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 JOB SEARCH  
STRATEGIES

2014 - 2015  
MANUAL



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# CAREER DEVELOPMENT MANUAL

2014 - 2015



CAREER  
DEVELOPMENT  
CENTER

**Suite 304**

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[www.tnstate.edu/careers](http://www.tnstate.edu/careers)

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# Career Development Center

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## Career Development Center

The Career Development Center of Tennessee State University provides comprehensive assistance in preparing students for the world of work and for graduate or professional school opportunities. The staff has developed a variety of programs and services to identify and meet students' career and personal goals. The professional staff's commitment ensures the students are given appropriate guidance to meet their career planning or graduate/professional school desires.

We maintain our professional skills through regular staff development training, daily interactions with internal and external customers and professional memberships in the National Association of Colleges and Employers and other professional organizations. Frequent partnerships with corporate experts on professional development events and in other areas ensure we are sensitive to the dynamics and evolving requirements of a global workforce.

Our annual activities include various general and targeted career fairs, on-campus interview opportunities, company informational events, participation in the Nashville College-to-Careers Consortium and a growing lists of new offerings. We look forward to working with recruiters to help brand their company or school on both campuses of Tennessee State University.

Our center recognizes the power of social media and we are fully engaged in Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and LinkedIn...check us out! Simplicity's Career Services Management platform is offered for students, faculty and employers. We call it Tiger Track here, but it has many of the same features found at other universities. Additionally, we utilize Going Global, an outstanding software system designed specifically for students, alumni and faculty who wish to learn more about studying and working abroad and in select United States cities. The coming year will once again be marked by continuous improvement on several levels for us!



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**Tennessee State University  
Career Development Center  
has a lot of Career Opportunities!  
Please stop by the office or  
follow us on:**



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**[instagram.com/tsucdc](https://instagram.com/tsucdc)**

**Don't Miss Out On Your Opportunity**

**Floyd Payne Campus Center Suite 304**



# DID YOU KNOW??

# Tiger Track



*TSU's own electronic gateway to opportunities!*

## REGISTRATION FOR NEW USERS

Step 1: Visit the Career Development Center

website [www.tnstate.edu/careers](http://www.tnstate.edu/careers)

Step 2: Go to "TigerTrack Access" on the right side.

Step 3: Click on "Student/Alumni, Faculty or Employer Log In"

Step 4: Select "Register for a new account button" and complete required information.

Step 5: An e-mail will be sent to you from our office. This e-mail will mention CSM which is the provider of TigerTrack. Please click link to confirm your address. Reminder that the auto-generated message

may come to your spam folder, so please check as well.

Step 6: You will receive a second e-mail with a link to set a password to log into TigerTrack account.

The system will automatically generate a username.

When setting your password, please remember the username that was given to you.



## Did You Know Students & Alumni?:

TigerTrack is an interactive on-line database that allows students and alumni to apply for employment, schedule interviews, and obtain professional development information. Students/alumni may also maintain multiple resumes, cover letters, and other portfolio information on-line. Students also have access to Going Global which allows you to find international jobs & internships, plus job search advice & work permit/visa information.

## Did You Know Employers?:

Employers can seamlessly post jobs via TigerTrack to TSU students & alumni with a click, develop dynamic profiles (including logos, statistics, photo gallery, and multi-media), register for events, manage interview schedules (register,select candidates, generate packets, and more), peruse resume books and place candidates.

## Did You Know Faculty?:

Faculty are able to recommend jobs to their students by filtering qualified candidates. Also they can view jobs themselves and announce them to students. Faculty can also see the events that are available during that month such as Career fairs and informational sessions.




## e-PORTFOLIO & RESUME BOOKS

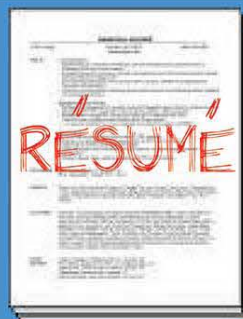


**Jamal Coleman**  
Business Information System Major

Jamal is a hard-working, reliable, and motivated individual who is dedicated to doing the best job possible. Takes initiative to solve problems and also has hands-on experience working with different aspects of technology, designing and marketing.

### Documents

 [Jamal Coleman Professional Resume](#)  
application/pdf, 157kb



**MARKET YOURSELF TODAY!**

CREATE A e-PORTFOLIO AND  
UPLOAD YOUR RESUME IN  
TIGERTRACK. LET YOUR SKILLS  
BE SHOWN ELECTRONICALLY  
TO OUR TOP EMPLOYERS!

# Chart Your Path to Success With Us!

## Freshman Year

### Asking questions and exploring your options

- Get to know the TSU Career Development Center (CDC) staff, services and resources.
- Take the Kuder Career Assessment...learn more about your interests, skills and values.
- Register for Tiger Track, the on-line job posting and resource site, and follow the CDC on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram!
- Meet with a volunteer career counselor or career advisor on staff.
- Identify at least four soft skills employers want and plan how to acquire them before graduation.
- Start attending the monthly professional development workshops and company informationals.
- Pursue job shadowing and part-time job opportunities, along with service learning experiences.
- Join university organizations that may offer you a leadership role in the future.
- Create your first resume and an electronic portfolio!

## Sophomore Year

### Researching options and testing paths

- Update your resume and electronic portfolio with summer activities.
- Take the additional assessment tools like MBTI or StrengthsFinder 2.0 to learn more about yourself.
- Continue reviewing Tiger Track and following the CDC on Facebook and Twitter.
- Attend on-campus career and job fairs, along with company informationals.
- Review progress towards acquiring four soft skills employers want in their employees.
- Continue attending professional development programs sponsored by the CDC.
- Pursue internship, cooperative education and part-time job opportunities to learn about the world of work and test out your academic major.
- Join at least one professional or honorary organization related to your major.
- Put together an interview outfit!

## Junior Year

### Making decisions and plotting directions

- Update your resume and electronic portfolio with summer activities, student organization positions, etc.
- Continue reviewing Tiger Track and following the CDC on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram. Register for on-campus interviews.
- Create a LinkedIn profile and showcase your accomplishments.
- Review/continue your participation in internships, cooperative education and part-time job opportunities.
- Attend on-campus career and job fairs, along with company informationals.

- Participate in mock interviews, cover letter writing, and other job search workshops.
- Consider graduate and professional school options, learn entry requirements and be aware of application deadlines.
- Ask former employers and professors to serve as references and write recommendation letters.
- Pursue a leadership position in clubs and organizations.
- Shadow professionals in your chosen field.

## Senior Year

### Searching, Interviewing, Acceptance...Success!

- Revise your resume and electronic portfolio by updating them with summer activities, student organization positions, etc.
- Continue reviewing Tiger Track and following the CDC on Facebook and Twitter. Register for on-campus interviews and upload your resume on Tiger Track.
- Ensure your LinkedIn profile is up-to-date.
- Develop an employer prospect list for companies you are interested in pursuing. Research entry-level salaries and company information.
- Attend on-campus career/job fairs, company informationals and local association meetings to meet future employers.
- Participate in interviewing, cover letter writing, mock interviews and other job search workshops.
- Take graduate and professional school entrance examinations and complete applications on time.
- Ask former employers and professors to serve as references and write recommendation letters.
- Follow up with employers after interviews to send thank-you notes and check on progress.
- Evaluate job offers and report acceptance to the CDC staff.

## Graduate Year

### Explore options and expand knowledge base

- Create/update your resume with your undergraduate degree and any relevant work experience.
- Register for Tiger Track and follow the CDC on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram. Create/update an electronic portfolio via Tiger Track, along with uploading your resume.
- Create or update your LinkedIn profile.
- Pursue internship or cooperative education opportunities through the CDC.
- Attend monthly professional development workshops to improve soft skills.
- Attend on-campus career and job fairs, company informationals and local professional associations.
- Participate in interviewing, cover letter writing, mock interviews and other job search workshops.
- Ask former employers and professors to serve as references and write recommendation letters.
- Follow up with employers after interviews to send thank-you notes and check on progress.
- Evaluate job offers and report acceptance to the CDC staff.









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Capt. Ana Morgan, M.D., HPSP Medical Recipient  
Brooke Army Medical Center, Texas

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# Transferable Skills

If you're wondering what skills you have that would interest a potential employer, you are not alone. Many college seniors feel that four (or more) years of college haven't sufficiently prepared them to begin work after graduation. And like these students, you may have carefully reviewed your work history (along with your campus and civic involvement) and you may still have a difficult time seeing how the skills you learned in college will transfer to the workplace.

But keep in mind that you've been acquiring skills since childhood. Whether learning the value of teamwork by playing sports, developing editing skills working on your high school newspaper or developing countless skills while completing your coursework, each of your experiences has laid the groundwork for building additional skills.

## What Are Transferable Skills?

A *transferable* skill is a “portable skill” that you *deliberately* (or inadvertently, if you haven't identified them yet) take with you to other life experiences.

Your transferable skills are often:

- acquired through a class (e.g., an English major who is taught technical writing)
- acquired through experience (e.g., the student government representative who develops strong motivation and consensus building skills)

Transferable skills supplement your degree. They provide an employer concrete evidence of your readiness and qualifications for a position. Identifying your transferable skills and communicating them to potential employers will greatly increase your success during the job search.

Remember that it is impossible to complete college without acquiring transferable skills. Campus and community activities, class projects and assignments, athletic activities, internships and summer/part-time jobs have provided you with countless experiences where you've acquired a range of skills—many that you may take for granted.

## Identifying Transferable Skills

While very closely related (and with some overlap), transferable skills can be divided into three subsets:

- Working With People • Working With Things
- Working With Data/Information

For example, some transferable skills can be used in every workplace setting (e.g., organizing or public speaking) while some are more applicable to specific settings (e.g., drafting or accounting).

The following are examples of skills often acquired through the classroom, jobs, athletics and other activities. Use these examples to help you develop your own list of the transferable skills you've acquired.

### Working With People

- Selling • Training • Teaching • Supervising
- Organizing • Soliciting • Motivating • Mediating
- Advising • Delegating • Entertaining
- Representing • Negotiating • Translating

### Working With Things

- Repairing • Assembling parts • Designing
- Operating machinery • Driving
- Maintaining equipment • Constructing • Building
- Sketching • Working with CAD • Keyboarding
- Drafting • Surveying • Troubleshooting

### Working With Data/Information

- Calculating • Developing databases
- Working with spreadsheets • Accounting • Writing
- Researching • Computing • Testing • Filing • Sorting
- Editing • Gathering data • Analyzing • Budgeting

## Easy Steps to Identify Your Transferable Skills

Now that you know what transferable skills are, let's put together a list of your transferable skills. You may want to work with someone in your career services office to help you identify as many transferable skills as possible.

**Step 1.** Make a list of every job title you've held (part-time, full-time and internships), along with volunteer, sports and other affiliations since starting college. (Be sure to record officer positions and other leadership roles.)

**Step 2.** Using your transcript, list the classes in your major field of study along with foundation courses. Include electives that may be related to your employment interests.

**Step 3.** For each job title, campus activity and class you've just recorded, write a sentence and then underline the action taken. (Avoid stating that you *learned* or *gained experience* in any skill. Instead, present your skill more directly as a verifiable qualification.)

*“While working for Jones Engineering, I performed 3D modeling and drafting.”*

**NOT** *“While working for Jones Engineering, I gained experience in 3D modeling and drafting.”*

*“As a member of the Caribbean Students Association, I developed and coordinated the marketing of club events.”*

**NOT** *“As a member of the Caribbean Students Association, I learned how to market events.”*

**Step 4.** Make a list of the skills/experiences you've identified for future reference during your job search.

## Using Transferable Skills in the Job Search

Your success in finding the position right for you will depend on your ability to showcase your innate talents and skills. You will also need to demonstrate how you can apply these skills at an employer's place of business. Consult the staff at your career services office to help you further identify relevant transferable skills and incorporate them on your resume and during your interviews. During each interview, be sure to emphasize only those skills that would be of particular interest to a specific employer.

Transferable skills are the foundation upon which you will build additional, more complex skills as your career unfolds. Start making your list of skills and you'll discover that you have more to offer than you realized!

### Additional Tips to Help Identify Your Transferable Skills

1. Review your list of transferable skills with someone in your field(s) of interest to help you identify any additional skills that you may want to include.
2. Using a major job posting Web site, print out descriptions of jobs that interest you to help you identify skills being sought. (Also use these postings as guides for terminology on your resume.)
3. Attend career fairs and company information sessions to learn about the skills valued by specific companies and industries.

Written by Rosita Smith.





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CAREER FAIR:  
EVERY FALL  
AT TSU

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CAREER  
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- ✓ NETWORK FOR OPPORTUNITIES
- ✓ BRING LOTS OF RÉSUMÈS

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR  
FALL CAREER FAIR.



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# Getting the Most Out of a Career Fair

**M**any employers use career fairs—both on and off campus—to promote their opportunities and to pre-screen applicants. Career fairs come in all shapes and sizes, from small community-sponsored events to giant regional career expositions held at major convention centers.

Most career fairs consist of booths and/or tables manned by recruiters and other representatives from each organization. For on-campus events, some employers also send alumni representatives. Large corporations and some government agencies have staffs who work the career fair “circuit” nationwide.

An employer’s display area is also subject to wide variance. It could be a simple table with a stack of brochures and business cards and a lone representative or an elaborate multimedia extravaganza with interactive displays, videos, posters and a team of recruiters.

## Fashions and Accessories

Generally, the appropriate attire for career fair attendees is more relaxed than what you’d wear to an actual job interview. In most cases, “business casual” is the norm. If you’re unsure of the dress code (particularly for off-campus events), it would be wise to err on the overdressed side—you’ll make a better impression if you appear professional. Think of it as a dress rehearsal for your real interviews!

Remember to bring copies of your resume (or resumes, if you have several versions tailored to different career choices), a few pens and pencils (have backups—they have a way of disappearing), a folder or portfolio and some sort of note-taking device (a paper or electronic pad). Keep track of the recruiters with whom you speak and send follow-up notes to the ones who interest you. Don’t bring your backpack; it’s cumbersome for you, it gets in the way of others and it screams “student!” instead of “candidate!”

## Stop, Look and Listen

Keep your eyes and ears open—there’s nothing wrong with subtly eavesdropping on the questions asked and answers received by your fellow career fair attendees. You might pick up some valuable information, in addition to witnessing some real-life career search “do’s and don’ts.”

In order to maximize your career fair experience, you must be an active participant and not just a browser. If all you do is stroll around, take company literature and load up on the ubiquitous freebies, you really haven’t accomplished anything worthwhile (unless you’re a collector of key chains, mousepads and pocket flashlights). It is essential to chat with the company representatives and ask meaningful questions.

