

# The Job Search

Looking for work is a full-time job and is the hardest work a person may ever do! A serious job search requires as much time looking for work as will be spent on the job. A 40-hour week job equals a 40-hour week job search.

Clear occupational goals and objectives are required for an effective job search. Knowing the kind of work you're looking for will keep your search in focus. No one is really looking for "anything." Every jobseeker has requirements for employment and limitations on their current qualifications. Without clear job search goals, the search will become aimless and ineffective.

Begin your job search by gathering and organizing all the information you need to sell your qualifications and satisfy the needs of a prospective employer.

Next, complete a thorough identification and analysis of your skills. Employers not only want to know where you've worked, your job title and that you need a job; they want to know what you can do. If you were looking to purchase a product that would cost you thousands of dollars a year for many years, you also would want to know what it could do.

There are some basic tools you should develop to help in this effort. First, prepare a *Personal Data Record* with all your employment-related information. This will make employment applications easier to complete. Second, write one or more resumes that advertise your skills to an employer.

Now you are ready to begin seeking that new job. The job market is constantly changing. During one period of time job opportunities may be scarce, during another period they may be plentiful. Regardless of job market conditions, there's always strong competition for the better jobs. Successful candidates are those who use up-to-date job search techniques.

Experts agree that today the vast majority (80 percent or more) of job openings are not advertised. Most employment opportunities are hidden. A primary reason is simply that most employers don't need to advertise; they have enough applicants without it. Another reason is that employers prefer to hire on a referral from someone they trust.

There are a variety of strategies that increase the chances of identifying job openings and to break into the "hidden job market." These techniques include: networking, informational interviewing, direct employer contact, employment services, electronic bulletin boards and resume scanning systems. Electronic resume systems allow jobseekers to enter resumes and search for jobs on the Internet. MinnesotaWorks is such a system. MinnesotaWorks can be found at [www.MinnesotaWorks.net](http://www.MinnesotaWorks.net).

## The Job Search

### Networking

Job search networking is a targeted effort to talk to people about your job search. It should not be limited to casual conversations with people you meet. It should be a calculated campaign to contact people for ideas, suggestions and information.

Networking is not new, it's simply the sharing of information and resources with others. Everyone carries with them a wealth of information and insight. When we share information, we tap into this wealth of knowledge and open the doors of opportunity. This exchange is often informal and not planned. Networking, as a job search strategy, is more formal and calculated.

## *Informational Interviewing*

The informational interview is a networking effort targeted toward potential employers and professionals within a specific industry. This technique is used to gather information regarding skills, training and experience needed for an occupation. It's also a method to learn about a specific company or about an industry. Never ask for a job during an informational interview.

## *Direct Employer Contact*

Direct contact is essential for the serious jobseeker. But direct contact takes planning and preparation. It's not enough to just walk in and ask, "Are you hiring?" A successful job search is a sales campaign and your challenge is to sell your qualifications.

The first step is to list potential employers. As your job search progresses, you'll continually add to this list. The local public library is a priceless resource in this effort. The library is an excellent place to identify potential employers and prepare your job search strategy. Specific publications to review include the phone book, Chamber of Commerce listings, employer profiles, industry guides and newspapers. Additional sources for information include your local Minnesota WorkForce Center, schools and community agencies.

Once you have your list, plan a strategy to approach each employer. There are many approaches available and you'll want to vary them depending upon the circumstances and your preferences. You can fill out an application, send a resume, call the employer directly or arrange for an informational interview. Persistence and follow-up are the keys to a successful job search. If you're serious about employment, plan your follow-up. There is no such thing as a wasted effort and the only dead lead is the one you chose to kill. Situations change and the employer who isn't hiring today may be

looking for someone with your qualifications in the future.

## *Private Placement Agencies*

Employment agencies come in all shapes, sizes and prices. Some specialize in very specific occupational areas. Many employers have exclusive arrangements with employment agencies and they can be an excellent resource for job leads. If you're interested in the services of an agency, investigate them carefully. Determine what they'll do for you and how much it will cost.

Temporary agencies and contract houses are another source of employment. Increasingly, employers are turning to them for help in managing their human resources. Many people have worked their way into excellent employment by first working as a temporary. Once they prove themselves, the employer is eager to hire them as permanent employees. Even if this doesn't happen, temporary jobs are an excellent way to build skills, gain experience and minimize the cost of reemployment. If you're receiving any wage subsidy, such as Unemployment Insurance, be sure to check for any adverse consequences temporary employment may have on those benefits. If you choose to use an agency, check them out very carefully and be sure you understand all the conditions of the contract.

