



This handout & video interview provides an insight on resume and cover letter development.

A. Screening Process

1. Professionals look at your **resume**, check your **grades**, screen for **finance experience**, make a decision on whether your application is of interest, if unsure then looks at your **extra-curricular experience** (1 min)
2. If your application is of interest, then looks at your **cover letter** to get more context and might refer back to resume for a few more details to make final decision on whether to invite you for an interview (2-3 min)

B. Resume Writing

General Comments

- For all sections (Education, Work Experience, Extra-curricular) **focus on awards, recognitions and positions** such as first place/scholarship/team captain/VP/selected among wide pool of candidates. Do not feel obligated to use exact names of awards as those are often long and non-descriptive; would rather pick a short descriptive label and potentially describe why an award is impressive such as "highest-ranked officer or most distinguished performer in peer group"
- **List what sounds most impressive to a third party** rather than what might actually have been most impressive
- **Your experiences should illustrate your skillset** so select the items under each experience based on what part of your skillset you want to highlight as opposed to everything you did at this job: for instance, focus on modeling for one experience (doesn't harm mentioning this more than once), client relationships for another experience, and supervision and leadership for another experience
- **Do not include a description of your skills or profile at the top:** your skills should become apparent from looking at the resume
- Try to **fit each point or concept within one line** unless you really require two lines to describe a concept
- **Leave out any articles like "the" or "a"** mainly so you do not waste space
- **Start each sentence with "led, oversaw, developed, implemented, built, responsible for, in charge of"** which helps keep each sentence concise

Education

- **Include your GPA** (you include a combination of core commerce courses or finance & accounting courses that make the overall average look a bit higher but do not misrepresent; it's helpful for recruiters to know that you can do well in some meaningful subset of relevant courses; generally speaking, 85% is ideal, anything less than 80% may create a slightly negative bias)
- **You can include finance/accounting courses with grades in brackets** (pick only the ones that are relevant and with high grades)
- Include something interesting you have done but **focus on objective awards, scholarships and positions**

Work Experience

- Generally, **only list your best 3 work experiences**; sometimes it is better to recast certain full-time experiences as temporary internships/placements so it doesn't look like your background/interest is too diverse (for instance, the typical undergrad candidate will have had one or two internship/placement experiences before applying for banking)
- Try to **maintain chronological order of your experiences** but sometimes it makes sense to slightly adjust the order so the story makes more sense
- If you have corporate finance experience, **focus on building valuation models** (DCF, trading comparables, precedents, LBO), building pitchbooks, conducting M&A analysis, as applicable
- If you have other somewhat related experience, **focus on modeling, financial analysis, building forecasts, presentations, client relationships, sales, legal agreements** (can use these keywords for a lot of applications; leave out anything related to IT, HR or admin)
- **First sentence should** somehow **give an idea of what your company, team and role is about**, especially if the firm is not so well-known
- **Include as many numbers as possible** (ideally make them sound large and should have one in every 2nd or 3rd bullet) on size of presentation/publication, deals, team or company (numbers provide some sense of objectivity, especially for bankers)
- **Include some form of ranking or external validation of your performance** such as: ranked at top of intern class, delivered best presentation, recognized for performance, generated most sales, commended by department heads

Extra-curricular

- **Generally, include only your best 3 experiences**; pick experiences or describe them in a way that highlight specific characteristics you want to emphasize (for instance case competitions or athletics/music to demonstrate your competitive drive or make yourself sound interesting)
- If you have **other great experiences**, then **list those as one-line item or sub-bullet under a separate section**

C. Cover Letter Writing

Format and Length

- **Make the cover letter as short as possible**; note if your resume is not amazing (or even if it is), there is a significant risk that professionals will not read a cover letter that spans over much more than half a page (no need to repeat things that are obvious in intro or conclusion sentences like “for the above reasons I think I would be an ideal candidate”; this is obvious and you don’t have the space to waste)
- **Leave some decent margins at top and sides**

Purpose of a Cover Letter

- **Explain your current situation** and exactly **what you are applying for** and **when you are available to work**
- **Provide certain context around your experience that is hard to convey on resume** (for instance, went to work for start up before pursuing career in banking or decided to pursue career in banking after consulting internship)
- **Explain logical thread / progression to your experiences** (even if your life was not that logical, make it sound logical); whatever it is you did before banking, make sure it reads like you always distinguished yourself and were at top of your game
- **Highlight one or two impressive items from your resume that you feel you absolutely want to focus the recruiter’s attention on**; however, the cover letter is not supposed to go into nor repeat the same detail as the resume
- In some rare occasion, you can **include some anecdotes or further detail in the cover letter that may seem awkward to include in resume** (for instance, grew up in a different country, joined military service, interfaced directly with CEO/CFO in meeting, etc.)
- Generally, **cover letters in banking do not need to follow a format of describing your 3 strengths**: main reason is that as fresh graduate, you probably do not have 3 very well-developed relevant skills and bankers are looking for a broad set of qualities to build a foundation on