Here’s a great bit of career fair advice from Stanford University’s *Career Fair* guide:

“Create a one-minute ‘commercial’ as a way to sell yourself to an employer. This is a great way to introduce yourself. The goal is to connect your background to the organization’s need. In one minute or less, you need to introduce yourself, demonstrate your knowledge of the company, express enthusiasm and interest and relate your background to the company’s need.”

## You’re a Prospector—Start Digging

The questions you ask at a career fair depend upon your goals. Are you interested in finding out about a particular career

field? Then ask generalized questions about working within the industry. If you’re seeking career opportunities with a specific employer, focus your questions on the application and interview process, and ask for specific information about that employer.

## Fair Thee Well

By all means, try to attend at least one career fair before beginning your formal job interviewing process. For new entrants into the professional career marketplace, this is a good way to make the transition into “self-marketing mode” without the formality and possible intimidation of a one-on-one job interview. It’s an opportunity that’s too valuable to miss.

## A Few Words About Career Fair Etiquette

1. Don’t interrupt the employer reps or your fellow job-seekers. If someone else is monopolizing the employer’s time, try to make eye contact with the rep to let him or her know that you’re interested in speaking. You may be doing a favor by giving the recruiter an out. If all else fails, move to the next exhibit and plan to come back later.
2. If you have a real interest in an employer, find out the procedures required to secure an interview. At some career fairs, initial screening interviews may be done on the spot. Other times, the career fair is used to pre-screen applicants for interviews to be conducted later (either on campus or at the employer’s site).
3. Sincerity always wins. Don’t lay it on too thick, but don’t be too blasé either. Virtually all employers are looking for candidates with good communication skills.
4. Don’t just drop your resume on employers’ display tables. Try to get it into a person’s hands and at least say a few words. If the scene is too busy and you can’t get a word in edgewise, jot a note on your resume to the effect of, “You were so busy that we didn’t get a chance to meet. I’m very interested in talking to you.” Look around the display for the recruiter’s business card (or at the very least, write down his or her name and get some literature with the company’s address) and send a follow-up note and another copy of your resume.
5. If you know ahead of time that one of your “dream companies” is a career fair participant, do some prior research (at minimum, visit their Web site). A little advance preparation goes a long way and can make you stand out among the masses of other attendees.



# Turning Your Internship Into a Full-Time Position

One of the best benefits of an internship or cooperative education experience is that it can serve as your passport to future employment opportunities. Getting your foot in the door by landing the internship or co-op is only half of the challenge in turning your career dreams into a reality. The more vital half is to build a reputation during this career experience that will culminate in receiving a full-time job offer.

A growing number of employers are using internships as a way to gain a first in-depth look at prospective employees. In this respect, both you and your employer have a common goal—namely, to determine if there is a good fit between you.

Here are ten tips to becoming a savvy intern and making powerful career moves:

## 1. Exhibit a Can-Do Attitude

Pass the attitude test and you will be well on your way to success. Attitude speaks loud and clear and makes a lasting impression, so make sure that yours is one of your greatest assets. Take on any task assigned—no matter how small—with enthusiasm. Take the initiative to acquire new skills. Accept criticism graciously and maintain a sense of humor.

## 2. Learn the Unwritten Rules

Get to know your co-workers early in your internship. They will help you figure out quickly the culture in which you will be working. Being the “new kid” is like being a freshman all over again. You will need to adapt, observe, learn and process a large volume of information. Watch closely how things get done. Ask questions and pay attention to how people interact with each other.

## 3. Take Your Assignments Seriously

Build a reputation for being dependable. Be diligent and accurate in your work. You may encounter a great deal of ambiguity in the work environment, so seek direction when in doubt and do whatever it takes to get the job done. As an intern, you will generally start out by performing small tasks, asking a lot of questions and learning the systems. Your internship supervisor knows that there will be an initial learning curve and will make allowances for mistakes. Learn from your errors and move on to your next task. From there, your responsibilities and the expectations of others are likely to grow.

## 4. Meet Deadlines

Always assume the responsibility to ask when an assignment is due. This will help you to understand your supervisor’s priorities and to manage your time accordingly. Alert your boss in advance if you will be unable to meet expectations. This will show respect and professional maturity.

## 5. Set Realistic Goals and Expectations

Invest actively in the most critical element of your internship—that is, the learning agenda which you set up with your supervisor at the beginning of the assignment.

Your learning agenda should target specific skills and competencies that you wish to acquire and demonstrate. After all, the learning agenda is what distinguishes a short-term job from an internship. It is up to you to establish a correlation between your learning goals and the daily work you are asked to perform. Maintain a journal of your activities and accomplishments in order to monitor your progress. Seek regular reviews from your supervisor to assess your performance and reinforce the fact that you mean business.

## 6. Communicate Respectfully

Assume that everyone else knows more than you do. However, don’t be afraid to present useful ideas that may save time or money or solve problems. Make sure, however, that your style does not come across as cocky. Employers value assertiveness but not aggressiveness. Find out the proper way to address individuals, including customers. Maintain a pleasant and respectful demeanor with every person, regardless of his or her rank.

## 7. Be Flexible

Accept a wide variety of tasks, even those that may not relate directly to your assignments or those that may seem like grunt work. Your willingness to go the extra mile, especially during “crunch time,” will help you carve the way to assuming greater responsibilities.

## 8. Be a Team Player

Learn how your assignment fits into the grand scheme of things and keep a keen eye on getting the job done. In today’s work environment, success is often defined along the lines of your ability to get along with and interact with others. You’re a winner only if your team wins.

## 9. Get a Mentor

Identify at least one individual to serve as your mentor or professional guardian. It should be someone who is willing to take a personal interest in your career development and success. Once you know your way around, begin to network wisely and get “plugged in” by associating with seasoned employees who may share their knowledge, perspectives and insights. Get noticed, because many more people will have a role in determining your future than you might at first realize.

## 10. Have Fun!

Last but not least, enjoy learning, sharpening your skills and developing professionally and personally. Participate in work-related social functions and become an active member in your work community.

Make your internship or co-op experience work for you. It can be the first link in the chain of your career.

*Written by Lina Melkonian, Executive Director of Development at San José State University, College of Engineering.*

# Marketing Your Liberal Arts Degree

**A**s liberal arts graduates enter the job market, their direction may not be as obvious as that of their technically trained counterparts. For the most part, engineering or computer science majors know exactly where to target their efforts.

Liberal arts majors are less fortunate in that regard—such a heading cannot be found in the want ads. Yet if they learn to target their aptitudes, they have as good a chance as anyone to find meaningful work.

Students are no longer necessarily hired just because they have a particular degree. Math and physics majors are getting engineering jobs and liberal arts majors are getting accounting jobs. The reason new graduates are being hired is because they have specific skills that meet the needs of the employer.

No one is more suited to this approach than the liberal arts major. What you need to do, explains one career advisor, is to find out what you really want to do—regardless of your major. Students often ask, “What can I do with a major in philosophy?” But that’s the wrong question. The real questions are, “What fascinates me? How can I connect my interests with a job? What do I really want to be doing in 20 years?”

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**Conduct in-depth research on any companies that appeal to you, and try to match their needs to your wants.**

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Once you have answered those questions, look at possibilities for matching your interests with a job. There are more options than you might think. Don’t get stuck on titles. For instance, if you want to be an autonomous problem-solver, someone with good communication skills who can do a good job of synthesizing sources (as in writing term papers), forget about the titles and look at the job descriptions. Management consultants, career specialists, personnel managers, teachers or trainers within organizations and schools are just a few options.

As a liberal arts major, you have to do much more work in terms of researching different job markets and finding out where there is a demand. Conduct in-depth research on any companies that appeal to you, and try to match their needs to your wants. You must be specific, however. It is possible to be too general, too open and too flexible.

To be successful, you should combine your long-term vision with short-term specificity. Present yourself to your potential employer as someone who both understands the broad goals of the company and has the ability to grow and contribute in the

long run. But most importantly, show how you can excel in that specific job. And this, most likely, will involve some specialized skills. If you’ve taken business courses, had work experiences or done specialized work on a computer in your liberal arts work, point out those strengths.

Once you’ve taken the time to determine your real interests and have set some long-term goals, map out a plan—long- and short-term—on how to get there. Resources are plentiful—from the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* or *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* to numerous general job search books, as well as those dealing with specific topics such as *What to Do with a Degree in Psychology*, *The Business of Show Business*, etc.

Your liberal arts education has equipped you to take a broad topic and research it. Use those skills to make the connection between what you want and what companies need. Once you find job descriptions that match your long-term interests, set about shaping your resume and, if need be, getting the additional specific skills, training or certification to get that first job.

Your first job may not match your long-term goal. But it’s the first step. And that, at this point, is the all-important one.

## WHAT LIBERAL ARTS GRADUATES ARE DOING

A sampling of the wide range of positions filled by liberal arts graduates:

|                                   |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Accountant                        | Librarian                   |
| Administrative assistant          | Management consultant       |
| Advertising account executive     | Marketing representative    |
| Air traffic controller            | Medical/dental assistant    |
| Artist                            | Museum coordinator          |
| Auditor                           | Office administrator        |
| Bank manager                      | Outpatient therapist        |
| Business systems analyst          | Paralegal                   |
| Buyer                             | Photographer                |
| Child support enforcement officer | Probation officer           |
| Claims examiner                   | Product specialist          |
| Communications specialist         | Psychologist                |
| Computer specialist               | Public relations specialist |
| Copywriter                        | Quality engineer            |
| Counselor                         | Recreation administrator    |
| Customer service representative   | Research analyst            |
| Editor                            | Restaurant manager          |
| Employee relations specialist     | Retail manager              |
| Engineering planner               | Sales representative        |
| Financial consultant              | Social worker               |
| Graphic designer                  | Speech pathologist          |
| Hotel manager                     | Stockbroker                 |
| Human resource specialist         | Systems analyst             |
| Industrial designer               | Tax consultant              |
| Interpreter/translator            | Teacher                     |
| Journalist                        | Technical writer            |
|                                   | Transportation specialist   |
|                                   | Underwriter                 |
|                                   | Urban planner               |
|                                   | Writer                      |



# International Students and the Job Search

Looking for a job is seldom easy for any student. For you, the international student, the job search process can be especially confusing. You may lack an understanding of U.S. employment regulations, or perhaps you are unaware of the impact your career choice has on your job search. You may also be unsure about your role as the job-seeker and the resources used by American employers to find candidates.

The following is an overview of the issues most relevant to international students in developing a job search strategy. Additional information about the employment process and related topics can be found through your career center and on the internet.

## Bureau of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Regulations

As an international student, you should only obtain employment-related information from an experienced immigration attorney or your campus USCIS representative. *Advice from any other resource may be inaccurate.* Once you have decided to remain in the United States to work, contact the international student services office or the office of human resources on your campus and make an appointment with your USCIS representative. In addition to helping you fill out necessary forms, the USCIS representative will inform you of the costs associated with working in the United States.

## Importance of Skills and Career Field

Find out if your degree and skills-set are currently in demand in the U.S. job market. An advanced degree, highly marketable skills or extensive experience will all make your job search easier. Find out what region of the United States holds the majority of the jobs in your field; you may need to relocate in order to find the job you want. Learn all you can about your targeted career field by talking to professors, reading industry publications and attending professional meetings and regional conferences.

## Role of Employers

It is the employer's responsibility to find the right people for his or her company—not to help you find a job. The interview is successful when both of you see a match between the employer's needs and your interest and ability to do the job.

The employer (through hiring managers, human resources staff or employment agencies) will most likely use several resources to find workers, including:

- College recruiting
- Campus or community job fairs
- Posting jobs on the company website or on national job posting sites on the internet
- Posting jobs in major newspapers or trade publications
- Posting jobs with professional associations
- Resume searches on national online services
- Employee referrals
- Regional and national conferences
- Employment agencies ("headhunters")

Are you accessible to employers through at least some of the above strategies? If not, develop a plan to make sure your credentials are widely circulated. Notify as many people as possible in your field about your job search.

## Strong Communication Skills

You can help the employer make an informed hiring decision if you:

- Provide a well-prepared resume that includes desirable skills and relevant employment experiences.
- Clearly convey your interests and ability to do the job in an interview.
- Understand English when spoken to you and can effectively express your thoughts in English.

It's important to be able to positively promote yourself and talk with confidence about your education, relevant skills and related experiences. Self-promotion is rarely easy for anyone. But, it can be especially difficult for individuals from cultures where talking about yourself is considered inappropriate. When interviewing in the United States, however, you are expected to be able to explain your credentials and why you are suitable for the position.

Be sensitive to the interviewer's verbal and nonverbal cues. Some international students may not realize when their accent is causing them to be misunderstood. Interviewers are sometimes too embarrassed or impatient to ask for clarification, so be on the lookout for nonverbal clues, such as follow-up questions that don't match your responses or sudden disinterest on the part of the interviewer. Also, make sure you express proper nonverbal communication; always look directly at the employer in order to portray confidence and honesty.

If your English language skills need some work, get involved with campus and community activities. These events will allow you to practice speaking English. The more you use the language, the more proficient you will become. These activities are also a great way to make networking contacts.

## Career Center

The career center can be a valuable resource in your job search. Be aware, however, that some employers using the career center won't interview students who are not U.S. citizens. Though this may limit your ability to participate in some campus interviews, there are numerous ways to benefit from the campus career center:

- Attend sessions on job search strategies and related topics.
- Work with the career services staff to develop your job search strategy.
- Attend campus career fairs and company information sessions to inquire about employment opportunities and to practice your networking skills.

It's a good idea to get advice from other international students who have successfully found employment in this country and to start your job search early. Create and follow a detailed plan of action that will lead you to a great job you can write home about.

*Written by Rosita Smith.*

# Clean Up Your Social Media Identity

The social media profiles of job candidates are an area of scrutiny for recruiters. In fact, there are now even online research analysts who will comb the Internet for damaging information on a firm's applicants. (On the flip side, there are "scrub services" that will clean up a job hunter's digital footprint.) Here are some simple ways to take a DIY approach to scrubbing your online presence.

## Google Your Name

Search for your name online occasionally to see what comes up, or set up automatic name alerts at [Google.com/alerts](http://Google.com/alerts). You may discover results for many people with your same name, possibly with embarrassing or outrageous content. To find the real "you," try tweaking your name (e.g., Sam versus Samuel) or add some additional identifying modifiers (perhaps your city or school).

Search for your name on all the networks to which you've ever belonged, including MySpace and YouTube. (Recruiters check everywhere.) After a thorough review, ask yourself: *Will this the social media profile foster callbacks, interviews and job offers?* If not, keep reading.