## *Job Search Technologies*

There is an increase in the use of technology in job search. With the use of computers and modems, a person can reach a vast world of opportunities. Many jobseekers use electronic media to identify potential employers and submit their qualifications. Employers and employment agencies use scanners to enter resumes and applications into a computer that reads, summarizes and stores the information for future consideration. These scanning systems use various degrees of software to screen job candidates.



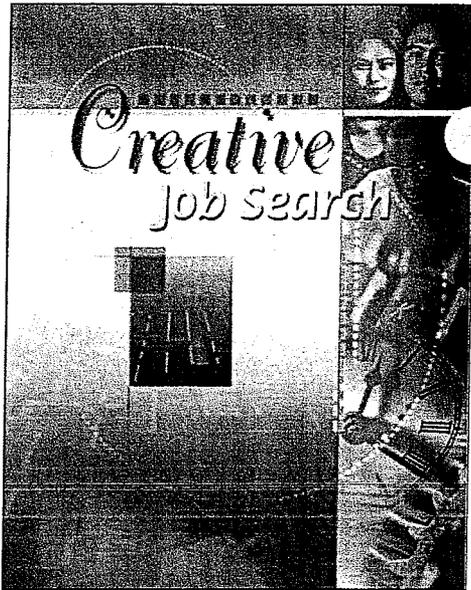
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# Skills Identification

Employment experts agree that skills identification is essential to a successful job search. Employers want to know what it is you can do for them— not just what you've done for someone else. A knowledge of your unique skills is needed to successfully complete an application, write a resume or answer interview questions. Skills identification is the first step toward new employment.

Webster's *New World Dictionary* defines a skill as "a great ability or proficiency, expertness that comes from training, practice, etc." A simple definition is that a skill is anything you can do right now.

Everyone has skills, hundreds of skills, many of which employers are looking for in an employee. Yet most people can only identify a few skills and are generally unable to describe them to an employer. Employers need to hear what you can do. If you're looking at purchasing a product that will cost you thousands of dollars a year for many years, you also would want to know what it can do. The more skills you have identified, the easier it is to convince a potential employer that you have what it takes to do the job.

## Skills Categories

### Job Skills

Job skills are those skills specific to a job or occupation. An administrative assistant is skilled in typing, word processing, answering telephones, company correspondence and filing. An accountant would list accounts receivable, performing accounts payable, payroll, figuring taxes, using a 10-key adding machine and computer accounting programs. A salesperson would include customer service, record keeping, order processing, inventory management, billing and product displays.

Job skills are important to employers for obvious reasons. These are the specific skills they look for in a candidate to accomplish the duties of the job. Job skills do not always come from employment. Along with the skills you used in previous jobs, you may have developed job skills through education, hobbies, community activities and life experiences. Common activities such as shopping, managing finances, balancing a bank account, hosting a party and teaching a child all contain potential job skills.

### Self-Management Skills

Sometimes called "personality traits," these self-management skills are the skills you use day-to-day to get along with others and to survive. They're the skills that make you unique. Sincerity, reliability, tactfulness, patience, flexibility, timeliness and tolerance are examples of self-management skills. Employers look for these skills in candidates as evidence of how they will fit into the organization. How a person will fit in is an important consideration to employers.

### Transferable Skills

These are skills that can transfer from one job or occupation to another. They may be either self-management or job content skills, and may or may not have been developed through previous employment. For most job seekers it's very unlikely that they'll find a job that is identical to their previous employment. For many today, that new job will be totally different from their past experience. Therefore, it's critical for a successful job seeker to carefully evaluate how their skills transfer into other opportunities. It's also important to look for ways to express this transferability to a prospective employer.

Skills Identification

## Duties

Many people have trouble distinguishing between their skills and duties. Duties are the basic functions of an activity. Skills are tools to accomplish those functions. Duties or functions are a part of any organized activity, whether it's employment, volunteer work or hobbies. A simple example is the management of a lemonade stand. The basic duties of a lemonade stand owner might be to manage lemonade operations including production, marketing, distribution and finances. There are many skills needed to accomplish these functions including: mixing, measuring, planning, sales, customer service, writing, cash handling, record keeping, maintenance, timeliness, dependability, accuracy and motivation. A complete list of skills would be very long.

