

BEST PRACTICES

for International Students on the US Job Search



Resumes

It is important to **remove personal information** such as gender, age, marital status, and nationality from resumes. While these are more commonly shared in other countries, they don't need to be included for resumes used in the US.

If you are applying within the US, you do not need to put "US" on your cover letter or in your address.

Unless you are applying to an international position, only one domestic American phone number should be included on your resume. The phone numbers are usually written in the following format: (123) 456-7890.

Don't include a photo on your resume.

If your visa status gives you permission to work in the US, then **this can be an advantage** when applying for jobs in the US as an international candidate. You can include a brief, but accurate, statement at the top or the bottom of the resume. For example: "3-years of work authorization included in visa status."

Speak to alumni who work in the career fields that interest you and at employers to which you might apply. Ask them what skills and knowledge they use daily to be successful in their roles. It will be helpful to illustrate these skills and knowledge areas in your resume when applying for similar types of jobs.

Use strong action verbs for your resume. See <https://careerservices.upenn.edu/preparing-effective-resumes/> for samples and a verb list.

Cover Letters

In a cover letter, refrain from using phrases such as "it is an honor and privilege to be able to apply for this position." This does not highlight the value that you can bring to an organization. Make sure that you highlight key skills that are relevant to the role and demonstrate why you would be excited about using these.

Include success stories which show your skills in action (the ones most relevant to that employer and where you did well). Rather than focus on what the job can do for you, it's better to show how your experience (internships, research, class projects, activities, summer jobs) has prepared you to make significant contributions to the employer.

In the final paragraph of a cover letter, make sure to answer the questions, **"Why do you want this role? Why do you want to work at this organization?"**.

Interviewing

Be sure to **arrive no more than 15 minutes prior to when your interview starts**. Make sure you have the correct date, time, and location ahead of time.

Bring a portfolio with a pen, pad of paper, and extra copies of your resume printed just in case the interviewer does not have a copy.

Before your interview **do thorough research on the company or organization** where you are interviewing. If you can, speak with a professional who works in the industry to get a better understanding of the company or arena that you are entering.

Dress to impress! Wear a suit if necessary (research the company). Sometimes they'll tell you to dress casually, but always dress professionally unless otherwise told. It is always better to be over-dressed than underdressed.

When in the waiting room, **do not be on your phone**. Sit quietly looking over your resume or simply preparing mentally for the interview.



Greet every interviewer with **a firm handshake** (don't break their hand!). Eye contact when first meeting them, and throughout the entire interview, is important.



Answer the question they are asking you. Sometimes we find ourselves answering something completely different and going off topic – remember to answer the exact question they asked.

Try to **keep your answers between 90 seconds to 2-minutes** for behavioral and standard interview questions. The behavioral ones ask for an example (Tell me about a time when ____). Use the CAR method to answer these. Challenge, Actions, Results – what was the challenge you faced? What actions did you take? What were the positive results?

Always have 2-3 questions prepared for the interviewer(s) at the end of the interview. They'll ask, "Do you have any questions for us?" and you'll want to make sure that you do have questions for them. Do NOT ask about salary!

When the interview is over, a follow-up thank you email to everyone who interviewed you is a must. This will conclude your interview. Be sure to send the thank you note within 24 hours of the interview.

Networking

When reaching out to alumni to network, make sure to tell them in initial outreach who you are, where you found their contact information, and why you're emailing them. A quick message will set the tone and you can end the message asking for a 15-minute phone call if they're available.

Think of networking as primarily an information gathering process. If you can gather enough relevant information about a career field or specific job, you will be able to present yourself as a more credible candidate for the job if you decide to apply. Effective networking maximizes the potential that you will successfully find internships or jobs that closely match your skills and interests.



If contacting alumni, you can utilize **LinkedIn, QuakerNet and CareerShift** to locate individuals who have overlapping interests and backgrounds with you. These resources are available on our website: <https://careerservices.upenn.edu/>

Networking with students on campus is a great way of learning about employers. You can find many students with experience working as interns or in previous full-time roles at employers you may be interested in. Use the community pages on Handshake to search for students who can share their insights with you - <https://upenn.joinhandshake.com/students>.

Your primary role when networking is NOT to actually to ask people for a job or internship, but to **find people with information you are looking for**. If you value the experiences of others and can communicate to them why hearing about their specific experiences and career paths is helpful to you, then you are networking effectively.

Negotiating

When you receive a verbal offer, express excitement and enthusiasm, but **don't immediately accept without having all the details in writing**. Ask when they can send you the complete offer in writing (usually as an attachment to an email in most cases).

It's important to ask if (any aspect of) the offer is negotiable before assuming or proceeding to negotiate.

Similarly, for undergrads some offers at large companies are fairly standardized, so it may be helpful to speak to upperclassmen or alumni who have been in the position before, to gauge the offer and to manage your offer expectations.

Often the first item you can negotiate for is more time to make your decision or consider your other options.

During the negotiation process, you can ask clarification questions about the offer by email, but actual negotiations are best done over the phone or in-person.

Once you formally accept an offer, **you must stop applying or interviewing for other positions**.



Don't Forget!

You are **valued** and possess different skill sets that make you marketable and unique.

Often **your cross-cultural experiences will be a very big asset**, and highly coveted in many roles.

Your multilingual skills will also be a wonderful bonus for many of your jobs.

The ability to navigate new cultures and settings proves your strength in adapting to big challenges.

You have cultivated resiliency and endurance while pursuing your education in a country that is not your home. This will translate positively to your future work projects and place of employment!