



STERLING MARTIN'S TOP TEN TIPS FOR CANDIDATES

Our partners and consultants want you to succeed. That is why we have prepared our Top Ten Tips for Candidates – a few do's and don'ts to help you have a winning experience.

We review literally hundreds of cover letters and résumés every month, and unfortunately we see many with grammatical and typographical errors. So, whether you are making an application through us, through one of our friendly competitors, or directly to a hiring organization, pay very careful attention to detail. We strongly suggest having someone else review your information to detect any mistakes you may have missed.

1. Yes, you want your materials to stand out and be noticed, and yes, your résumé is a marketing tool, but the design does not have to be flashy and colorful. Avoid overusing arrows, bullets, text boxes, and colorful borders. If you must highlight something, do so by underlining or putting a minimal amount of text in boldface or italics. Believe it or not, simpler is better, and it makes reading about you a much more pleasant experience. White space is a good thing, too.
2. Unless the application instructions request a writing sample or supplemental materials, please don't send them with your initial application. If the hiring organization wants to see supplemental materials, they will ask you to submit them.
3. If you come from an academic background but are applying for a non-academic position, please send a standard résumé in lieu of a lengthy *curriculum vitae*. With as many as 200 résumés to screen for our positions, brevity and clarity are better. If we or our client have questions, we'll ask you for additional information.
4. Read the position description and application instructions with care and with an eye for detail. Before hitting the "Send" button, be very certain that you qualify for the position requirements. For example, if the hiring organization says that candidates must hold a post-baccalaureate degree and have ten years of relevant experience, be sure that you do, and be prepared to document how your experience matches what the organization wants. Course work completed toward an advanced degree does not count in this instance. If, on the other hand, the requirement reads, "advanced degree preferred," then by all means go for it.
5. Don't use a generic cover letter for multiple applications. You may want to have a template that you can tailor to the specific position for which you are applying. Generally, you can use the same résumé, but you may have two or three different versions, or consider reformatting your résumé to suit the specific responsibilities, characteristics, and requirements outlined in the position description.
6. If a person to whom the application should be sent has been identified, be very certain (1) that you have spelled his or her name correctly, (2) that you do not refer to him or her by first name, or (3) that you

neglect his or her name altogether. “Greetings!,” “Hello,” “Hi!,” and “Good Morning” (or “Good Afternoon” or “Good Evening”) are not suitable salutations. “Dear Mr./Ms. Smith” is. If no name is specified, use “Dear Sir or Madam”

7. (Oops!) If submitting your portfolio via email, remember to attach your cover letter and supporting materials before you hit the “Send” button. You shouldn’t have to send a letter of apology before you are even out of the starting gate.

8. If the hiring organization indicates that it is not accepting telephone calls in conjunction with the position, don’t call; it will only hurt your application. If you find that you have a question after you have sent your application, you would do well to submit it by email to the same contact person or department listed in the instructions.

9. Don’t follow up the day after you have sent the application to see if it was received. If you have not received even an acknowledgment within 10-15 days, then it might be appropriate to send a brief note to confirm receipt.

10. Have someone else look at your materials and cover letter before you submit your application. You don’t want what might have been inadvertent typographical or formatting errors to cause your portfolio to be set aside.

BONUS TIP: Above all, exude confidence, exhibit a positive attitude, and let your personality and experience shine through the application. These will be your keys to success.