## Keep Some Mystery

"Most new grads grew up texting, Skyping, Tweeting, Facebooking and reading or creating blogs," says Jenny Foss, who operates Ladder Recruiting Group in Portland, Ore. "Older, more experienced competitors aren't 'native social media people.'" That's the plus; the minus is you have to shift your mindset from "impressing the guys" to "promoting myself as a polished professional."

Foss recommends you adjust the privacy settings on your accounts. But you're not safe even then since companies can change privacy policies. When possible, it is better to remove negative or overly private content than hide it.

## There's No Swimsuit Competition

Recruiters will judge you by your profile photos. Do they tell the right story? "Don't post sexy photographs of yourself online. Don't even be too glamorous. That's a really big turnoff to employers," says Vicky Oliver, author of *201 Smart Answers to Business Etiquette Questions*. "Dress in photos as you would in an interview."

Remove unflattering pictures, videos, and unfavorable comments you've posted on social networks. Post a high-quality headshot, the same one across all platforms. **Important:** Don't forget to check out photos where friends have tagged you on Facebook. If you're pictured at a party with a drink in hand, delete the tag. Adjust privacy settings to prevent that from happening again.

## Blot Out the Bitter

Have you ever gone online while under the influence or in a foul mood? Bad idea. "Whatever you wouldn't do at the networking event, don't do online," says Oliver. Some examples of social media gaffes: Posting about parties, dates, getting into posting wars with your friends, or using obscenities, faulty grammar, typos, or cryptic texting shortcuts.

"I personally would never put a thumbs-down sign on someone's comment," Oliver says. "I would not write anything negative, no snippy commentary at all."

## Get LinkedIn

This is the single best social media platform for job seekers because of its professional focus. Some savvy employers are now even requesting LinkedIn profile info as part of the job application process. One of the most powerful aspects of this profile is the recommendations from previous bosses and

## Content You Should NEVER Share

*These may seem really obvious, but people lose jobs (and job offers) every day because of them:*

- Don't refer to a company by name; they may get alerts when mentioned online.
- Don't complain about your job or boss.
- Refrain from making snarky comments about co-workers or customers.
- Don't reveal your drug/drink habits.
- Never make discriminatory or inflammatory remarks.
- Don't share intimate relationship details.
- Don't brag about skipping work, playing games or sleeping on the job.
- Do not broadcast an employer's confidential information.

co-workers. Testimony from others is proof positive of your professionalism.

Make good use of keywords and set up links between all your social media profiles. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Blogspot all rank high in Google searches.

## Witness Protection Program

Some job seekers are so concerned about privacy they've gone into lockdown mode and blocked all of their profiles. Unfortunately, that makes recruiters wonder what they're trying to hide. Plus, many of them seek employees with social media skills, so cleaning up what's out there is usually better than shutting it down.

## What Would Your Mother Say?

Many career coaches and recruiters say that the rule of thumb for social media content is: Would you want your mother or employer to see it? No? Then don't post it.

"Self-censorship is the main key," says Alexandra Levit, author of *Blind Spots: The 10 Business Myths You Can't Afford to Believe on Your New Path to Success*. "Always think before you post, because if there is a single person out there who you don't want to see your content, I guarantee it will get back to them."

You may be too close to the situation to judge what's appropriate or not, so it can be helpful to have a second pair of eyes to look over your profiles. Select someone who's about the same age as your target employers, experienced in your field, or at least in the hiring process.

## Netiquette Tips

Dan Schwabel, a personal branding expert and author of *Me 2.0*, offers these tips to keep your digital reputation clean:

- Don't over-promote yourself or people will get turned off.
- Do share industry insights, useful resources, quotes and facts with your audience.
- Don't send your resume to employers on Facebook.
- Do build a relationship through tweeting before you email blindly.
- Don't come to an interview without researching the company and the hiring manager online, using LinkedIn first.

*Written by Jebra Turner, a former human resources manager, who writes about career issues, and other business topics. She lives in Portland, Ore., and can be reached at [www.jebra.com](http://www.jebra.com).*



# Your 60-Second Commercial

Use the following guidelines to develop an introduction when meeting employers during interviews, career days and other networking events. Your goal is to create a positive and lasting impression in a brief amount of time.

## Step 1: Research the Employer

1. Preview the list of organizations participating in the event and plan a strategy for the day. Put together an “A” list and a “B” list of employers you want to target. Contact your career services office to see what employers may be recruiting on campus.
2. Research all the employers on your “A” list. Look for current facts about each employer, including new products, services or acquisitions.
3. Write down some key facts about the employer:

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Review job descriptions pertinent to your major for employer requirements. Note specific knowledge, skills, and abilities they seek. List academic or employment experiences and activities where you demonstrated these skills.

**The employer is seeking:**

**My qualifications and selling points:**

(a) \_\_\_\_\_ (a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_ (b) \_\_\_\_\_

(c) \_\_\_\_\_ (c) \_\_\_\_\_

(d) \_\_\_\_\_ (d) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Review the employer’s mission statement and look for key words that indicate the personal qualities the organization values in its employees. List 2 or 3 of your personal qualities that closely match.

**My personal qualities:**

(a) \_\_\_\_\_ (b) \_\_\_\_\_ (c) \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 2: Develop Your Introduction

Review the sample below. Using the information above, prepare and practice a brief 60-second commercial or introduction to use when meeting employer representatives.

**Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am currently a junior, majoring in economics and working part-time as a supervisor at Campus Information Services. This role has enhanced my communication, management, and leadership skills. In addition, I had an internship over the summer with ABC Company where I worked in a team environment on a variety of marketing and website development projects. I recently read an article about your company’s plans for business growth in the Northeast, and I’m interested in learning more.**

### Notes:

Practice your introduction with a friend or career counselor so it sounds conversational rather than rehearsed. You may want to break your opening remarks into two or three segments rather than delivering it all at once. Good luck with your all-important first impression!

*Adapted with permission from the Office of Career Services at Rutgers University, New Brunswick Campus.*

# Social Networking Websites

**C**areer professionals—and parents—are warning young job seekers that using social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, may be hazardous to your career.

After all, do you want your potential employer to see photos of you at last weekend’s party? Certainly, those photos could diminish your prospects of landing a job. However, more job seekers are using social networking to enhance their preparation for interviews, garner an advantage over less-wired peers, and even gain an edge with recruiters.

One example of a constructive use of social networking websites is gathering background information about the recruiters with whom you will interview. By finding out about topics that will interest the recruiter, you may gain an upper hand in the interview process. In addition, stronger connections with a potential employer can be made by talking about the clubs he or she belongs to and even friends you have in common—information that can be discovered on Facebook.

Research on professional sites like LinkedIn can also be used to prepare for site visits. By using the alumni connections available through LinkedIn, you can gain added insight into potential employers. If you are interviewing with a company, search for alumni who are working there. You can have conversations with alumni via LinkedIn that you wouldn’t have in an interview, such as, “do you like it at the company?” or “can you negotiate salary?”

## Networking Rules

When you seek and maintain professional connections via social networking sites, follow the same etiquette you would if you were networking by phone and in person. Remember that every contact is creating an impression. Online, you might tend to be less formal because you are communicating in a space that you typically share with friends. Just as you would not let your guard down if you were having dinner with a potential employer, you must maintain a positive and professional approach when conversing with networking contacts online. Ask good questions, pay attention to the answers, and be polite—this includes sending at least a brief thank-you note anytime someone gives you advice or assistance.

## If It’s OK for Mom, It’s OK for Facebook

The more controversial aspect of the interplay between social networking and job searching is the privacy debate. Some observers, including career counselors, deans, and parents, worry that students put themselves at a disadvantage in the job search by making personal information available on Facebook and Twitter pages. More and more companies are using such websites as a screening tool.

Concern about privacy focuses on two areas: social life and identity/affiliations. Parents and career counselors argue that job-seekers would never show photos of themselves at a party in the middle of an interview, so why would they allow employers to see party photos on a Facebook page? Students often respond that most employers do not even use social networking sites and that employers already know that college students drink.

While it may be true that senior managers are less likely to be on Facebook, young recruiters may be active, and in many cases, employers ask younger employees to conduct online searches of candidates. Why risk losing a career opportunity because of a photo with two drinks in your hand?

It’s easy to deduce that if an employer is comparing two candidates who are closely matched in terms of GPA and

experience, and one has questionable photos and text on his or her online profile and the second does not, that the second student will get the job offer.

## Identity—Public or Private?

Identity and affiliations are the second area where social networking and privacy issues may affect your job search and employment prospects. Historically, job-seekers have fought for increased protection from being asked questions about their identity, including religious affiliation and sexual orientation, because this information could be used by biased employers to discriminate. Via social networking sites, employers can now find information that they are not allowed to ask you.

Employers can no longer legally ask these questions in most states, however, some students make matters like religion, political involvement, and sexual orientation public on their web pages.

You would never include religious and political affiliations as well as sexual orientation or transgender identity (GLBT) on your resume, so do you want this information to be available via social networking sites? There are two strategies to consider. One approach is that if you wish to only work for an employer with whom you can be openly religious, political, or GLBT then making that information available on your web page will screen out discriminating employers and make it more likely that you will land with an employer open to your identity and expression.

A second approach though, is to maintain your privacy and keep more options open. Investigate potential employers thoroughly and pay special attention at site visits to evaluate whether the company would be welcoming. This strategy is based on two perspectives shared by many career professionals. First, as a job-seeker, you want to present only your relevant skills and experience throughout the job search; all other information is irrelevant. Second, if you provide information about your identity and affiliations, you may be discriminated against by one person in the process even though the company overall is a good match.

## Strategies for Safe and Strategic Social Networking

1. Be aware of what other people can see on your page. Recruiters use these sites or ask their colleagues to do searches on candidates.
2. Determine access intentionally. Some career counselors advocate deactivating your Facebook or Twitter accounts while job searching.
3. Set a standard. If anything appears on your page that you wouldn’t want an interviewer to see, remove the offending content.
4. Use social networking to your advantage. Use these sites to find alumni in the companies that interest you and contact them before you interview in your career center or before a site visit. In addition, use social networking sites and internet searches to learn more about the recruiters who will interview you before the interview.

*Written by Harriet L. Schwartz.*



# Dressing for the Interview

Depending upon your fashion style, whether it is the latest trends for the club scene or merely college senior casual, a job interview may be cause for some drastic wardrobe augmentation.

For your interviews, some of your individualism might have to be shelved or kept in the closet. In most business and technical job interviews, when it comes to your appearance, conservatism and conformity are in order.

While many companies have adopted the “office casual” dress code, don’t try to set new standards in the interview. When in doubt, it is better to be too conservative than to be too flashy. For men and women, a suit is the best bet.

Here are some guidelines:

## MEN

- A two-piece suit will suffice in most instances.
- Solid colors and tighter-woven fabrics are safer than bold prints or patterns.
- Bright ties bring focus to the face, but a simple pattern is best for an interview. (A tip for larger men: Use a double Windsor knot to minimize a bulky appearance.)
- Wear polished shoes with socks high enough so no skin is visible when you sit down and cross your legs.

## WOMEN

- A suit with a knee-length skirt and a tailored blouse are most appropriate.
- Although even the most conservative organizations allow more feminine looks these days, accessories should be kept simple. Basic pumps and modest jewelry and makeup help to present a professional look.
- Pants are more acceptable now but are not recommended for interviews.

## Staying Within a Budget

For recent graduates just entering professional life, additions to wardrobes, or complete overhauls, are likely needed. Limited funds, however, can be an obstacle. Image consultant Christine Lazzarini suggests “capsule wardrobing.” For example, by mixing and matching, she says, an eight-piece capsule wardrobe can generate up to 28 ensembles.

Before shopping, Lazzarini advises establishing a budget, 50% of which should be targeted for accessories. For women, “even a brightly colored jacket could be considered an accessory when it makes an outfit you already have look entirely different.”

The most important piece in any wardrobe is a jacket that is versatile and can work with a number of other pieces, according to one fashion expert. This applies to men and women. “If you focus on a suit, buy one with a jacket which may be used with other skirts or trousers,” says a women’s fashion director for a major national retailer. “Then add a black turtleneck or a white shirt. These are the fashion basics that you can build on.”

A navy or black blazer for men can work well with a few different gabardine pants. Although this kind of ensemble would be just as expensive as a single suit, it offers more versatility.

One accessory recommended by company representatives is a briefcase. “When I see one,” says one recruiter, “it definitely adds to the candidate’s stature. It is a symbol to me that the individual has done some research and that he or she is prepared.”

## A Final Check

And, of course, your appearance is only as good as your grooming. Create a final checklist to review before you go on an interview:

- Neatly trimmed hair
- Conservative makeup
- No runs in stockings
- Shoes polished (some suggest wearing your sneakers on the way to an interview and changing before you enter the interview site)
- No excessive jewelry; men should refrain from wearing earrings
- No missing buttons, crooked ties or lint

You want your experience and qualifications to shine. Your appearance should enhance your presentation, not overwhelm it.

## Taking a Casual Approach

“Office casual” is becoming the accepted mode of dress at more and more companies. The rules, however, for casual attire are subject to tremendous company-to-company variance. At some, “casual day” is a Friday-only observance, where the dress code is *slightly* relaxed—a sports coat and slacks for men and slacks and a sweater for women. At others, especially entrepreneurial computer companies, it’s shorts and sandals every day.

The safest fashion rule for new employees to follow is *dress about the same as your most conservatively attired co-worker*. As a new hire, don’t try to “push the boundaries” of casual attire.

### Fashion Arrests

- Never wear denim jeans or shorts unless the vast majority of others do
- Don’t dress too provocatively—you’re at work, not at a dance club
- “Casual” doesn’t mean “sloppy”—your clothes should always be free of stains or holes
- Workout wear belongs at the gym.

### Play It Safe

- Chinos or corduroy slacks are usually a safe bet for both sexes
- As for formal business attire, buy the best that your budget will allow
- If you will be seeing clients, dress appropriately for *their* workplace, not yours;
- Go to the mall—most department and specialty stores have sections devoted to this style of office attire.

# Business Etiquette Blunders

## And How to Fix Them

**G**etting a handle on business etiquette is even more important in this digital age, when the HR process is in flux and the “rules” aren’t always clear. Here are some of the top etiquette complaints from recruiters, and ways you can avoid those mistakes so that even old-school interviewers will be impressed with your good manners and social graces.

### No Show = No Job

This should go without saying, but actually showing up to an interview is necessary to lock down a job offer. Yet, too many candidates casually blow off interviews. One of the easiest ways to make a good impression is to arrive for interviews 10-15 minutes early, so you have plenty of time to get settled and perhaps check your appearance one last time.

