OVERVIEW:

Whenever possible, do research on the company, person you're writing to, and the position for which you're applying and write accordingly. You might need to craft different documents for each position you apply for to optimize the opportunity. Be proactive and confident, but don't be cocky or arrogant. Be cognizant of the time it might take an employer to review a pile of resumes, so be concise, to-the-point, and factual. Focus on the immediate next step in your career, not your long-term ultimate goals. Put your best foot forward, but don't over inflate your qualifications or desires. By all means, have several people, especially those with experience, proof-read your materials before sending them, especially your first drafts.

COVER LETTER:

A brief cover letter will open the package. This document should be printed on clean new paper, contain no abbreviations (other than state), and be no longer than one page. It needs to have the following or similar elements:

1)   Letterhead or heading with your full name, address, phone number, email address, and website (if appropriate)
2)   Date
3)   Name and full address of the person/company you are writing
4)   Formal greeting (know who you are writing to…no "To Whom It May Concern" greetings)
5)   Statement of introduction (who you are in brief perhaps including a short statement of qualifications)
6)   Statement of intent (what you want from them and why you have selected them to approach).
7)   Conclusion (future prospects, request a personal interview, availability, and contact info)
8)   Closer (thank you, salutation, signature, and printed name)

RESUME:

Create a resume of your current experience, skills, education, and attributes. Remember a resume is a *"concise inventory of your professional attributes."* This document should be printed on clean new paper, contain no abbreviations (other than state), and no longer than two pages. No typos, grammatical errors, or inaccurate/incomplete information. The outline below will help you with content:

Personal Information:
- Full name (the most important thing on the page)
- Primary mailing address, area code & phone number, email address, webpage (if appropriate), etc.
- Alternate mailing address (such as parent's home), area code & phone number
- Alternate email address, phone number, and/or other contact info

Objectives: (optional…this can be more of a detriment than help if poorly done):
- A brief, but focused statement of immediate employment or internship goals
- Use one or two complete sentences (two at the most)
- Don't be too generic or vague.

Education: (This should come after Work Experience once a professional track record has been built, but until then your education will likely be more relevant to the kind of work you are seeking.)
- Name of each institution with the highest degree typically listed first
- The exact name of degree(s) earned or sought
- Major(s), concentration/emphasis, minor(s), and GPA(s)[if appropriate]
- Your current status and anticipated graduation date if still in school
- Any previously earned degrees, certificates, and/or educational experiences

Work/Business/Professional Experience:
- Work History: A concise listing of each work experience with most recent or current job first. (This list will change over time as your career progresses and less relevant jobs can be eliminated).
- Full name of employer and geographic location
- Position held (Title if any)
- Duration or time frame (as appropriate)
- Brief listing of duties, responsibilities, and/or functions (emphasis leadership and management roles)
- Military service could be listed here or in a separate section
- Include professionally related internships, practicum, and/or volunteer experience here or in a separate section

Professional Affiliations:
- Full name of relevant professional organizations
- Your involvement in each (type of membership, offices held, national/regional, etc.)
- Duration of membership

Achievements, Honors, & Awards:
- Brief listing of relevant honors and/or awards, (awards, recognitions, scholarships, grants, Eagle Scout, etc.)
- Date of receipt

Optional Areas: These areas are only to be included only if you have room and the added content provides information about you that you feel will have a bearing on your chances of employment.

Language Skills:
- If you are bi- or multi-lingual list the language(s) other than English in which you are fluent.

Certifications, Licenses, Etc.:
- Earned certifications (ProTools for example), licenses (FCC or CDL for example), or other professional qualifications not listed elsewhere.

Relevant Coursework:
- Classes you successfully completed that are directly related to the job for which you are applying. (This will become less necessary as you gain experience and will eventually be eliminated.)

Equipment/Software Proficiency:
- Specific equipment and/or software you are proficient with, (computer application/operating systems, software, audio equipment, video equipment, etc.).
- This should include platforms with significant learning curves (consoles, professional software, etc.) with which you are thoroughly competent.

Relevant Skills:
- Skills that may have importance to a particular employer or sheds light on your abilities, (musician, composer, video/film production, computer skills, graphic/web design, maintenance skills, accounting, etc.)
- *BE CAREFUL NOT SEND A MIXED MESSAGE HERE! "I'm really and artist, but will work for you until I get my career going!" would be an example of such a mixed message. Employers want you to be devoted to the job at hand and don't want to be seen as just a "day job!"*
- Be sure you do not duplicate skills discussed in other sections

Additional Skills:
- Skills that may have ancillary importance to an employer or sheds light on your abilities, (carpentry, construction, welding, woodworking, cooking, sewing, truck driver, etc.)
- Be sure you do not duplicate skills discussed in other sections

Volunteer Work/Public Service:
- List any related volunteer work and/or public service you have performed
- List the name of the organization for which you volunteered
- This area should be relevant and substantial
- Do not duplicate volunteer work used in other sections

Hobbies & Interests:
- Brief listing of your hobbies and interests that conveys pertinent information about you that is not covered elsewhere in resume.
- Be careful with this one!

Other:
- Any other area that communicates who you are as a professional or what you bring to the profession as an employee.