Writing out the duties or functions of an activity first can be a useful way to begin identifying skills. When presenting your skills to an employer, it's best to tie them to specific activities in which they were used. It's not enough to tell the employer your skills; you need to be prepared to tell where, when and how you used those skills.

## Writing Your Skills

Identifying, listing and describing your skills isn't an easy task. However, it's critical to job search success and you should plan to invest the time needed. Listed below is an outline for skills identification that has been successfully used by many job seekers.

- List by title a job you've held. Start with your most recent employment and work backwards.
- Write a detailed description of four to five major duties.
- Think of the skills needed to accomplish each duty you've listed. Write those skills down on a piece of paper. Remember to look for both job and self-management skills. Be sure to include tools used, machines operated, knowledge applied, etc.
- Repeat the above steps for each activity you anticipate describing to an employer either on an application, in your resume or in an interview. Use this process for other work-related activities including hobbies, volunteer work and community experience.

Once you've completed this process, you should have a long list of skills. A list too long to tell an employer. Go through the list and select those skills that match your job goal(s). These are the skills you will use in your job search effort.



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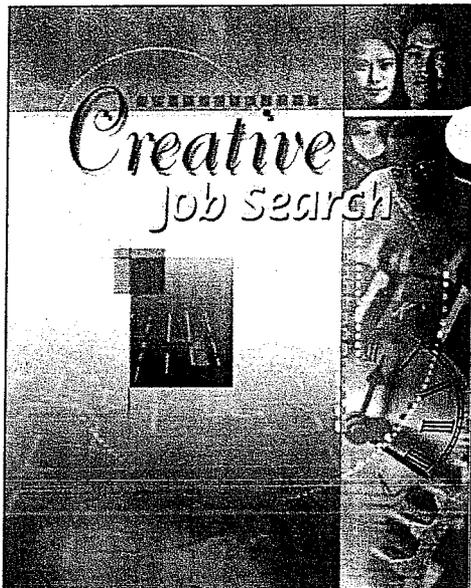


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# Resumes

In today's job market, the resume is an important tool for anyone looking for work. Everyone, from the new entrant into the workforce to the experienced professional, benefits from a well-written resume. Many employers require a resume be sent as the first method of contact. A resume captures an employer's attention, even when no job is advertised. Just as a job search is a sales campaign, your resume is your sales brochure. More than a summary of your skills, experience and education, it's an advertisement of your best. Your resume should make you stand out from the competition.

Take the time to organize your job search information, including education and employment. Focus on your skills and accomplishments and look for ways to sell your qualifications. A prospective employer doesn't just want to know where you worked, but also wants to know what you can do.

## Resume Formats

### *Chronological*

The emphasis is on a chronological listing of employment and employment-related experiences. The chronological resume is a good format for those with a consistent employment history, no gaps in employment and whose past employment experiences are related to their current employment goals. It effectively showcases a steady work record with increasing upward responsibilities. This may not be the best for new graduates, individuals with job gaps or persons changing careers.

### *Functional*

The functional resume highlights skills, experiences and accomplishments without identifying specific dates, names and places. This format is organized by functions or skills, which advertise the specific qualifications needed for an occupation. This resume works well for people changing careers. It's also effective for those reentering the workforce, first-time jobseekers and when highlighting experiences that occurred in the distant past. There is no chronological listing of employment. Consequently, some employers don't like this format because they suspect that the person may be trying to hide something.

### *Combination*

The combination resume brings together the best of both the chronological and functional resumes. It features a functional section that highlights skills, accomplishments and experiences. It also includes a chronological listing of employment, education and employment-related experiences. This is a very effective format for many jobseekers. The best chronological resume is enhanced with a section highlighting skills, accomplishments and experiences. The best functional resume is strengthened with a chronological listing of employment experiences.

## Points to Consider

- Keep your resume brief (one to two pages)
- Use only 8½" x 11" paper
- Use white or off-white quality paper
- Emphasize your skills and accomplishments
- Don't use abbreviations
- Arrange the resume so it's pleasing to the eye
- Avoid fancy fonts, exotic colored paper, photographs and graphics

## Resume Variations

### Keyword

The keyword resume is a variation that adds a listing of skills to the beginning of any standard resume format. Place critical occupational skills as keywords at the beginning to add impact to the resume and help capture the reader's attention. This variation is effective for all career fields and levels of skill.

### Targeted

More of a strategy than a style, the targeted resume directs skills and experience to the specific needs of an employer.

## Resume Layout

The resume created by the jobseeker needs to be unique. No one layout fits everyone; however, there are some standard resume categories.

