CHECKLIST FOR PROACTIVELY REVISING JOB APPLICATIONS

The following information and tips are supposed to help you with autonomously revising your application documents for (entry-level) jobs in Germany – primarily with a focus on the formatting. After having had a go for yourself, we still recommend requesting a **feedback session with one of our career counselors:**

General tips:

- **Purpose of your application:**
  Applying for a job, internship, etc. usually requires a cover letter („Anschreiben") – highlighting the potential use of a candidates skills and knowledge for the employer; in contrast, applications for a scholarship, a mentoring program, etc. usually require a motivation letter („Motivationsschreiben"), detailing the candidate's personal plans and expectations

- **Completeness:**
  1. Cover letter, 2. CV, 3. Supplements such as university diploma or current grade sheet, certificates of trainings, language proficiency tests, or scholarships, letters of reference or official „Arbeitszeugnisse"

- **Consistent formatting:**
  One font type and size for cover letter and CV – preferably non-serif such as „Arial" and no smaller than size 11

- **Document format:**
  If possible, create one pdf document from all three parts, and label it clearly, e.g. "Bewerbung_MariaMustermann_DataScientist_221207", document size max. 3 MB

- **Corporate culture:**
  Mirror the language style of the job advertisement, e.g. if the advertisement is in English, apply in English or use the first name of a person when addressing them casually in the „Du"-style

- **Faultlessness:**
  Typos and grammatical errors give a bad first impression. Have someone proofread!
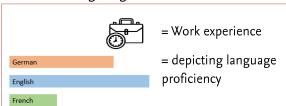
CHECKLIST FOR CURRICULUM VITAE

General tips:

- usually 2-column table, approx. 2 pages in length
- Insert page numbers, e.g. "Page 1 of 2", full name and optionally full contact information on each page
- use reverse chronological order within CV sections, i.e. with the most recent experience at the top
- always include month and year information to indicate the exact duration, e.g., "10/2012 - 02/2013"; no gaps if possible
- Consistent structure: highlight job titles, educational qualifications
- Pick up relevant keywords from the job advertisement
- no must-have going by German labor law, but a professionally done and friendly photo may signal a good match to the advertised job role or the corporate culture in place

Tips for dealing with "CV parsing "*
(automatic, text-based reading of CVs):

- Save your CV in PDF or DOCX format (not as a scan or jpeg)
- Do not include important details such as name/e-mail address in an image/ graphic
- Do not base it on a ready-made template
- Do not include important information in the document header or footer exclusively
- Choose a font size larger than 8 pt
- Do not use unusual font types (no extended spacing or small caps)
- Do not use graphics/icons, e.g. company or university logos
- No graphic representation of competencies or headings, e.g. with bar charts

= Work experience

= depicting language proficiency

Components in the CV:

The sequence is variable.

• **Personal details:** Name, date and place of birth (optional), address, e-mail, phone number

• **Practical experience:** jobs and internships
1. Name of employer, place
2. name of function/position
3. keyword-like (max. 3-4 indents) description of special features/personal performance/positive work results

• **Education:** Study, school
1. Name of the university, place
2. name of the course of study, degree
3. Focus or title of thesis (optional)
4. average/final grade (optional)

• **Language skills** with self-assessment: e.g. native language / Fluent in spoken and written / Fluent / Very good knowledge in spoken and written / Good knowledge in spoken and written / Basic knowledge

• **IT skills** with self-assessment: e.g. beginner / advanced / expert

• **Interests / hobbies:** 2-3 specific interests

Optional:
• Other knowledge / further education
• Extracurricular activities
• Stays abroad
• References
• Date, place and signature

CHECKLIST FOR COVER LETTER

General tips:

Layout:
- max. one DIN A4 page
- margins: approx. 4.5 cm from top and left and right 2.5 cm
- order of text blocks:
    1. sender information
    2. recipient information
    3. place, date
    4. subject line incl. job ID
    5. text body in approx. 3-4 paragraphs
- Formatting exceptions: cover letter must be inserted into a text field of a job application portal or sent as the body of an email
- **Application language**
  As a rule of thumb, you may apply in English language, if the job ad is composed in English, otherwise in German
- **Personalized letter salutation:**
  Possibly, even combine the salutation of the responsible recruiter and the hiring manager. If contact person is not specified, ask HR or try a work around: "Dear *"department"* team"
- **Think corporate culture:**
  A growing number of German employers seeks to appeal to young people's preference for flat hierarchy, teamwork, etc. by choosing less formal, easy going wording for the job ads (i.e. "Du" / "Dein"); consider mirroring this style of writing in the cover letter
- Formulate briefly and concisely

Components in the cover letter:

Attention-grabbing opening:
- Reference to a prior contact with employer, e.g., on the phone or at a company contact fair, reference to an employer-specific vision or a current challenge for the potential employer; No "stating the obvious," e.g., "I herewith apply..." or "It is with great interest that I have seen..."

Main part:
- Enough focus on match with the job requirements and the potential benefits for the employer
- Refer to professional and interdisciplinary competencies, substantiating with concrete examples from internships/part-time jobs/studies

End:
- Information on the possible starting date or salary requirements
- Closing line with greeting without comma. In contrast to the Anglo-Saxon closing, e.g. „Kind regards,", no comma is used in German letters

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