If something pressing does come up, immediately call to cancel or reschedule. Decided you don’t want the job after all? Don’t just disappear. It’s not only rude, but every industry has a grapevine, and word of flakiness gets around. Failing to show for an on-campus interview can have even more severe consequences, so make sure you know the cancelation and no-show policy.

### Too Negative

“Keep your emotional baggage outside the interview door,” says Peggy Klaus, author of *BRAG! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It*. We all have days when the alarm doesn’t go off, the weather is a mess, and there’s no parking spot. Don’t whine. Be enthusiastic, eager, flexible, and most of all—likeable. “Do not expect the interviewer to entertain you, or do your job for you by drawing you out,” she adds.

### Thankless

Sending a thank-you note is an important way to demonstrate good manners. It doesn’t have to be handwritten, but it should be considered and specific. “An email is fine, but make sure it shows thought and effort,” says Klaus. “Don’t do it in the elevator on the way down. Do it with forethought, so you can translate what you got out of the interview.”

If you do a round of interviews with three people, say, then send three slightly different thank-you notes that day, or the next. (Get business cards so you have everyone’s contact information close at hand.)

### Too Familiar

When emailing someone you don’t know well, be a bit formal: Capitalize words, don’t use texting shorthand, and start with a salutation. “You don’t send an email to a *New York Times* bestselling writer and say ‘Hey, I need to know...,’” complains Martin Yate, author of [NYT bestseller] *Knock ‘em Dead, the Ultimate Job Search Guide*. “No, you start with ‘Dear Martin...’ and finish with ‘Thank you for your time. Sincerely, your name.’”

“Similarly, if everyone in the office calls your interviewer ‘Sam,’ adjust that to ‘Ms. or Mr. Jones,’” says Yate. “Be respectful of the people who can put food on your table.”

### What Dress Code?

Dressing appropriately for an interview is a balancing act. One level in formality above what people normally wear on the job is just right. For men, if you’d wear khakis and a polo shirt on the job, wear dress slacks and a blazer to the interview. Women should follow a similar “step up” plan. (Scope out company dress codes during informational interviews.)

“On an interview, you’re dressing to get hired, not dated,” says Yate. “Your dress must be conservative and clean cut. It shows

respect for the occasion, job, company, interviewer, and most of all—for yourself.”

### Dining Disaster

You may have an opportunity to interview at lunch or dinner. It can be doubly nerve wracking to think about what you’ll say, as well as how to keep the spaghetti on your fork. “If you eat like a caveman with a mastodon on your plate, you won’t be invited to dine with the chairman of the board, or important clients,” Yate says. Don’t drink, even if your interviewer does, so that you can keep your wits about you, and be courteous to the wait staff. Consider ordering an easy-to-manage entrée.

### Clueless About the Employer

It’s so easy to do online research, that there’s no reason for you not to know about a prospective employer—the company and the individual. How much will employers care if you don’t do your due diligence? One applicant at IBM was asked if he knew what those three letters stood for. He did not. Next! (In case you ever interview at IBM, the answer is International Business Machines.)

### Annoying Devices

“We get complaints about candidates taking a cell phone call, or checking email, or texting in a meeting,” says Kathleen Downs, recruiting manager at Robert Half International in Orlando, Fla. “It’s a mistake to not silence a phone during a meeting. Even in the waiting room, we’ve had phones go off and it’s an inappropriate ring tone, like a hip-hop song with swear words.”

Make sure you have a greeting on your voicemail—some employers won’t leave a message if they aren’t sure they’ve reached the right party. And if your phone number is blocked, they can’t call you back if you don’t leave a message. “I’ve called candidates and gotten obnoxious voicemail messages, ‘You know who this is. You know what to do,’” she says. That’s not the way to win over a recruiter.

### Poor Profile

Employers often complain of inappropriate photos or comments on an applicant’s social media profile. “You can try to make that info private, but somehow, somehow, there’s a way to get to it,” Downs says. She has her Facebook profile set to private, and directs business contacts to her LinkedIn profile. “Don’t ever post anything racy. For example, don’t post a picture of yourself in a bikini—even if you look good!”

### Tattoos and Piercings

Tribal tattoos, hair dyed colors not seen in nature, or dreadlocks may turn off conservative employers. If your personal style doesn’t go over well in interviews, cover up (easy with some tattoos) or get a makeover ASAP.

“A guy with a piercing came to an interview with a tongue ring in,” says Downs. “I told him to go to the restroom and take it out. It was stuck. He had to go to the tattoo parlor a few miles away and have it cut out.”

If your personal style is more important to you than a position with a company, spend a little more time researching the corporate culture of a company before you apply, so you can find the right fit.

*Written by Jebra Turner, a former human resources manager, who writes about career issues, and other business topics. She lives in Portland, Ore., and can be reached at [www.jebra.com](http://www.jebra.com).*

# Top Ten Pitfalls in Resume Writing

1. **Too long.** Most new graduates should restrict their resumes to one page. If you have trouble condensing, get help from a technical or business writer or a career center professional.
2. **Typographical, grammatical or spelling errors.** These errors suggest carelessness, poor education and/or lack of intelligence. Have at least two people proofread your resume. Don't rely on your computer's spell-checkers or grammar-checkers.
3. **Hard to read.** A poorly typed or copied resume looks unprofessional. Use a plain typeface, no smaller than a 12-point font. Asterisks, bullets, underlining, boldface type and italics should be used only to make the document easier to read, not fancier. Again, ask a professional's opinion.
4. **Too verbose.** Do not use complete sentences or paragraphs. Say as much as possible with as few words as possible. *A*, *an* and *the* can almost always be left out. Be careful in your use of jargon and avoid slang.
5. **Too sparse.** Give more than the bare essentials, especially when describing related work experience, skills, accomplishments, activities, interests and club memberships that will give employers important information. Including membership in the Society of Women Engineers, for example, would be helpful to employers who wish to hire more women, yet cannot ask for that information.
6. **Irrelevant information.** Customize each resume to each position you seek (when possible). Of course, include all education and work experience, but emphasize only relevant experience, skills, accomplishments, activities and hobbies. Do not include marital status, age, sex, children, height, weight, health, church membership, etc.
7. **Obviously generic.** Too many resumes scream, "I need a job—*any* job!" The employer needs to feel that you are interested in that particular position with his or her particular company.
8. **Too snazzy.** Of course, use good quality bond paper, but avoid exotic types, colored paper, photographs, binders and graphics. Electronic resumes should include appropriate industry keywords and use a font size between 10 and 14 points. Avoid underlining, italics or graphics.
9. **Boring.** Make your resume as dynamic as possible. Begin every statement with an action verb. Use active verbs to describe what you have accomplished in past jobs. Take advantage of your rich vocabulary and avoid repeating words, especially the first word in a section.
10. **Too modest.** The resume showcases your qualifications in competition with the other applicants. Put your best foot forward without misrepresentation, falsification or arrogance.

## The Three Rs

The three Rs of resume writing are **Research, Research, Research.** You must know what the prospective company does, what the position involves and whether you will be a fit, before submitting your resume. And that means doing research—about the company, about the position and about the type of employee the company typically hires.

**Research the company.** Read whatever literature the company has placed in the career library. For additional information, call the company. Ask for any literature it may have, find out how the company is structured and ask what qualities the company generally looks for in its employees. Ask if there are openings in your area, and find out the name of the department head and give him or her a call. Explain that you are considering applying to their company, and ask for their recommendation for next steps. Thank that person for the information, and ask to whom your resume should be directed.

The Internet is another key tool to utilize in your research. Most companies have websites that include information regarding company background, community involvement, special events, executive bios or even past annual reports. Be sure to take advantage of the Internet during your job search.

**Research the position.** The more you know about the position, the better able you will be to sell yourself and to

target your resume to that position. If possible, interview someone who does that same job. In addition to finding out the duties, ask if there is on-the-job training, whether they value education over experience (or vice versa) and what kind of turnover the department experiences. Ask what they like about the position and the company; more important, ask what they don't like about it.

**Finally, research yourself.** Your goal is not just to get a job. Your goal is to get a job that you will enjoy. After you find out all you can about the company and the position, ask yourself honestly whether this is what you really want to do and where you really want to be. The odds are overwhelming that you will not hold this position for more than two or three years, so it's not a lifetime commitment; however, this first job will be the base of your lifetime career. You must start successfully so that future recommendations will always be positive. Furthermore, three years is a long time to spend doing something you don't like, working in a position that isn't challenging or living somewhere you don't want to live.

One last word of advice: Before you go to the interview, review the version of your resume that you submitted to this employer. The resume can only get you the interview; the interview gets you the job.



# Power Verbs for Your Resume

|              |                |              |                  |                     |
|--------------|----------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|
| accelerated  | compared       | excelled     | maintained       | repaired            |
| accommodated | compiled       | executed     | marketed         | reported            |
| accomplished | composed       | exercised    | measured         | represented         |
| achieved     | computed       | expanded     | mediated         | researched          |
| acquired     | conceptualized | expedited    | minimized        | reserved            |
| acted        | concluded      | explained    | mobilized        | resolved (problems) |
| activated    | confirmed      | extended     | modeled          | restored            |
| adapted      | consented      | extracted    | moderated        | retrieved           |
| added        | consolidated   |              | modernized       | revamped            |
| addressed    | constructed    | fabricated   | modified         | reviewed            |
| adjusted     | contracted     | facilitated  | monitored        | revised             |
| administered | contributed    | familiarized | motivated        | revitalized         |
| admitted     | converted      | fashioned    | multiplied       | revived             |
| advanced     | convinced      | figured      |                  |                     |
| advised      | cooperated     | finalized    | negotiated       | sanctioned          |
| aided        | coordinated    | forecasted   |                  | satisfied           |
| alleviated   | correlated     | formulated   | officiated       | scheduled           |
| allocated    | corresponded   | fostered     | operated         | screened            |
| allowed      | counseled      | founded      | orchestrated     | scrutinized         |
| altered      | created        | fulfilled    | organized        | secured             |
| ameliorated  | critiqued      |              | originated       | served              |
| amended      | customized     | generated    | overhauled       | set goals           |
| analyzed     |                | grew         |                  | settled             |
| appointed    | debugged       | guaranteed   | performed        | shaped              |
| apportioned  | deciphered     | guided       | persuaded        | smoothed            |
| appraised    | dedicated      |              | pioneered        | solicited           |
| apprised     | delegated      | hired        | planned          | solved              |
| approved     | deliberated    |              | polished         | sought              |
| approved     | demonstrated   | identified   | prepared         | spearheaded         |
| approximated | designated     | illustrated  | prescribed       | specified           |
| arbitrated   | designed       | implemented  | prioritized      | spoke               |
| arranged     | determined     | improved     | processed        | stimulated          |
| ascertained  | devaluated     | improvised   | procured         | streamlined         |
| assembled    | developed      | increased    | produced         | strengthened        |
| assessed     | devised        | indexed      | programmed       | studied             |
| assigned     | diagnosed      | indicated    | projected        | submitted           |
| assisted     | directed       | inferred     | promoted         | substantiated       |
| attained     | disbursed      | influenced   | publicized       | suggested           |
| attested     | dispatched     | informed     | purchased        | summarized          |
| audited      | displayed      | initiated    |                  | supervised          |
| augmented    | drafted        | innovated    | queried          | supplemented        |
| authored     |                | inspected    | questioned       | surveyed            |
| authorized   | eased          | inspired     |                  | sustained           |
|              | eclipsed       | instituted   | raised           | synthesized         |
| balanced     | edited         | instructed   | rated            | systematized        |
| bolstered    | educated       | integrated   | realized         |                     |
| boosted      | elevated       | interceded   | recommended      | tabulated           |
| brainstormed | elicited       | interpreted  | reconciled       | tailored            |
| budgeted     | employed       | interviewed  | recorded         | traced              |
| built        | empowered      | introduced   | recruited        | trained             |
|              | enabled        | invented     | rectified        | transacted          |
| calculated   | encouraged     | investigated | reduced (losses) | transformed         |
| catalogued   | endorsed       | involved     | refined          | translated          |
| centralized  | engineered     | issued       | referred         | transmitted         |
| certified    | enhanced       |              | reformed         |                     |
| chaired      | enlarged       | judged       | regarded         | updated             |
| charted      | enlisted       | justified    | regulated        | upgraded            |
| clarified    | enriched       |              | rehabilitated    |                     |
| classified   | enumerated     | launched     | reinforced       | validated           |
| coached      | envisioned     | lectured     | rejuvenated      | valued              |
| collaborated | established    | led          | related          | verified            |
| collected    | estimated      | licensed     | relieved         | visualized          |
| commissioned | evaluated      | lightened    | remedied         |                     |
| committed    | examined       | linked       | remodeled        | wrote               |
| communicated |                |              |                  |                     |

# Romancing Your Resume

It's a **MUST** to feel good about your resume so that you are more apt to send it to prospective employers. Think about it: If you don't like what you see on paper, you are less likely to use it for employment purposes. If you are not using your resume for employment purposes, you are even more unlikely to interview for a sustainable, career-oriented job.

In order for your resume to work for you, **ROMANCE IT!** To romance your resume means to be excited about it, to be proud of it, to be attentive to it, and to view it as a unique and invaluable part of you. Although there are several ways to romance your resume, here are the top five that gets the best results:

1. **Begin with a positive attitude.** When creating your resume, think of your resume as a life-long partner.
2. **Keep your resume informed with what you are doing.** Include your education, work experience, volunteer and leadership experience, skills, honors and activities, awards, and other pertinent information on your resume.
3. **K.I.S.S. your resume.** Keep it significant and simple. Tailor your resume to each job or internship in which you are applying. When typing your resume, use a plain font,

use bullets to make key points, and use a dictionary to check for spelling errors. You will also need to check for typographical errors.

4. **See if your resume is right for you.** Always ask a professional career advisor to critique or inspect your resume. If your career advisor is not immediately available, ask someone you trust to give you an honest opinion about the content of your resume.
5. **Take your resume out.** After you have looked it over, polished it up, and had it critiqued, send it to as many employers in your field of study that have available opportunities for you.

Remember, what you put into your resume is what you will get out of your resume. Romancing it by keeping it updated, relevant, and looking good will give you a better chance of going to the next step...the interview.

*Written by Tina Reed, TSU Career Development Center Coordinator for Professional Development & Employer Relations, breedhew@tstate.edu, (615) 963-7527.*

# SMART

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In accordance with Federal statutes and regulations, no person on the grounds of race, color, age, sex, national origin or disability shall be excluded from participating in, denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program activity receiving financial assistance from the Department of Defense.