### Personal Data

Your name, complete mailing address and telephone number(s) are all required personal data. Stack this information in a four to six line "block" format instead of running the information together on one line.

### Employment or Career Objective

Include an objective if you have a specific career goal in mind, or you know the title of the job for which you're applying. If you omit the objective on the resume, be sure to communicate it elsewhere, such as in the cover letter.

## Summary or Highlights of Qualifications

Generally, employers will spend less than 10 seconds screening your resume the first time. Their goal is to eliminate as many candidates as possible and concentrate on the best. Therefore, highlight your qualifications early in the resume to improve your chances for consideration.

### Body of Resume

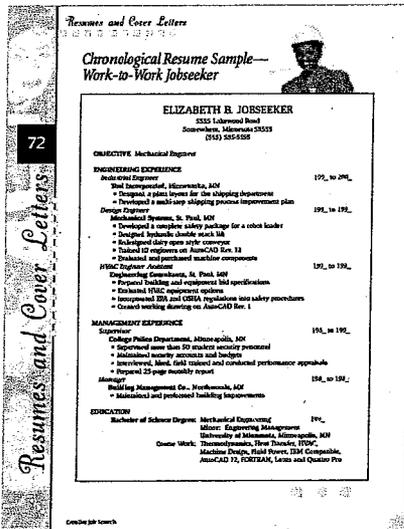
The resume format you choose determines the sequence of information. For a chronological resume, employment history comes next. In a functional resume, the summary sections follow. The combination format includes both summary sections and chronological listings.

### Other Activities

List only those activities that relate to your occupational goal and show skill or experience. It's best not to mention specific religious or political organizations unless they directly relate to your goal. Military experience may be listed as a separate section or in the employer's "language" as part of the work history.

### References

References don't belong on the resume. They should be listed on a separate sheet. Send the references with the resume only when specifically requested by the employer. There is no need to state "References available upon request." It's assumed that you'll provide them.

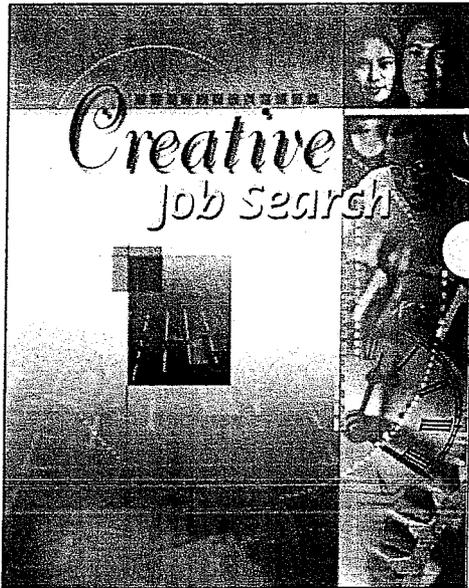


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# Internet Job Search Strategies

The Internet is a global electronic community— a network of networks. Nearly everything found in a real community can be found in cyberspace. There are businesses, social organizations, government agencies, educational institutions and individual residences. Every idea, ideology and interest is represented. For every major job search strategy there is a cyberspace counterpart. The Internet is a virtual gold mine of employment resources that will only get better in the future.

The Internet is a tool, and like all tools is only as good as the skill of the user. Learning to use the Internet productively takes time and effort. Many new users become overwhelmed. One frustration is that the Internet is huge and there is no single manual or help desk. Another is that it is constantly changing. What's there today may be gone, moved or changed tomorrow.

It's said that patience is a virtue— on the Internet it's a necessity! A dedication to continuous learning is a must. For those who master this tool, the rewards are great. The Internet will open up a whole new world of opportunities.

## Internet Job Search Strategies

### *Electronic Resumes*

Once you've mastered the paper resume, you can add plain text and hypertext resumes to your resources. There are numerous opportunities to present your resume to potential employers. You can post your resume on news groups or in resume databases. You can send your resume direct through email. You can even set up a professional website using your resume information.

- Plain Text Resumes— Email, news groups and most resume databases require your resume to be in a basic text format. Plain text resumes have the advantage of being read by most computer programs. The major disadvantage is the loss of fancy formatting. The content of the resume should follow the same standards as a paper resume. Many plain text resumes will be managed in a database, so give special attention to keywords.
- Hypertext Resumes— Hypertext resumes take advantage of the features of the Internet. They may include graphics, video, sound, hypertext links and direct email. Some sites that post resumes require them to be formatted in Hypertext Markup Language (HTML). Many progressive jobseekers are creating professional websites which include their resume information. A good professional website should follow the publishing standards of the Internet and most of

the standards of good resume writing. However, a website should be more than just an online resume. There are numerous resources on the Internet, in bookstores and in libraries to help in this effort.