REFERENCES:

A listing of three or four references should accompany or be part of your resume. This document should be printed on clean, new, paper, contain no abbreviations (other than state), and be no longer than one page if not included on within the resume. Please do not include the phrase *"References Available Upon Request."* References should include:

1-2 Professional References:
- A current or former employer(s) or supervisor with considerable basis to judge your skills, knowledge, professional abilities and qualities (work ethic, professionalism, etc,) and so on.
- Military references are appropriate here.

Education Reference:
- A current or former teacher with considerable basis to judge your academic abilities and professional potential.
- Someone you've worked closely with or with whom you've had more than one class is best.

Personal Reference:
- Anyone that can attest to your personal qualities (scout leader, religious leader, neighbor, volunteer coordinator, etc...no family members)

Include the following for each reference:
- Full name of each person
- Title, rank, position, or relation to you (within the context of this reference)
- Full name of business or organization
- Full daytime contact information: business/organization/personal address, area code & phone number, and email addresses

IMPORTANT: As a personal and professional courtesy, you should ask each person before including them on your reference list. You should also make sure you use accurate and current information.

BIBLIOGRAPHIES: These are usually separate documents and provide as support material.

Publications:
- Publications in which your work has appeared.
- Include full title of publication, article, or book, publisher, date.
- Your specific involvement/contribution.
- Reviews may also be cited here.

Media/Discography:
- Brief listing of your most important recordings, videos, animations and/or other projects.
- Include full title of project, type of media, publication, label, release date, etc.
- Your specific involvement/contribution.
- Any recognitions/awards the work has received or you received for working on it.
- You might say that demo media is available on request.

Clients:
- Brief listing of most important clients and your level of involvement.

DEMO MEDIA:
- You might create a CD, DVD, files, or website that appropriately showcases *a sampling* of your best work.
- Make sure it's brief and it represents you well.
- You might edit your work into shorter versions (scopes) to include more examples and keep things brief. It's rare for someone to sit through an epic, especially at first.
- Make sure any media is made with precision and technical accuracy.
- Make sure everything is neatly and well labeled. Include titles, media info, your contact info, and credits/copyright information as appropriate.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION:
- Some people include letters of recommendation from people who can vouch for them.
- Unless requested, these letters are not typically required or expected.
- Make sure the person you ask to write on your behalf has enough experience with you to serve as a good reference.
- Some people will agree to write on your behalf, but will not write a generic "To Whom It May Concern" reference letter. These people will only write for specific applications.

RESUME FORMATTING:
- You full name should be the largest element on your resume.
- Use good formatting and organization.
- Use bullet or outline format and limit the use of narrative to a minimum.
- Make it easy to navigate and read (don't make it cluttered...consider "white-space" on the paper).
- Make information easy to find quickly (employers will often do a first scan looking only for the minimum requirement and the return later for details in remaining resumes).
- There are many books, software programs, and services available for writing resumes.

PRINTING:
- Bad prints and old wrinkled paper are also unacceptable.
- A laser printer is a good idea if possible.
- Printing or copying your final product on high-grade paper is also suggested, but not required.
- A paper color other than white is also good for getting your resume to stand out in a crowd, but don't over do it. Photos and clip art might not be received well and are not advised.
- At minimum, make certain the hard copies are of good, clean, and crisp quality.

HINTS:
- Remember, you are being represented by these documents!
- Accuracy and neatness are vital.
- Poor spelling, grammar, and form are not acceptable.
- Personal information like date of birth, age, social security numbers, race, gender, medical status, religion, nationality, and sexual orientation should not be included in your documents.
- Be brief. Say enough to tell your story, but be clear and concise.
- Keep in mind the reality of an employer (or me) having to work through large numbers of resumes to find a few employee candidates and the time it takes.
- Have someone proofread your documents. You know what they mean, but will someone else?
- Be open to suggests, but I suggest getting input from more than one person (several works best if possible).
- Several revisions are typically needed to fine tune a resume.
- *"The computer/printer ate my homework*" does not excuse poor quality content, format, and/or hard copies.
- For additional advice, information, and resume review, contact the MTSU Career Development Center (KUC 328).

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION:
- Don't assume the receiver knows who you are just from your email address...ALWAYS clearly identify who you are in any email communication
- A clear subject line, perhaps with your name, is needed in any email
- If your email is part of a thread, always include the thread in your response. This will provide context for your message, especially if it your only response.
- No IM language in emails or letters. Use brief and concise language in your emails and always end with a polite message without making demands.
- KEEP IT PROFESSIONAL! Do not be casual even if they are.
- Never let your business email account go over quota, causing emails to bounce
- Never send huge files via email without asking first… Your file could put their business account over quota.
- ALWAYS label any files (resume, applications, cover letters) with at least your last name in the file name itself. Employers might receive dozens of files of the same type and need to quickly know whose is whose without opening the file itself.
- A professional looking website can be a positive means to providing additional information,
- Clean up your Facebook page and other websites, even if you do not list them on your resume.
- Don't assume what is said on any social network (or otherwise) will be kept private and confidential. Be careful what you say and post…you never know who is watching or is a friend of a friend.
- Don't have lengthy or cutesy voice mail messages on your professional phone or when you are looking for a job.