# Chronological Resume Example

**Your Name**  
 Street Address  
 City, State, Zip  
 Area Code/ Phone Number

**Objective or Summary of Qualification:** Seeking entry-level position in business management. If you opt for a "Summary of Qualifications", please list relevant academic and transferable skills you possess in this section

- Education:** Name of School, Location of School
- Bachelor of Science, Business Administration, Estimated Graduation Date
  - Emphasis: Marketing
  - GPA: 3.67 (typically state if GPA is 3.0 or higher)
  - Studied abroad one semester in England

**Employment or Experience:**  
 List jobs held, company name, length of time for position and major duties. List significant responsibilities in terms of the impact you had on the job. Please include relevant data related to numbers, typical workflow, sales figures, etc.

**Skills:**  
 Leadership Skills – list with examples of accomplishments (i.e. served as President of a student organization, led a service project)  
 Interpersonal Communication Skills – list with examples of accomplishments (i.e. made seven presentations during new student orientation, etc.)

**Honors:**  
 Computer Skills – list any systems you are proficient on  
 List accomplishments at the collegiate level and beyond

**Awards:**  
 List any received at the collegiate level and beyond

**Activities:**  
 List and explain type of organization (i.e. peer mentoring, professional development, etc., if not widely recognized organization)

**Note:** Students typically just need a one-page resume. If a second page is needed, ensure information at least fills up the majority of the second page. Please remember to not use acronyms.

# PRESENTING YOUR BEST SELF

# Functional Resume Example

**Celestine Moore**  
 4155 Clement Drive  
 Nashville, TN 37207  
 (615) 555-1212  
 Cmoore7@mytsu.tnstate.edu

**Objective**  
 To obtain a position in management or a related area

**Education**  
 December 2009 **Tennessee State University** Nashville, TN  
 Bachelors of Business Administration, Management  
 • 3.3 GPA Dean's List

- Management**
- Supervised various youth recreational activities
  - Trained new employees in effective sales and direct mail techniques

- Interpersonal**
- Designed and developed a coding system for a university research project
  - Organized and recorded data as a research assistant.
  - Served as facilitator and group leader for a team of 10 members

- Organizational**
- Provided administrative support in producing office communication
  - Designed and developed a coding system for a research project
  - Recognized by supervisors as being efficient and detail-oriented

**Experience**  
 ABC Corporation, Nashville, TN  
 Sales Associate (June 2006 -Present)  
 HCA, Nashville, TN  
 Research Assistant (May-August 2007)

**Honors and Activities**  
 SUBG, HCAP Student Organization, NSAH Recipient of Lettie Pate Scholarship, AKP Prof. Bus. Fraternity, Graduate and Professional Studies Program

**Skills**  
 Outstanding verbal and written communication skills. Creative problem-solver, determined, proven ability to manage multiple projects individually and as a team player. Motivated and committed to successful outcomes, excellent presentation skills, and self-motivated. Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Project, and Excel.



# Outstanding Student Example

**Resume B. Ready** (Your name)  
 123 Any Drive Nashville, TN Zip Code  
 Email: resumebrady@tsumail.com  
 Phone: (000) 000-0000

## Summary of Qualifications

Business Administration major with strong leadership, organizational, and critical thinking skills. Works well with diverse populations. Proficient in Microsoft Office and SAP Business Management Software

## Education

**Tennessee State University**- Nashville, TN  
 Major: Business Administration Concentration: Supply Chain Management  
 Graduation Date: May 2015  
 GPA: 3.5

## Work Experience

**Delivery Plus Corporation**- Any town, USA  
**Supply Chain Scholar Intern**  
 May 2014- August 2014  

- Improved the contract and insurance tracking procedures to save \$50,000 annually
- Resourced battery parts and reaped \$74,000 in cost savings
- Participated in green belt and black belt Six Sigma projects

## ABC Corporation

Houston, TX  
**Global Summer Intern**  
 May 2013- August 2013  

- Managed 12 reports and developed metrics to track spending
- Managed contract and purchase order database tracking \$12M in revenue
- Designed an alternate database management system for tracking products and revenue

## Tennessee State University

Nashville, TN  
**Residence Hall Desk Attendant**  
 September 2012- May 2013  

- Greeted residents and guests who entered the building, checked-in residents, and coordinated room changes
- Assisted with problem solving issues such as reporting maintenance/facility issues and student lock-outs
- Provided excellent customer service in person and on the phone

## ABC Grocery Store

Minneapolis, MN  
**Cashier/Customer Service (Seasonal)**  
 December 2010- August 2012  

- Operated a cash register with efficiency: processed cash, checks, and credit card transactions
- Assisted customers with questions regarding grocery selections and prices
- Promoted store products and special offers available to customers

## Honors & Activities

- Tennessee State University Honors Council- Vice President (August 2013- Present)
- Recording Secretary (August 2012- May 2013)
- Alpha Kappa Psi Professional Business Fraternity, Inc. Membership Committee Chair (August 2014- Present)
- Recipient of the ABC Scholarship Award (August- May 2013)
- Dean's List (May 2012- Present)

## Volunteer Experiences

Second Harvest Food Bank, Nashville, TN- Organize and pack food to be delivered to families in need  
 Service Learning, Hands on Nashville- Performed a variety of different tasks and duties: cleaned local neighborhoods, read to elementary school students, and assisted with book drives

## FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English (Native Language), French (Basic)  
**WORK EXPERIENCE**  
*Sales Representative/Manager*, Pre-Paid Legal Services  
 1/2009 – Present  
*Cashier*, CU Parking Services  
 5/07 – 5/10  
*Cashier*, Wal-Mart  
 5/06 – 5/07

# PRESENTING YOUR BEST SELF

# Technical Resume Example

## Name

Street Address  
 City, State, Zip  
 Phone Number  
 Email Address

## OBJECTIVE

Seeking a full-time position in embedded systems, software development, web-design or other position where Programming knowledge can be applied. Available May 2013.

## COMPUTER SKILLS

**Operating systems:** Win XP/7/8, UNIX  
**Languages:** C, C++, Python, Java, Visual Basic  
**Software:** Mathematica, MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint, MS Access  
**Web:** Experienced in HTML, DreamWeaver

## EDUCATION

**Tennessee State University, Nashville, TN**  
*Bachelor of Science, Computer Science ABET Accredited*  
**Expected Graduation: May 2013**

## Relevant Courses:

Data Structures  
 Computers as Components  
 Software Engineering  
 Numerical Computation  
 Programming Languages  
 Digital Logic  
 Computer Organizations  
 Operating Systems

## TEAMWORK EXPERIENCE

### Digital Logic Project

- Designed and implemented circuits using Xilinx to make an elevator operate with a team of three students.

### Picture Frame Design Project

- Designed and implemented a project sponsored by Colorado Frame Company to design picture frames and calculate the cost of materials using Java language with a team of four students.

## LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

International Club, Active Member, Tennessee State University  
 Engineering Peer Advocate, Tennessee State University  
 2009 – Present  
 2010 – 2013

## HONORS

Dean's List: Fall 2009 to Present  
 Boulder Multicultural Diversity Scholarship: Sole annual recipient, 2011

# Cover Letters

- Always enclose a cover letter when you mail out a resume.
- Cover letters should be individually typed and signed.
- Your cover letter should be brief, usually one page, and follow the general guidelines given below.
- Leave a 1” margin on all sides and make top and bottom margins as equal as possible.
- Be sure to proof the final version for any typographical or grammatical errors.

## Cover Letter Format

Your Address  
City, State Zip Code

Date

Contact’s Name  
Title of Contact  
Company Name  
Address  
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr. /Ms. (Contact’s Last Name):

Your opening paragraph should arouse interest on the part of the reader. Tell why you are writing the letter. Give them information to show your specific interest in this company.

Your middle paragraph should create desire. Give details of your background that will show the reader why you should be considered as a candidate. Be as specific as possible about the kind of job you want. Don’t make the reader try to guess what you would be interested in.

Refer the reader to your general qualifications on your enclosed resume or other material. Use as much space as needed to tell your story, but keep it brief and to the point.

In your closing paragraph, ask for an action. Ask for an appointment suggesting a time when you will be available. A positive request is harder to ignore than a vague hope.

Sincerely yours,

Your handwritten signature

Your typed name

Enclosure

## Sample Cover Letter

Your Name  
Your Address  
City, State Zip Code

Date

Contact’s Name  
Title of Contact  
Company Name  
Address  
City, State Zip Code

Dear (Contact’s Name):

I am delighted to have the opportunity to apply for the Retail Marketing Manager position with your company. I learned about this position while visiting the Tennessee State University Career Development Center.

My interest in the Retail Marketing Manager position is rooted in several factors. First, I have a proven ability to conduct research on the latest trends; I have experience in organizing programs through traditional marketing and social networking. Second, I understand the importance of internal and external marketing for effective branding. Third, I believe that my responsibilities as the Retail Marketing Manager will be both challenging and rewarding, and I welcome the opportunity to discover new ways to promote the company. ABC Company has emerged as having a strong market position, an excellent training program, and a reputation for excellent customer service. Based on your company’s progression and my array of skills, I believe that I would be an excellent choice for this position.

Finally, while my resume shows a summary of my qualifications, I would like to discuss my skills and abilities in person. Thank you for the opportunity. I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,

Your Handwritten Signature

Your Typed Name

Enclosure

# Letter of Application

000 Lakeland Ave.  
New Rochelle, NY 10077  
April 11, 20XX

*note spacing and arrangement*

Ms. Mary Richards  
Director of Campus Relations  
XYZ Corporation  
54 West Third Street  
Albany, NY 10056

*use name whenever possible*

Dear Ms. Richards:

I am interested in applying for the sales representative position recently advertised in *The New York Times*. The skills I have developed from my work experience and academic background support my strong interest in a sales career.

*identify position*

As you can see from my resume, the internship I had with ABC Corporation provided an opportunity for me to gain practical experience with account maintenance and cold-calling new accounts. In addition, I have worked as a waiter for the past four years, learning firsthand how to effectively deal with customers and their demands. I have been formally commended by the management several times, being named "Employee of the Month."

*refer to resume . . . point out qualifications and relevant background*

Since I decided to pursue a sales career, XYZ Corporation has been at the top of my list of prospective employers. The strides your company has taken in the computer software market, namely the development of packages for use by pharmacies and hospitals, make XYZ a leader in the industry.

I would very much like an opportunity to speak with you regarding the sales representative position. I will call you late next week to discuss my qualifications for the position or you can reach me in the meantime at (718) 555-0000. Thank you for considering me for this position.

*arrange for an interview*

Sincerely,



John K. Alberts

Enclosure

*note that you have enclosed your resume*

# PRESENTING YOUR BEST SELF

# Letter of Acceptance

18240 Magnolia Place  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
May 16, 20XX

Mr. John Sampson  
Vice President  
ABC, Inc.  
2301 Walnut Grove Lane  
Raleigh, NC 27695

Dear Mr. Sampson:

I am writing to confirm receipt of your letter offering me a position in ABC's technical training program at an annual salary of \$30,000. I am very pleased to accept this offer, and I am proud to have been selected for the program.

*note offer and how you learned of it*

I will contact your office for more details, such as when the training sessions begin. Thank you for the offer and for your consideration throughout the past few weeks.

*arrange next communication*

Sincerely,



Karen E. Jones



# Thank-You Letter Format

Your Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Date

Name of Interviewer  
Title of Interviewer  
Company Name  
Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. (Interviewer's Last name):

In the first paragraph, state when and where you had your interview and thank the interviewer for his or her time. Reaffirm your interest in the position and the organization.

In the second paragraph, mention something that particularly appeals to you about working for them and reinforce a point or two in support of your application.

If after the interview you thought of something you wish you had said, the third paragraph of the letter is a good place to bring that up.

You can also restate your understanding of the next steps in the hiring process.

In the last paragraph, thank the employer for considering your application and ask for further communication.

Sincerely yours,

Your handwritten signature

Your typed name

# Thank-You Letter Example

One Main Street  
Nashville, Tennessee 37209

June 11, 20XX

Ms. Jane Doe  
Director, Human Resources  
Big Automotive Incorporated  
1234 Greatness Road  
Nashville, Tennessee 37209

Dear Ms. Doe:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me regarding the Project Manager position that is available with Big Automotive Incorporated. After speaking with you and your staff, I am confident that this is a great fit for my skill sets and I would be thrilled to join your team.

My professional experiences have enhanced my skills in strategic planning, time management and excellent interpersonal communication, which would contribute to your organization. In addition to my experiences, I am a focused team player.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration. If you should have any additional information, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Jim Smith

# Letters of Recommendation

**C**andidates for employment, graduate school, scholarships or any activity for which others will evaluate their talents and abilities will need to request letters of recommendation. The content and quality of these letters, as well as the caliber of the people who write them, are critical to the selection process.

## Selecting People to Serve as References

Select individuals whom you feel are knowledgeable of your skills, work ethic, talents and future capacity. The selection of your references is critical, as a reference that is ill-informed could sabotage all the great work you have done in a matter of minutes. Choose people who have known you for a minimum of six months. The longer they have known you the better, but they must have had regular contact with you to observe your growth and development. A reference from someone who may have known you several years ago but you have not spoken to in a year or more is not in a position to critique your skills.

If you must choose between several people, select those who know you the best but who also hold a higher rank in their profession. A department head is a better candidate than a graduate assistant or an instructor. Never choose someone on status alone, continue to choose people based on how well they know you and how much they want to assist you in your job search. *Do not choose people who are not committed to you or who are not very familiar with your background.*

## Try to Meet Face to Face

Never assume someone will want the responsibility to serve as your reference. Make an appointment to discuss your career goals and purpose of the letter of recommendation. Determine if the person would want the responsibility of serving as your reference, which involves not only writing a letter supporting your skills, but also handling any phone inquiries and responding to other questions which may be posed by a selection committee. Persons who serve as a reference have responsibilities that go beyond the words they put on paper. They should feel strongly about your success and desire to do whatever they can to assist you in reaching your goals. You have come too far to let someone jeopardize your future.

A personal meeting is always best because you can observe your potential reference's body language to see how interested he or she is in assisting you. A slow response to a question or a neutral facial expression may be this person's way of trying to show you that he/she does feel comfortable serving as your reference. Trust your instincts. If you don't feel that you want to pursue this person as a reference you are not required to inform them of your decision. At any rate, always thank the person and end the meeting on a positive note.

## Help Them Help You

You must assist your reference-givers so they can do the best job possible. Provide them with a copy of your current resume, transcript, job descriptions for the type of employment you desire or other detailed information related to the purpose of the letter. Provide a one-page summary of any achievements or skills exhibited with the person who will be writing the letter. They

may not remember everything you did under their supervision or time spent with you. Finally, provide them with a statement of future goals outlining what you want to accomplish in the next few years.