### *Advertised Jobs*

There are too many advertised jobs on the Internet to even begin to count. More and more employers are listing job openings on their web pages, in newsgroups and with Internet employment service providers.

### *Electronic Networking*

Would you like to network with professionals in your industry, from all over the world without traveling great distances to attend expensive conferences? Looking for another way to make direct contact with potential employers? In cyberspace you can! The Internet is a networker's paradise.

Electronic networking uses three basic Internet tools— newsgroups, email and live chat. To master these tools requires specialized communication skills. To be successful in this media requires preparation and practice. Many of the standards that apply to good telephone communication apply to the Internet.



## Labor Market Research

You'll want to examine labor market conditions in making employment and career decisions. Minnesota's Labor Market Information collection includes estimates of hiring demand, the future employment outlook for specific occupations, wage range estimates, and career profiles describing work expectations, working conditions, and preparation requirements.

## Business Research

If an industry of interest can be identified—or better yet, specific businesses—news coverage, industry reports, or even a business's own website may provide insight into key issues, products or services, industry work culture, and workforce needs.

## Employment Services

There are hundreds of businesses specializing in providing employment services. Some are merely advertisements, but many provide services directly online. These services include career counseling, resume writing, placement assistance and job matching. Some sites match jobseekers with employers directly online.

## MinnesotaWorks

[www.MinnesotaWorks.net](http://www.MinnesotaWorks.net)

You can register to look for work by setting up an Internet account on MinnesotaWorks. Establishing an account and logging onto MinnesotaWorks gives you access to job openings, resume posting, career information, training opportunities, and information on Minnesota WorkForce Center services.

Employers and private employment agencies will have access to your resume. They can view your qualifications in relationship to their job openings. Interested employers will directly contact you.

There are step-by-step instructions for easy use of the system. You have the personal control of updating or removing your resume. Your resume will be done in an attractive and standardized format. There are links to job-related websites with career and job search information, and other local services and information. There is no charge for this service. Hundreds of new jobs are posted every day, so be sure to check back often.

If you don't have Internet access, visit your local public library, school, university, Minnesota WorkForce Center or local state employment service.

## CareerOneStop

[www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)

CareerOneStop is a national website that helps jobseekers, employers, students and workforce professionals find employment, career and business resources. It includes three core products described below.

## America's Career InfoNet

Find national and local career and business information and labor market data using unique career tools, career and occupation-based reports, a resource library and much more. Visit this site to identify careers, education and job options before making important career decisions. Research the job market in any state to learn about employment trends and training requirements for jobs that interest you.

## America's Service Locator

Find local employment, training and other employment-related resources for employers, jobseekers, students and workforce professionals.

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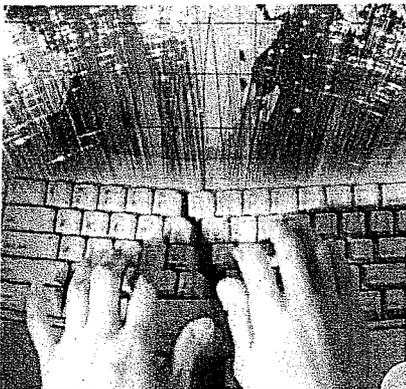
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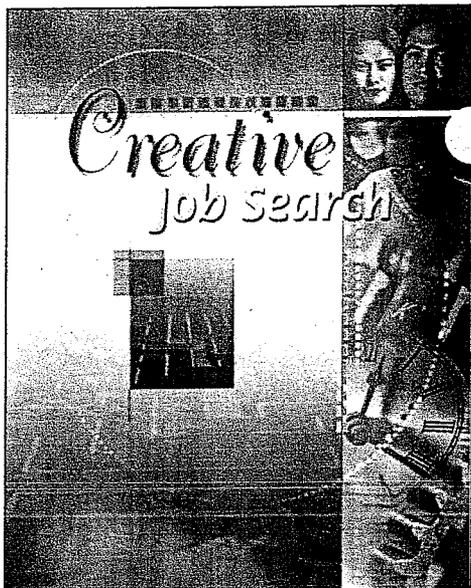
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# Employment Applications

Employment applications are an important part of the hiring process. Many employers require an application as the first step to employment. Other employers may not require an application until later in the employment process. Still other employers may never require an application. No matter when an application is requested, it's an important job search tool. It's used to judge you as a prospective employee and is an opportunity to sell your qualifications.

