talking about their Microsoft Office skills, they're talking about they know how to do multiple databases, and that they're familiar with statistical programs. Some people will put specific statistical programs, for example, SPSS, Stata, whatever statistical programs you know, please feel free to include those. This person chose not to. That's okay.

Then for language, this person mentioned that they have conversational Spanish. Some people, if you have basic level language and it's critical to the job, I would include it. Just expect that if you put language on there, they're going to expect that you are that level of proficiency. We will always recommend that you qualify what level of proficiency you have with language. Again, some people will choose to move the skill section up.

If you're a computer engineer, computer scientist and you have a skill section, which we do recommend; you will want to break down the computer section into different subsets. For example, databases, programming languages, modeling, etc., etc. That is what the employer is looking for. Again, going back to the job description, you give the employer what they're looking for based on the job description.

I'm going to give you a couple extra examples for another resume. I'm going to show you. The first piece under education, this person chose to put their GPA and they chose to put not only their major GPA, but also their cumulative GPA. This is perfectly acceptable to do. What we will always recommend is the GPA that is highest for you. If your major GPA is higher, then we recommend making sure that they understand it's for your major GPA and not your cumulative.

This person happened to study abroad, so we'll put what business school they were at and then the times that they were away, so that the employees understand where they were, how long their time frame was.

This person happened to be a transfer student. This person is saying, "I went to Cal State Long Beach. I went for maybe a semester or two, and then I decided to transfer to USC." That's how you might mention that you did the coursework there, but you don't necessarily put much more information because really, the degree that you're getting at USC is going to be most critical.

I want to call attention to, for some of the leadership of this person on their resume decided to pull out. This person was a member of their sorority and they were actually the philanthropy chair. What we did for them is we actually helped them pull out some bullet points based on the different accomplishments they had for their philanthropy. This is how much money they were able to bring in for their philanthropy. We use that as an accomplishment statement.

I'm going to be another example here. This person was part of the entrepreneur club for at least a year and then the last year in that organization, they were actually the vice president for membership. What we did was over here on the right, we had the whole time that they are part of the organization and then down below that, we had that they were the VP for membership actually for that two semesters. Then again, we used the bullet points with accomplishment statements and things like that.

You can do it ever you need to do to make this work for you. We think that is a really, really great way to show all the great work that you've been doing. We know that being a leader

takes a lot of time and energy and strength. We believe that you should be able to highlight that as strongly as possible.

Here's an example over here, by the way, of how you might want to just list out organizations that you might not be a leader in, but that you participate in. Another piece here, if you'll notice here at the super, super bottom here, is that some people choose to mention their interests. We don't recommend that everybody, but for some people, that's critical. If it's critical to, you think, the employer, then we say, "Include it. Why not? Not a problem."

In summary, for your resume, we definitely want to make sure that you know what knowledge, skills, and abilities that you are bringing to the table. You need to know what the employees are looking for and you need to be able to deliver that. We want your resume to be tailored to each job and/or industry that you're applying to. We want the most important information to be at the top, we want to make sure that you include the relevant information and accomplishments as best as you can, and please, please, please, triple check for errors. The career center is available. There are people in industry, sometimes faculty, sometimes advisors. We want them to look at your resumes, not only to make sure that the content is correct, but also that there are no typos.

We wish you the best of luck. If you need anything, please look to our website. Here's the career center's website. We are on the University Park campus, Student Union in room 110. We have a website: careers.usc.edu. We would love to help you with your resume. We have a lot of information that I think will be very useful; samples, suggested action verbs, anything that you might need to help you. This is one of the biggest services that we provide, is resume support. Please take advantage of us. I'm really proud of the sport that we have. We would love help you. Thank you so much.