An employer will interview you and then contact your references to determine consistency in your answers. You should not inflate what you are able to do or what you may have completed in work or school assignments. A reference is looked upon as someone who can confirm your skill and ability level. Any inconsistencies between what you said in your interview and a reference's response could eliminate you from further consideration. The key is to keep your references informed of what you are going to be discussing with employers so there is a clear understanding of what is valued by the employer.

## What's the Magic Number?

Each situation will dictate the appropriate number of references that will be required. The average would be three to five letters of recommendation. Generally, references are people whom you have known professionally; they should not be family or friends. When selecting people as references, choose people who know you well and have the most to say pertaining to the purpose of the letter. One person may be very appropriate for a reference for employment, while another would be best for use in admission to graduate or professional school or a scholarship application.

Encourage your reference to use strong, descriptive words that provide the evidence of your interpersonal skills initiative, leadership, flexibility, conflict resolution, decision-making, judgment, oral and written communication skills, and grasp of your field of study. Education majors are encouraged to request a letter from the cooperating teacher, supervising teacher, professor(s) in your major, and a current or former employer.

## Maintain Professional Courtesies

Give your reference writers ample time to complete their letters and provide a self-addressed stamped envelope. Make it as easy for them as possible so they don't have to spend valuable time searching for the proper return address and a stamp. Follow up with your letter writers and let them know the status of your plans and search. They will want to know how you are doing and whether there is anything else they may do to increase your candidacy. You never know when you will need their assistance again, and it is just good manners to keep those who care about you informed of your progress. Finally, many times when two or more candidates are considered equally qualified, a strong letter of reference can play an important role in determining who is selected for the position.

Maintaining a good list of references is part of any professional's success. Continue to nurture valuable relationships with people who will want to do whatever they can to aid in your success. Your personal success is based on surrounding yourself with positive people who all believe in you. No one makes it alone; we all need a little help from our friends.

*Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.*

# What Happens During the Interview?

**T**he interviewing process can be scary if you don't know what to expect. All interviews fit a general pattern. While each interview will differ, all will share three common characteristics: the beginning, middle and conclusion.

The typical interview will last 30 minutes, although some may be longer. A typical structure is as follows:

- Five minutes—small talk
- Fifteen minutes—a mutual discussion of your background and credentials as they relate to the needs of the employer
- Five minutes—asks you for questions
- Five minutes—conclusion of interview

As you can see, there is not a lot of time to state your case. The employer may try to do most of the talking. When you do respond to questions or ask your own, your statements should be concise and organized without being too brief.

## It Starts Before You Even Say Hello

The typical interview starts before you even get into the inner sanctum. The recruiter begins to evaluate you the minute you are identified. You are expected to shake the recruiter's hand upon being introduced. Don't be afraid to extend your hand first. This shows assertiveness.

It's a good idea to arrive at least 15 minutes early. You can use the time to relax. It gets easier later. It may mean counting to ten slowly or wiping your hands on a handkerchief to keep them dry.

## How's Your Small Talk Vocabulary?

Many recruiters will begin the interview with some small talk. Topics may range from the weather to sports and will rarely focus on anything that brings out your skills. Nonetheless, you are still being evaluated.

Recruiters are trained to evaluate candidates on many different points. They may be judging how well you communicate on an informal basis. This means you must do more than smile and nod.

## The Recruiter Has the Floor

The main part of the interview starts when the recruiter begins discussing the organization. If the recruiter uses vague generalities about the position and you want more specific information, ask questions. Be sure you have a clear understanding of the job and the company.

As the interview turns to talk about your qualifications, be prepared to deal with aspects of your background that could be construed as negative, i.e., low grade point average, no participation in outside activities, no related work experience. It is up to you to convince the recruiter that although these points appear negative, positive attributes can be found in them. A low GPA could stem from having to fully support yourself through college; you might have no related work experience, but plenty of experience that shows you to be a loyal and valued employee.

Many times recruiters will ask why you chose the major you did or what your career goals are. These questions are designed to determine your goal direction. Employers seek people who have direction and motivation. This can be demonstrated by your answers to these innocent-sounding questions.

## It's Your Turn to Ask Questions

When the recruiter asks, "Now do you have any questions?" it's important to have a few ready. Dr. C. Randall Powell, author of

*Career Planning Today*, suggests some excellent strategies for dealing with this issue. He says questions should elicit positive responses from the employer. Also, the questions should bring out your interest in and knowledge of the organization.

By asking intelligent, well-thought-out questions, you show the employer you are serious about the organization and need more information. It also indicates to the recruiter that you have done your homework.

## The Close Counts, Too

The interview isn't over until you walk out the door. The conclusion of the interview usually lasts five minutes and is very important. During this time the recruiter is assessing your overall performance.

It is important to remain enthusiastic and courteous. Often the conclusion of the interview is indicated when the recruiter stands up. However, if you feel the interview has reached its conclusion, feel free to stand up first.

Shake the recruiter's hand and thank him or her for considering you. Being forthright is a quality that most employers will respect, indicating that you feel you have presented your case and the decision is now up to the employer.

## Expect the Unexpected

During the interview, you may be asked some unusual questions. Don't be too surprised. Many times questions are asked simply to see how you react.

For example, surprise questions could range from, "Tell me a joke" to "What time period would you like to have lived in?" These are not the kind of questions for which you can prepare in advance. Your reaction time and the response you give will be evaluated by the employer, but there's no way to anticipate questions like these. While these questions are not always used, they are intended to force you to react under some stress and pressure. The best advice is to think and give a natural response.

## Evaluations Made by Recruiters

The employer will be observing and evaluating you during the interview. Erwin S. Stanton, author of *Successful Personnel Recruiting and Selection*, indicates some evaluations made by the employer during the interview include:

1. How mentally alert and responsive is the job candidate?
2. Is the applicant able to draw proper inferences and conclusions during the course of the interview?
3. Does the applicant demonstrate a degree of intellectual depth when communicating, or is his/her thinking shallow and lacking depth?
4. Has the candidate used good judgment and common sense regarding life planning up to this point?
5. What is applicant's capacity for problem-solving activities?
6. How well does candidate respond to stress and pressure?



# Ten Rules of Interviewing

**B**efore stepping into an interview, be sure to practice, practice, practice. A job-seeker going to a job interview without preparing is like an actor performing on opening night without rehearsing.

To help with the interview process, keep the following ten rules in mind:

- 1 Keep your answers brief and concise.**  
Unless asked to give more detail, limit your answers to two to three minutes per question. Tape yourself and see how long it takes you to fully answer a question.
- 2 Include concrete, quantifiable data.**  
Interviewees tend to talk in generalities. Unfortunately, generalities often fail to convince interviewers that the applicant has assets. Include measurable information and provide details about specific accomplishments when discussing your strengths.
- 3 Repeat your key strengths three times.**  
It's essential that you comfortably and confidently articulate your strengths. Explain how the strengths relate to the company's or department's goals and how they might benefit the potential employer. If you repeat your strengths then they will be remembered and—if supported with quantifiable accomplishments—they will more likely be believed.
- 4 Prepare five or more success stories.**  
In preparing for interviews, make a list of your skills and key assets. Then reflect on past jobs and pick out one or two instances when you used those skills successfully.
- 5 Put yourself on their team.**  
Ally yourself with the prospective employer by using the employer's name and products or services. For example, "As a member of \_\_\_\_\_, I would carefully analyze the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_." Show that you are thinking like a member of the team and will fit in with the existing environment. Be careful though not to say anything that would offend or be taken negatively. Your research will help you in this area.
- 6 Image is often as important as content.**  
What you look like and how you say something are just as important as what you say. Studies have shown that 65 percent of the conveyed message is nonverbal; gestures, physical appearance and attire are highly influential during job interviews.
- 7 Ask questions.**  
The types of questions you ask and the way you ask them can make a tremendous impression on the interviewer. Good questions require advance preparation. Just as you plan how you would answer an interviewer's questions, write out specific questions you want to ask. Then look

for opportunities to ask them during the interview. Don't ask about benefits or salary. The interview process is a two-way street whereby you and the interviewer assess each other to determine if there is an appropriate match.

- 8 Maintain a conversational flow.**  
By consciously maintaining a conversational flow—a dialogue instead of a monologue—you will be perceived more positively. Use feedback questions at the end of your answers and use body language and voice intonation to create a conversational interchange between you and the interviewer.
- 9 Research the company, product lines and competitors.**  
Research will provide information to help you decide whether you're interested in the company and important data to refer to during the interview.
- 10 Keep an interview journal.**  
As soon as possible, write a brief summary of what happened. Note any follow-up action you should take and put it in your calendar. Review your presentation. Keep a journal of your attitude and the way you answered the questions. Did you ask questions to get the information you needed? What might you do differently next time? Prepare and send a brief, concise thank-you letter. Restate your skills and stress what you can do for the company.

## In Summary

Because of its importance, interviewing requires advance preparation. Only you will be able to positively affect the outcome. You must be able to compete successfully with the competition for the job you want. In order to do that, be certain you have considered the kind of job you want, why you want it and how you qualify for it. You also must face reality: *Is the job attainable?*

In addition, recognize what it is employers want in their candidates. They want "can do" and "will do" employees. Recognize and use the following factors to your benefit as you develop your sales presentation. In evaluating candidates, employers consider the following factors:

- Ability
- Loyalty
- Personality
- Acceptance
- Recommendations
- Outside activities while in school
- Impressions made during the interview
- Character
- Initiative
- Communication skills
- Work record

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.

# Are You Ready for a Behavioral Interview?

**“T**ell me about a time when you were on a team, and one of the members wasn’t carrying his or her weight.” If this is one of the leading questions in your job interview, you could be in for a behavioral interview. Based on the premise that the best way to predict future behavior is to determine past behavior, this style of interviewing is popular among recruiters.

Today, more than ever, each hiring decision is critical. Behavioral interviewing is designed to minimize personal impressions that might cloud the hiring decision. By focusing on the applicant’s actions and behaviors, rather than subjective impressions that can sometimes be misleading, interviewers can make more accurate hiring decisions.

A manager of staff planning and college relations for a major chemical company believes, “Although we have not conducted any formal studies to determine whether retention or success on the job has been affected, I feel our move to behavioral interviewing has been successful. It helps concentrate recruiters’ questions on areas important to our candidates’ success within [our company].” The company introduced behavioral interviewing in the mid-1980s at several sites and has since implemented it companywide.

## Behavioral vs. Traditional Interviews

If you have training or experience with traditional interviewing techniques, you may find the behavioral interview quite different in several ways:

- ✓ Instead of asking how you *would* behave in a particular situation, the interviewer will ask you to describe how you *did* behave.
- ✓ Expect the interviewer to question and probe (think of “peeling the layers from an onion”).
- ✓ The interviewer will ask you to provide details and will not allow you to theorize or generalize about events.
- ✓ The interview will be a more structured process that will concentrate on areas that are important to the interviewer, rather than allowing you to concentrate on areas that you may feel are important.
- ✓ You may not get a chance to deliver any prepared stories.
- ✓ Most interviewers will be taking notes throughout the interview.

The behavioral interviewer has been trained to objectively collect and evaluate information and works from a profile of desired behaviors that are needed for success on the job. Because the behaviors a candidate has demonstrated in previous positions are likely to be repeated, you will be asked to share situations in which you may or may not have exhibited these behaviors. Your answers will be tested for accuracy and consistency.

If you are an entry-level candidate with no previous related experience, the interviewer will look for behaviors in situations similar to those of the target position:

*“Describe a major problem you have faced and how you dealt with it.”*

*“Give an example of when you had to work with your hands to accomplish a task or project.”*

*“What class did you like the most? What did you like about it?”*

Follow-up questions will test for consistency and determine if you exhibited the desired behavior in that situation:

*“Can you give me an example?”*

*“What did you do?”*

*“What did you say?”*

*“What were you thinking?”*

*“How did you feel?”*

*“What was your role?”*

*“What was the result?”*

You will notice an absence of such questions as, “Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses.”

## How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview

- ✓ Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially those involving coursework, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning and customer service.
- ✓ Prepare short descriptions of each situation; be ready to give details if asked.
- ✓ Be sure each story has a beginning, a middle and an end; i.e., be ready to describe the situation, your action and the outcome or result.
- ✓ Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable).
- ✓ Be honest. Don’t embellish or omit any part of the story. The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation.
- ✓ Be specific. Don’t generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.

A possible response to the question, “Tell me about a time when you were on a team and a member wasn’t pulling his or her weight” might go as follows: “I had been assigned to a team to build a canoe out of concrete. One of our team members wasn’t showing up for our lab sessions or doing his assignments. I finally met with him in private, explained the frustration of the rest of the team and asked if there was anything I could do to help. He told me he was preoccupied with another class that he wasn’t passing, so I found someone to help him with the other course. He not only was able to spend more time on our project, but he was also grateful to me for helping him out. We finished our project on time and got a ‘B’ on it.”

The interviewer might then probe: “How did you feel when you confronted this person?” “Exactly what was the nature of the project?” “What was his responsibility as a team member?” “What was your role?” “At what point did you take it upon yourself to confront him?” You can see it is important that you not make up or “shade” information and why you should have a clear memory of the entire incident.

## Don’t Forget the Basics

Instead of feeling anxious or threatened by the prospect of a behavioral interview, remember the essential difference between the traditional interview and the behavioral interview: The traditional interviewer may allow you to project what you might or should do in a given situation, whereas the behavioral interviewer is looking for past actions only. It will always be important to put your best foot forward and make a good impression on the interviewer with appropriate attire, good grooming, a firm handshake and direct eye contact. There is no substitute for promptness, courtesy, preparation, enthusiasm and a positive attitude.

# Questions Asked by Employers

## Personal

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your hobbies?
3. Why did you choose to interview with our organization?
4. Describe your ideal job.
5. What can you offer us?
6. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
7. Can you name some weaknesses?
8. Define success. Failure.
9. Have you ever had any failures? What did you learn from them?
10. Of which three accomplishments are you most proud?
11. Who are your role models? Why?
12. How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?
13. What motivates you most in a job?
14. Have you had difficulty getting along with a former professor/supervisor/co-worker and how did you handle it?
15. Have you ever spoken before a group of people? How large?
16. Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?
17. What do you know about our organization (products or services)?
18. Where do you want to be in five years? Ten years?
19. Do you plan to return to school for further education?

## Education

20. Why did you choose your major?
21. Why did you choose to attend your college or university?
22. Do you think you received a good education? In what ways?
23. In which campus activities did you participate?
24. Which classes in your major did you like best? Least? Why?
25. Which elective classes did you like best? Least? Why?
26. If you were to start over, what would you change about your education?

27. Do your grades accurately reflect your ability? Why or why not?
28. Were you financially responsible for any portion of your college education?