Employers use the application to collect information about your qualifications and to compare you to other applicants. Most employers receive hundreds and even thousands of applications a year. The reality is that employers screen out most applications and read only those that catch their attention. Therefore, you need to do everything possible to create the perfect application. Listed below are some suggestions.

## *Provide Visual Impact*

The application should be neat, with no errors in grammar or spelling. Print, avoid abbreviations, use black ink and respond to all questions. Use N/A (not applicable) if the section doesn't apply to you. If you're seeking professional or office jobs, you may want to type the application.

## *Follow Directions*

Read the entire application before you begin. Pay close attention to what's being asked and how you're expected to respond. Pay attention to and honor those sections that say "Do Not Write Below This Line" or "Office Use Only." You should read these sections carefully. They may give you insight into the evaluation process.

## *Be Positive*

During your job search you want to present a positive yet honest picture of yourself. Avoid any negative information. Look for ways to show you're the right person for the job. Think about what you would look for in an employee.

## *Be Honest*

It's important to be truthful on an application. The information you provide will become a permanent part of your employment record when hired. False information can be a basis for

dismissal. However, don't volunteer more information than the employer is seeking or is necessary to sell your qualifications.

## *Target Your Qualifications*

To accomplish this you will need to do a little research. Look for ways to target your qualifications to the specific requirements of the job. It's also useful to target the work philosophy and culture of the organization.

## *Personal Data Record*

Preparation for completing a job-winning application begins at home. Take the time to gather and organize all of the information you need including education, employment history, clear and concise descriptions of previous job duties, a list of significant skills and reference information. Keep this data record with you whenever you contact an employer. You never know when you'll need this information.

## *Salary Requirements*

When asked about salary requirements, it's best to respond with "Open" or "Negotiable." This is often a knockout question used to screen applicants. Use this response even when the wage is posted. You never know what the future holds, and you may be able to negotiate a higher wage.

## Reasons for Leaving

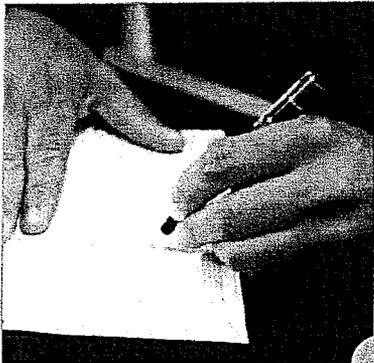
When stating why you left a job, avoid terms like "Fired, Quit, Illness or Personal Reasons." Such terms may screen you out for the job. If you respond with, "I would like to explain at the interview," you very likely will be called upon to do so. Look for positive statements about why you left a job such as "Lack of Work or Quit for a Better Job."

## Position Desired

Never leave this question blank or reply "Any" or "Open." The employer won't try to figure out where you fit in their organization. If the job is an advertised job or you're looking for a specific position, enter the job title. If you don't know the job title, state the department in which you want to work. If you're interested in more than one job, fill out more than one application.

## Illegal Questions

Some applications may contain questions that are tricky or even illegal. These may include questions about age, sex, disabilities, health, marital status, children, race and criminal convictions. It's up to you how you respond to these questions. Generally, if the question doesn't raise a problem, answer it. If it does, you may want to use N/A or a dash. But beware, you may be screened out by too many non-responses.



## References

References are an important part of your job search so choose them carefully. Don't just look for someone who is influential in the community but someone who can honestly talk about your qualifications. Before you use someone as a reference, be sure to talk to him or her about your job search and get their permission.

There are four kinds of references:

- Work related references are former employers or direct supervisors.
- Professional references are people who worked with you or know you in your work environment.
- Academic references are teachers and others who can talk about your school accomplishments.
- Personal references are people who only know you socially.

The work related or professional references are the most valuable because they can talk about your qualifications.

## Additional Application Tips

- If possible, take the application home where you can take your time in completing the application. This is especially helpful if you have trouble with spelling and grammar (it gives you the opportunity to seek help).
- Use an erasable pen or keep handy a bottle of correction fluid for fixing errors.
- Write out responses on a separate sheet of paper or on a second copy of the application before writing it on the final application. Double check grammar, spelling and content.

