

## Style

When creating a resume and cover letter, writers do the following:

- *Use professional language.* Just as applicants dress formally for a job interview, they also write their cover letters using business- and workplace-appropriate language. That said, because writers are writing about themselves, the use of the first person (*I*) is appropriate. Use language that is formal enough to be respectful but that is not stilted or boring. In your resume, use professional, specific language to describe your accomplishments.
- *Give a sense of their personalities.*
  - » *Cover letters.* Just because this is formal correspondence doesn't mean it has to be lackluster. It's okay for a writer to use a voice and tone that let readers know something about who the writer is and why he or she is special. Use the active voice and verb construction. For example, "A degree was earned in history from XYZ University" could be written in the active voice this way: "I earned a degree in history from XYZ University."
  - » *Resumes.* Writers need to convey attributes of their personality and work ethic through the details they provide in their resumes. The voice and tone of a resume, regardless of the voice and tone in the cover letter, need to be professional and businesslike.

## WRITE

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What are some ways you can personalize your cover letter to reflect your personality? How about your resume? Write a list of the different ways you might do this.

- *Provide specific relevant details.* In cover letters, readers will be persuaded by specific statements ("I exceeded sales goals by 15 percent at the Limited") than by *generalizations* ("I am a good salesperson"). Resumes should be precise.
- *Proofread and make sure their documents are error-free.*
  - » *Cover letters.* While proofreading is important for all compositions, it is particularly important when you're reviewing a cover letter; even one typo can cause a reader to dismiss you completely as a job applicant. Recently, Elizabeth received a cover letter and resume from someone who wanted to work in the writing center she directs on campus. One sentence in the cover letter read, "I kept my death clean." The word *death* was probably a simple typo, but Elizabeth could not bring herself to schedule an interview with the writer.
  - » *Resumes.* As with cover letters, it's crucial to proofread your resume so readers will see you as professional. Make sure to keep tenses consistent, place periods at the end of sentences, and carefully check for any misuse of words. Always have someone else proofread your resume to be sure you haven't overlooked anything. Make sure your verbs are parallel in construction in all sections of your resume, including your lists of tasks.

## Design

Writers of cover letters and resumes:

- *Use standard business formatting and personalized headings.*
  - » *Cover letters.* Like any other business letter, a cover letter includes the complete contact information of both the recipient and the sender. It also includes a date, a salutation, and a signature. With word processors and online cover letter templates, writers can easily create personalized letterhead that includes their name and contact information at the top or bottom of the page.
  - » *Resumes.* Job seekers place their contact information at the top of their resumes. They also include standard sections such as Objective, Education, and Experience.
- *Use standard spacing and plenty of white space.*
  - » *Cover letters.* Writers single-space their cover letters but insert an extra space between paragraphs. They do not use indents.
  - » *Resumes.* Within each section, writers use single spacing. Between sections, they add an extra space. Margins are usually one inch. Make sure to use some white space to separate different areas of the resume in order to keep it from appearing too cluttered. In the sample on [page 174](#), the writer uses white space by indenting the copy.