## Experience

29. What job-related skills have you developed?
30. Did you work while going to school? In what positions?
31. What did you learn from these work experiences?
32. What did you enjoy most about your last employment? Least?
33. Have you ever quit a job? Why?
34. Give an example of a situation in which you provided a solution to an employer.
35. Give an example of a time in which you worked under deadline pressure.
36. Have you ever done any volunteer work? What kind?
37. How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?

## Career Goals

38. Do you prefer to work under supervision or on your own?
39. What kind of boss do you prefer?
40. Would you be successful working with a team?
41. Do you prefer large or small organizations? Why?
42. What other types of positions are you considering?
43. How do you feel about working in a structured environment?
44. Are you able to work on several assignments at once?
45. How do you feel about working overtime?
46. How do you feel about travel?
47. How do you feel about the possibility of relocating?
48. Are you willing to work flextime?

Before you begin interviewing, think about these questions and possible responses and discuss them with a career advisor. Conduct mock interviews and be sure you are able to communicate clear, unrehearsed answers to interviewers.

# Questions to Ask Employers

1. Please describe the duties of the job for me.
2. What kinds of assignments might I expect the first six months on the job?
3. Are salary adjustments geared to the cost of living or job performance?
4. Does your company encourage further education?
5. How often are performance reviews given?
6. What products (or services) are in the development stage now?
7. Do you have plans for expansion?
8. What are your growth projections for next year?
9. Have you cut your staff in the last three years?
10. How do you feel about creativity and individuality?
11. Do you offer flextime?
12. Is your company environmentally conscious? In what ways?
13. In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competitors?
14. Is this a new position or am I replacing someone?
15. What is the largest single problem facing your staff (department) now?
16. May I talk with the last person who held this position?

17. What is the usual promotional time frame?
18. Does your company offer either single or dual career-track programs?
19. What do you like best about your job/company?
20. Once the probation period is completed, how much authority will I have over decisions?
21. Has there been much turnover in this job area?
22. Do you fill positions from the outside or promote from within first?
23. What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
24. What skills are especially important for someone in this position?
25. What characteristics do the achievers in this company seem to share?
26. Is there a lot of team/project work?
27. Will I have the opportunity to work on special projects?
28. Where does this position fit into the organizational structure?
29. How much travel, if any, is involved in this position?
30. What is the next course of action? When should I expect to hear from you or should I contact you?



# Students With Disabilities: Acing the Interview

**T**he traditional face-to-face interview can be particularly stressful when you have a disability—especially a visible disability. Hiring managers and employers may have had little prior experience with persons with disabilities and may react with discomfort or even shock to the appearance of a wheelchair, cane or an unusual physical trait. When this happens, the interviewer is often so uncomfortable that he or she just wants to “get it over with” and conducts the interview in a hurried manner. But this scenario robs you of the opportunity to present your credentials and could prevent the employer from identifying a suitable, qualified candidate for employment.

It is essential that you understand that interviewing is not a passive process where the interviewer asks all the questions and you simply provide the answers. You, even more than applicants without disabilities, must be skilled in handling each interview in order to put the employer representative at ease. You must also be able to demonstrate your ability to manage your disability and be prepared to provide relevant information about your skills, experiences and educational background. In addition, you may have to inform the employer of the equipment, tools and related resources that you will need to perform the job tasks.

## To Disclose or Not to Disclose

To disclose or not to disclose, and when and how to disclose, are decisions that persons with disabilities must make for themselves during the job search process.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you are not legally obligated to disclose your disability unless it is likely to directly affect your job performance. On the other hand, if your disability is visible, it will be evident at the time of the interview so it may be more prudent to acknowledge your disability during the application process to avoid catching the employer representative off guard.

## Reasons for Disclosing

You take a risk when you decide to disclose your disability. Some employers may reject your application based on negative, preconceived ideas about persons with disabilities. In addition, you may feel that the issue is too personal to be publicized among strangers. On the other hand, if you provide false answers about your health or disability on an application and the truth is uncovered later, you risk losing your job. You may even be held legally responsible if you failed to inform your employer and an accident occurs that is related to your disability.

## Timing the Disclosure

The employer’s first contact with you will typically be through your cover letter and resume, especially if you initially contacted the organization. There are many differing opinions on whether one should mention the disability on the resume or in the cover letter. If you are comfortable revealing your disability early in the process, then give careful consideration to where the information is placed and how it is stated. The cover letter and resume should primarily outline relevant skills, experiences and education for the position for which you are applying. The reader should have a clear understanding of your suitability for the position. Therefore, if you choose to disclose your disability, the disclosure should be brief and placed near the end of the cover letter and resume. *It should never be the first piece of information that the employer sees about you.* The information should also reveal your ability to manage your disability while performing required job functions.

## When You Get the Interview

As stated earlier, it may not be wise to hide the disability (especially a visible disability) until the time of the interview. The employer representative may be surprised, uncomfortable or assume that you intentionally hid critical information. As a result, more time may be spent asking irrelevant and trivial questions because of nervousness, rather than focusing on your suitability for the position. Get assistance from contacts in human resources, your career center or workers with disabilities about the different ways to prepare the interviewer for your arrival. Take the time to rehearse what you will say before making initial contact. If oral communication is difficult for you, have a career services staff person (or another professional) place the call for you and explain how you plan to handle the interview. If you require support for your interview (such as a sign language interpreter), contact human resources in advance to arrange for this assistance. Advance preparation puts everyone at ease and shows that you can manage your affairs.

## Tips on Managing the Interview

### *Prior to the Interview*

1. Identify a career services staff person to help you prepare employers for their interview with you.
2. Arrange for several taped, mock interview sessions to become more confident in discussing your work-related skills and in putting the employer representative at ease; rehearse ahead of time to prepare how you will handle inappropriate, personal or possibly illegal questions.
3. If your disability makes oral communication difficult, create a written narrative to supplement your resume that details your abilities.
4. Determine any technical support, resources and costs that might be necessary for your employment so that you can respond to questions related to this topic.
5. Be sure that your career center has information for employers on interviewing persons with disabilities.
6. Seek advice from other workers with disabilities who have been successful in finding employment.
7. Review the general advice about interviewing outlined in this career guide.

### *During the Interview*

1. Put the interviewer at ease before starting the interview by addressing any visible disability (if you have not done so already).
2. Plan to participate fully in the discussion (not just answer questions); maintain the appropriate control of the interview by tactfully keeping the interview focused on your abilities—not the disability.
3. Inform the employer of any accommodations needed and how they can be achieved, thereby demonstrating your ability to manage your disability.
4. Conclude the interview by reiterating your qualifications and giving the interviewer the opportunity to ask any further questions.

*Written by Rosita Smith.*

# The Site Visit/Interview: One Step Closer

**W**hile on-campus screening interviews are important, on-site visits are where jobs are won or lost. After an on-campus interview, strong candidates are usually invited to visit the employer's facility. Work with the employer to schedule the on-site visit at a mutually convenient time. Sometimes employers will try to arrange site visits for several candidates to take place at the same time, so there may not be much flexibility...but you'll never know if the employer is flexible unless you ask.

1. An invitation to an on-site interview is NOT a guarantee of a job offer. It is a chance to examine whether or not you will be a good match for the job and for the organization.
2. If invited to an on-site interview, respond promptly if you are sincerely interested in this employer. Decline politely if you are not. Never go on an on-site interview for the sake of the trip. Document the name and phone number of the person coordinating your trip. Verify who will be handling trip expenses. Most medium- and large-size companies (as well as many smaller ones) will pay your expenses, but others will not. This is very important, because expenses are handled in various ways: 1) the employer may handle all expenses and travel arrangements; 2) you handle your expenses and arrangements (the employer may assist with this), and the employer will reimburse you later; 3) the employer may offer an on-site interview, but will not pay for your travel.
3. Know yourself and the type of job you are seeking with this employer. Don't say, "I am willing to consider anything you have."
4. Thoroughly research the potential employer. Read annual reports, newspaper articles, trade journals, etc. Many companies have Web sites where you can read their mission statements, find out about long-term goals, read recent press releases, and view corporate photos. Don't limit your research only to company-controlled information. The Internet can be a valuable investigative tool. You may uncover key information that may influence—positively or negatively—your decision to pursue employment with a given organization.
5. Bring extra copies of your resume; copies of any paperwork you may have forwarded to the employer; names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of your references; an updated college transcript; a copy of your best paper as a writing sample; a notebook; a black and/or blue pen for filling out forms and applications; and names and addresses of past employers.
6. Bring extra money and a change of clothes. Also, have the names and phone numbers of those who may be meeting you in case your plans change unexpectedly. Anything can happen and you need to be ready for emergencies.
7. Your role at the interview is to respond to questions, to ask your own questions and to observe. Be ready to meet people who are not part of your formal agenda. Be courteous to everyone regardless of his or her position; you never know who might be watching you and your actions once you arrive in town.
8. Don't forget your table manners. Plant trips may include several meals or attendance at a reception the night before

your "big day." When ordering food at a restaurant, follow the lead of the employer host. For example, don't order the three-pound lobster if everyone else is having a more moderately priced entree. If you have the "dining jitters," some authorities suggest ordering food that is easy to handle, such as a boneless fish fillet or chicken breast.

9. Many employers have a set salary range for entry-level positions and others are more negotiable. Though salary should not be brought up until an offer is extended, it is wise to know your worth in advance. In as much as you are a potential employee, you also represent a valuable skills-set product. You should know what kind of product you have created, its value and what the company is willing to buy. Contact your campus career center to obtain more information on salaries.

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## Take note of how the employees interact, and also assess the physical work environment.

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10. Soon after the site visit, record your impressions of your performance. Review the business cards of those you met or write the information in your notebook before leaving the facility. You should have the names, titles, addresses and phone numbers of everyone who was involved in your interview so you can determine which individuals you may want to contact with additional questions or follow-up information. A thank-you letter should be written to the person(s) who will be making the hiring decision. Stay in touch with the employer if you want to pursue a career with them.

A site visit is a two-way street. You are there to evaluate the employer and to determine if your expectations are met for job content, company culture and values, organizational structure, and lifestyles (both at work and leisure). Take note of how the employees interact, and also assess the physical work environment.

Just as any good salesperson would never leave a customer without attempting to close the sale, you should never leave an interview without some sort of closure. If you decide that the job is right for you, don't be afraid to tell the employer that you feel that there is a good fit and you are eager to join their team. The employer is interested in hiring people who want to be associated with them and they will never know of your interest if you don't voice your opinion. Keep in mind that although the employer has the final power to offer a job, your demeanor during the entire interviewing process—both on and off campus—also gives you a great deal of power.

*Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.*

# The Art of Negotiating

**A**n area of the job search that often receives little attention is the art of negotiating. Once you have been offered a job, you have the opportunity to discuss with the employer the terms of your employment. Negotiations may be uncomfortable or unsatisfying because we tend to approach them with a winner-take-all attitude that is counterproductive to the concept of negotiations.

Negotiating with your potential employer can make your job one that best meets your own needs as well as those of your employer. To ensure successful negotiations, it is important to understand the basic components. The definition of negotiation as it relates to employment is: a series of communications (either oral or in writing) that reach a satisfying conclusion for all concerned parties, most often between the new employee and the hiring organization.

Negotiation is a planned series of events that requires strategy, presentation and patience. Preparation is probably the single most important part of successful negotiations. Any good trial attorney will tell you the key to presenting a good case in the courtroom is the hours of preparation that happen beforehand. The same is true for negotiating. A good case will literally present itself. What follows are some suggestions that will help you prepare for successful negotiating.

## Research

Gather as much factual information as you can to back up the case you want to make. For example, if most entering employees cannot negotiate salary, you may be jeopardizing the offer by focusing on that aspect of the package. Turn your attention to other parts of the offer such as their health plan, dental plan, retirement package, the type of schedule you prefer, etc.

## Psychological Preparation

Chances are that you will not know the person with whom you will be negotiating. If you are lucky enough to be acquainted, spend some time reviewing what you know about this person's communication style and decision-making behavior.

In most cases, however, this person will be a stranger. Since most people find the unknown a bit scary, you'll want to ask yourself what approach to negotiating you find most comfortable. How will you psyche yourself up to feel confident enough to ask for what you want? How will you respond to counteroffers? What are your alternatives? What's your bottom line? In short, plan your strategy.

Be sure you know *exactly* what you want. This does not mean you will get exactly that, but having the information clear in your head will help you determine what you are willing to concede. Unless you know what you want, you won't be able to tell somebody else. Clarity improves communication, which is the conduit for effective negotiations.

## Practice

Rehearse the presentation in advance using another person as the employer. If you make mistakes in rehearsal, chances are that you will not repeat them during the actual negotiations. A friend can critique your reasoning and help you prepare for questions. If this all seems like a lot of work, remember that if something is worth negotiating for, it is worth preparing for.

## Dollars and Sense

Always begin by expressing genuine interest in the position and the organization, emphasizing the areas of agreement but allowing "wiggle room" to compromise on other areas. Be prepared to support your points of disagreement, outlining the parts you would like to alter, your suggestions on how this can be done and why it would serve the company's best interests to accommodate your request.

Be prepared to defend your proposal. Back up your reasons for wanting to change the offer with meaningful, work-related skills and positive benefits to the employer. Requesting a salary increase because you are a fast learner or have a high GPA are usually not justifiable reasons in the eyes of the employer. Meaningful work experience or internships that have demonstrated or tested your professional skills are things that will make an employer stop and take notice.

It is sometimes more comfortable for job-seekers to make this initial request in writing and plan to meet later to hash out the differences. You will need to be fairly direct and assertive at this point even though you may feel extremely vulnerable. Keep in mind that the employer has chosen you from a pool of qualified applicants, so you are not as powerless as you think.

Sometimes the employer will bristle at the suggestion that there is room to negotiate. Stand firm, but encourage the employer to think about it for a day or two at which time you will discuss the details of your proposal with him/her. Do not rush the process because you are uncomfortable. The employer may be counting on this discomfort and use it to derail the negotiations. Remember, this is a series of volleys and lobs, trade-offs and compromises that occur over a period of time. It is a process—not a singular event!

Once you have reached a conclusion with which you are both relatively comfortable, present in writing your interpretation of the agreement so that if there is any question, it will be addressed immediately. Negotiation, by definition, implies that each side will give. Do not perceive it as an ultimatum.

If the employer chooses not to grant any of your requests—and realistically, he or she can do that—you will still have the option of accepting the original offer provided you have maintained a positive, productive and friendly atmosphere during your exchanges. You can always re-enter negotiations after you have demonstrated your worth to the organization.