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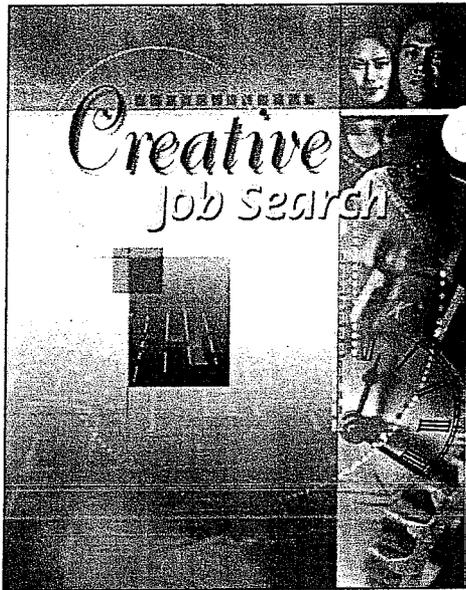
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# Employment Interviews

Looking for a job is a full-time job. Many hours of work go into a successful job search campaign. The interview is a critical step toward the goal of employment. It's at the interview that the job is won or lost. The best test of any job search is the number of interviews you're offered. If you're consistently being interviewed, you should expect job offers. If you're not getting interviews, you need to reevaluate your job search strategy.

An employment interview is simply a meeting between you and a potential employer to discuss your qualifications and see if there is a "fit." The employer wants to verify what they know about you and talk about your qualifications. If you've been called for an interview, you can assume that the employer is interested in you. The employer has a need that you may be able to meet. It's your goal to identify that need and convince the employer that you're the one for the job.

Interviews can be stressful, but when you're well prepared there is no reason to panic. An interview generally lasts from 30 to 60 minutes and most questions fall into standard categories.

## Preparation

Preparation is a key to success in a calculated job search campaign. Preparation will help win the interview and will improve interview success. Begin by gathering all information and documents you may need for the interview. Bring extra copies of your resume, typed list of references and letter(s) of recommendation. You may also want to bring school transcripts, licenses and certifications. If you have them, work samples are also powerful tools (e.g., designs, drawings and writings). Finally, bring a pen and pad of paper for taking notes.

The more you know about the job, the employer and the industry, the better prepared you'll be to target your qualifications. Up to this point you should have been gathering some of this information. Now is the time to intensify your research and expand your knowledge. There are many sources of information. Ask the employer for a position description. Research employer profiles at any Minnesota WorkForce Center, the Chamber of Commerce or local library. Network with anyone you know who works for the company or for a related company.

The next step is to match your qualifications to the requirements of the job. A good approach is to write out

your qualifications along with the job requirements. Think about some standard interview questions and how you might respond. Most questions are designed to find out more about you, your qualifications or to test your reactions in a given situation. If you lack experience or skills in a required area, think about how you might make up for those deficiencies.

## The Interview

The purpose of an interview is to become acquainted and to learn about one another. The employer wants to learn how you "fit into the organization," but it's also an opportunity for you to evaluate the company. Employers use a variety of interview formats. There are series of interviews, panel interviews, phone interviews or the traditional one-on-one interviews. Sometimes staff from the personnel or human resources departments will conduct an initial screening and the hiring authority will conduct the actual interview. Whatever the form or process, the interview is a basic effort to learn your qualifications.

During an interview it's important that you be yourself. It's advised that you get a good night's sleep and plan your travel to arrive in plenty of time. However, you should present yourself for the interview no more than 15 minutes early.

## Interview Questions

The interview is a sales meeting and you are both the salesperson and the product. The basic question in every interview, whether it's asked or not, is "Why should I hire you?" All other questions center on this one issue. Basic interview questions can take a variety of forms. Generally, questions will ask about you, your qualifications, experience, skills and motivation. If you've prepared for the interview and are confident about your qualifications, none of these questions should be difficult.

Listen carefully to each question asked in the interview. Take your time in responding and make sure your answers are positive. Express a good attitude and show that you're willing to work, eager to learn and are flexible. If you're unsure of a question, don't be afraid to ask for clarification. Sometimes a good strategy is to close a response with a question for the interviewer.

Focus on your qualifications and look for opportunities to personalize the interview. Briefly answer questions with an example of how you responded in a similar situation from either your life or previous job experiences. Avoid getting too personal or dwelling too long on non-job related discussions.

Show your potential to the company. Support your answers with examples from your experience. Avoid "yes" or "no" responses to questions.