## Money Isn't Everything

There are many things you can negotiate besides salary. For example, benefits can add thousands of dollars to the compensation package. Benefits can range from paid personal leave to discounts on the company's products and services. They constitute more than just icing on the cake; they may be better than the cake itself. Traditional benefits packages include health insurance, paid vacation and personal/sick days. Companies may offer such benefits as child care, elder care or use of the company jet for family emergencies. Other lucrative benefits could include disability and life insurance and a variety of retirement plans. Some organizations offer investment and stock options as well as relocation reimbursement and tuition credits for continued education.

*Written by Lily Maestas, Career Counselor, Career Services, University of California, Santa Barbara.*



# The Benefits of Company Benefits

**T**hough promises of high starting salaries or accelerated career growth may entice you as you search for your dream job, don't forget to check out the company's benefits package. These packages are generally designed to provide protection against financial hardship brought about by unforeseen circumstances, such as illness or injury. With the high cost of medical services, even a routine physical exam can set you back several hundred dollars if you don't have coverage. "Most employees today are looking for more than a paycheck," says Amy Roppe, a former senior account manager at Benefit Source, Inc., a Des Moines, Iowa-based company that designs and administers employee benefit packages. "Employees are looking for overall job satisfaction, and benefits are a key part of that."

What kinds of benefits can you expect at your first job out of college? That depends. Not all benefits programs are created equal, and most have certain rules, limitations and exclusions, particularly in regard to health plans. Though some employers still provide complete coverage with no out-of-pocket expense to workers, most company plans now require the employee to pay part of the benefits expense, often in the form of payroll deductions. However, the cost is usually reasonable in comparison to footing the entire bill by yourself. The benefits described below will give you a general overview of what many companies offer to their employees:

- **Medical insurance.** This is the most basic (and probably most important) benefit you can receive. Health coverage limits an employee's financial liability in the event of illness or injury.
- **Disability insurance.** Provides an income to the employee in the event of a long-term disability.
- **Life insurance.** Provides a benefit payment to family members in the event of the employee's death.
- **Dental insurance.** Provides basic dental coverage. Though many people agree that dental insurance is overpriced (you'll seldom get more than your premiums back in the form of benefits), you'll be covered for cleanings, scalings and x-rays.
- **Prescription drug plan.** This can save you a bundle, particularly if you require medicine for an ongoing condition. Typically, the employee pays a fixed co-payment—for example, \$25—for each prescription.
- **Vision.** Provides a benefit that helps defray the cost of eye exams and corrective lenses.
- **Retirement plans.** These used to be funded entirely by employers but have been largely replaced by 401(k) plans,

which are funded by the employee, often with some degree of "matching" contribution from the employer. However, these matching contributions have limits and the plans vary from company to company. In many companies, there is a specified waiting period before new employees can participate.

- **Flexible spending accounts.** These plans allow you to set aside untaxed dollars to pay for dependent care and unreimbursed medical expenses.
- **Tuition reimbursement.** The employer reimburses the cost of continuing education as long as the classes pertain to your job and certain grade levels are achieved.
- **Vacation.** Most companies will offer paid vacation time to employees. The number of days off is usually determined by how long you've been with the company.
- **Sick time.** Paid leave in the event of illness.

You should also be aware that there is something called "soft benefits." These are usually very popular with employees and cost the company little or nothing. For example, many companies have gone to a business casual dress code, while others may offer what is called "dress-down Fridays." Flextime is another popular soft benefit that many employers offer. This simply means that you don't have to arrive at work at a specific time each day. If it's more convenient for you to start at 10 a.m. to avoid the morning rush hour, for example, you'll be able to do so. However, most companies require employees to be at the office during predetermined "core hours"—usually between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Telecommuting from home is another "benefit" that employers like to tout. However, don't assume you'll be allowed to work from home whenever you want. You'll usually be offered this option when you're too sick to make it to the office, when you're on a tight deadline and your boss wants you to put in extra time, or when you're unable to come to work because of weather-related conditions.

And just what are the most popular benefits among recent college grads entering the work force? "In today's environment, it is assumed that health insurance will be offered," says Amy Roppe, "so most young employees tend to inquire more about retirement or bonus programs. No one is sure whether or not there will be a Social Security benefit when retirement time comes. Workers are taking more personal responsibility for their own financial futures." That sounds like the kind of common-sense advice we should all take.

*Written by John Martalo, a freelance writer based in San Diego.*

# Is Graduate School Right for You?

**A**t some point in your college career, you must decide what you would like to do after graduation—and that includes whether or not to attend graduate school. If you're trying to determine whether graduate school is right for you, here are some pointers to help you make an enlightened decision.

## 1. Should I consider going to graduate school?

*Going to graduate school might be a good idea if you...*

- want to be a professor, lawyer, doctor, investment banker or work in any profession that requires a post-secondary education.
- wish to develop additional expertise in a particular subject or field to maximize your future earning potential and opportunities for career advancement.
- are deeply interested in a particular subject and wish to study it in-depth—AND have the time and financial resources to devote to further education.

*Going to graduate school might not be a good idea if you...*

- are trying to delay your entry into the “real world” with real responsibilities and real bills.
- are clueless about your career goals.
- aren't prepared to devote the time and hard work needed to succeed.
- want to stay in school longer to avoid a poor job market.

## 2. Is it better to work first or attend graduate school immediately after I complete my undergraduate degree?

*Work first if...*

- you would like to get some real-world work experience before investing thousands of dollars in a graduate degree.
- the graduate school of your choice prefers work experience (most MBA and some Ph.D. programs require this).
- you cannot afford to go to graduate school now, and you haven't applied for any scholarships, grants, fellowships and assistantships, which could pay for a great deal of your education.

*Go to graduate school now if...*

- you are absolutely sure you want to be a college professor, doctor, lawyer, etc., and need a graduate degree to pursue your dream job.
- you have been awarded grants, fellowships, scholarships or assistantships that will help pay for your education.
- you're concerned that once you start earning real money, you won't be able to return to the lifestyle of a “poor” student.
- your study habits and mental abilities are at their peak, and you worry whether you'll have the discipline (or motivation) to write papers and study for exams in a few years.

## 3. I am broke. How will I pay for tuition, books, fees and living expenses?

- *Family:* You've likely borrowed from them in the past; maybe you're lucky enough for it to still be a viable option.

- *Student Loans:* Even if you've taken out loans in the past, another \$50,000 - \$75,000 may be a sound “investment” in your future.
- *Fellowships/Scholarships:* A free education is always the best option. The catch is you need a high GPA, good GRE/GMAT/LSAT/MCAT scores and the commitment to search out every possible source of funding.
- *Teaching/Research Assistantships:* Many assistantships include tuition waivers plus a monthly stipend. It's a great way to get paid for earning an education.
- *Employer Sponsorship:* Did you know that some companies actually pay for you to continue your education? The catch is they usually expect you to continue working for them after you complete your degree so they can recoup their investment.

## 4. What are the pros and cons of going to graduate school full-time vs. part-time?

*Benefits of attending graduate school full-time:*

- you'll be able to complete your degree sooner.
- you can totally commit your intellectual, physical and emotional energy to your education.
- ideal if you want to make a dramatic career change.

*Benefits of attending graduate school part-time:*

- work income helps pay for your education.
- you can take a very manageable course load.
- you can juggle family responsibilities while completing your degree.
- allows you to work in the function/industry/career of your choice while continuing your education.
- employer will often pay for part (or all) of your graduate degree.

## 5. Assuming I want to go to graduate school in the near future, what should I do now?

- Identify your true strengths, interests and values to help you discover what is right for YOU—not your friends or parents.
- Keep your grades up and sign up (and prepare) to take the required standardized tests.
- Talk to faculty, friends and family who have gone to graduate school to get their perspective about the differences between being an undergraduate and a graduate student.
- Talk to faculty, friends and family who are in your targeted profession to get a realistic sense of the career path and the challenges associated with the work they do.
- Investigate creative ways to finance your education—by planning ahead you may reduce your debt.
- Research graduate schools to help you find a good match.
- Investigate the admissions process and the current student body profile of your targeted schools to evaluate your probability for admission.
- Have faith and APPLY! Remember, you can't get in unless you apply.

*Written by Roslyn J. Bradford.*

# Developing a Winning Curriculum Vitae (CV)

**A** Curriculum Vitae or CV is a professional document that is used for marketing your background for a variety of purposes, mostly within academia or research. It can be multiple pages, but should be focused. Use the following tips to help you get started on your CV.

## Common Uses

- Graduate school admission, graduate assistantship, or scholarship application
- Teaching, research, and upper-level administrative positions in higher education
- School administration positions (superintendent, principal, department head)
- Research and consulting in a variety of settings
- Academic departmental and tenure reviews
- College or university service appointments
- Professional association leadership positions
- Publishing and editorial board reviews
- Speaking engagements
- Grant proposal

## Education

Include the following information:

- Name of institution(s) where obtained or working toward a degree, listed in reverse chronological order
- Official name of degree(s) and/or certification(s) obtained or currently working toward
- Add Master's Thesis, Project and/or Dissertation title(s)
- Name of advisor

## Additional Sections

Depending on your background, you may want to add additional sections to your resume:

- Teaching Experience and Interests
- Research Experience and Interests
- Related Experience: Internships, Practicum, and/or Fieldwork
- Grants Received and Academic Awards
- Special Training
- Scholarships and Fellowships

*Written by Veronica Rahim, Career Services Consultant, Center for Career Opportunities, Purdue University, for the 2011-2012 Career Planning Handbook.*

## Foundational Standards

Found in most standard resumes:

- **Heading**—name, address, professional email and phone number. A website with professional content (e.g. a portfolio) can be listed in the heading as well. Use the direct URL to the proper page, so the recruiter doesn't have to search your entire site.
- **Objective**—should be specific to the position for which you are applying.
- **Format**—standard margins of one inch, type size from 10-12 points and easy-to-read fonts.
- **Content**—the organization of your document should be rearranged depending on the potential employer. For example, if your education section speaks more to your qualifications for the desired position, it should appear before your employment experience.
- **Experience**—highlight paid, unpaid, school and extracurricular experiences that relate to your desired objective.
- **Skills**—technical/computer, language, leadership, laboratory to name a few.



### Recruiting Management Services

The Recruiting Management Services Division is responsible for posting vacancies in the preferred service and collecting and reviewing all applications for such vacancies in order for state government agencies to have the most qualified candidates to fill positions. Most jobs with the state are covered by the preferred service, in which there are approximately 1,300 different job classifications.

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# Guidelines for Writing Your Personal Statement

## STEP 1: Brainstorming

### Actions:

- Devote time to reflect on the following questions.
- Discuss them with friends or family members.
- Jot down notes. In some cases write sentences.
- Think about the flip side of each question. For example, why are you really committed to the field of biology despite pressure from your parents to become a lawyer or to get a job?

### Your answers to some of these questions will form the heart of your personal statement.

1. How did your pre-college education influence your decision to pursue graduate study in your field?  
*Think about:* High school courses, teachers, special programs, student organizations, and community or volunteer work.
2. How has your college experience influenced your decision?  
*Think about:* College courses, professors, academic interests, research, special programs, student organizations, and the decision-making process you went through to choose your major.
3. How has your work experience influenced your decision?  
*Think about:* Internships, externships, part-time jobs, summer jobs, and volunteer or community work.
4. Who has had the most influence on your decision to pursue graduate study? In what ways?  
*Think about:* Parents, relatives, teachers, professors, clergy, friends of the family, college friends, parents of friends, local merchants, supervisors, coaches, doctors, dentists, lawyers, etc.
5. What situation has had the most influence on your decision?  
*Think about:* Family, academic, work or athletic situations. Think about happy, sad, traumatic, moving, or memorable situations.
6. What personally motivates you to pursue graduate study in this field?  
*Think about:* Your personal skills, interests, and values.

## STEP 2: Writing Your Personal Statement

### Actions:

Incorporate your responses to the above questions. Begin writing your first draft:

1. Develop an outline of your statement prior to writing. It doesn't have to be detailed. It can be three or four main points in the order you want to make them.
2. Accentuate your strengths and what makes you unique.
3. Explain your weaknesses in positive ways. For example, refer to them not as weaknesses but as areas for improvement or growth.
4. Paint pictures and tell stories about what makes you special. In this way the admissions readers will remember you. The story can be happy or sad. The more feeling you can inject into your statement, the more you will stand out.
5. Find out the specific orientation and philosophy of the graduate program. Adapt and refine your statement to fit. This will make you stand out from other applicants who recycle the same personal statement with each application.

### Suggested Outline

Your personal statement will likely range from 250-1200 words or 1-6 pages. The typical personal statement should be 2-3 double-spaced pages or 500-700 words. Here is a suggested outline. You should adjust the main point of each paragraph and number of paragraphs depending on the desired length of your personal statement and the areas in your background that you choose to emphasize.

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Paragraph 1 | A personal human-interest story                  |
| Paragraph 2 | Your academic interests and achievements         |
| Paragraph 3 | Your relevant work and/or research experiences   |
| Paragraph 4 | Your career interests                            |
| Paragraph 5 | Why you are interested in this particular school |
| Paragraph 6 | The qualities you will bring to this school      |

### References

*Write for Success: Preparing a Successful Professional School Application*, Third Edition, October 2005 by Evelyn W. Jackson, PhD and Harold R. Bardo, PhD. NAAHP, National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions, Inc.

"Perfect Personal Statements" by Mark Alan Stewart. *Peterson's Guide 2004*

### Personal Statement Critiques

Contact your campus career office and make an appointment with a career counselor to have your personal statement critiqued. Ask a professor if they would review it as well. Having feedback from professionals with different points of view can only make for a stronger personal statement overall.

*Adapted with permission from the Office of Career Services at Rutgers University, New Brunswick Campus.*



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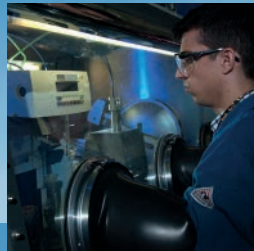
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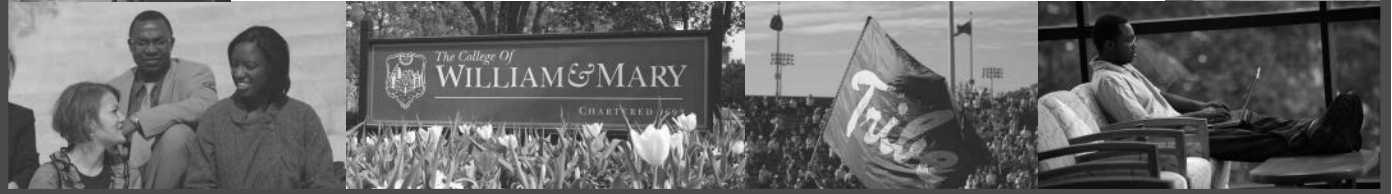
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