Use caution if you're questioned about your salary requirements. The best strategy is to avoid the question until you've been offered a job. Questions about salary asked before there is a job offer are usually screening questions that may eliminate you from consideration.

Keep in mind that the interview isn't over when you're asked if you have any questions. Come prepared to ask a couple of specific questions that again show your knowledge and interest in the job. This isn't the time to ask about pay or benefits.

## Closing the Interview

Close the interview in the same friendly, positive manner in which you started. If you want the job— say so. Summarize your qualifications again before leaving. When the interview is over, leave promptly. Do not overstay your time.

## After the Interview

Think about the interview and learn from the experience. Evaluate the success and failures. The more you learn from the interview, the easier the next one will become. You will become more confident.

Finally, write a "thank you" note or letter to each person who took part in the interview. Thank the employer for their time, restate your interest in the job and remind them of your intent to follow-up. Mail the letter the day of the interview.

## Additional Tips

- Maintain good eye contact throughout the interview.
- Don't be a clock watcher.
- Don't discuss illegal or discriminatory subjects such as race, religion, age, national origin, equal rights or gender.
- Be aware of nonverbal body language.
- Dress a step above what you would wear on the job.



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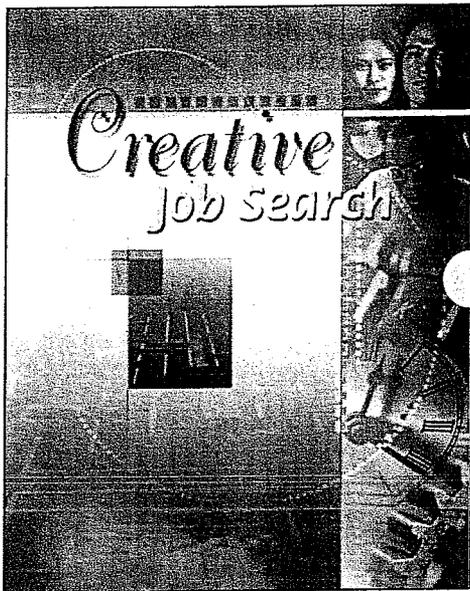
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# Cover Letters and Thank You Notes

Anytime a resume is sent by mail it must be accompanied by a cover letter. The resume is an impersonal description of your qualifications, much like a product brochure. The cover letter is your opportunity to personalize your resume and target your skills to that specific employer.

The effective jobseeker will not send the same resume for each new job opportunity. Resumes need to be tailored for each position. Likewise, the same cover letter cannot be used in every situation. It also must be customized for each opportunity. There are a variety of cover letter formats, some of which are described below. Whatever format you use, be sure the letter conforms to acceptable standards for business letters.

## Cover Letter Formats

### *Invited*

Use the invited format whenever an employer has asked for a resume. This is often in response to a classified ad or publicized job listing. This style focuses on matching your qualifications to the advertised requirements of the position.

### *Uninvited or Cold-Contact*

Use the uninvited format to contact employers who haven't advertised or published job openings. The focus is on matching your qualifications to the

perceived needs of the employer based on labor market research. This strategy requires that a phone or personal contact with the employer either precede or follow the sending of the resume and cover letter.

### *Referral*

Use the referral format to contact employers to whom you've been referred. The effective jobseeker will receive referrals to many job opportunities through networking and informational interviews. The referral may be to a specific job opening (advertised or unadvertised) or to an employer who may not be hiring. In a referral letter the individual who provided the referral is mentioned in the letter.

### *Job Match or "T"*

It's always important to match your qualifications to the job and/or employer in the cover letter. This is generally done as part of the body of the letter. In the "T" letter format this is done as bullet points targeting the specific requirements and your corresponding qualifications. Some sources for information to help you match your qualifications include: employment advertisements, company websites, position descriptions, phone conversations with the employer and informational interviews.

Cover Letters and  
Thank You Notes

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_:

**First Paragraph:** State the reason for writing. Name the specific position or type of work for which you're applying. Mention how you learned of the opening.

**Second Paragraph:** Explain why you're interested in working for this employer and specify how you're PERFECT for this position. Don't repeat the information on your resume. Include something special or unique about yourself that will benefit the employer. Remember, the reader will consider this an example of your writing skills.

**Third Paragraph:** Mention your resume is enclosed and indicate your desire to meet with the employer. You may want to suggest alternate dates and times, or simply advise them of your flexibility to the time and place. Include day and evening contact information. Include a statement or question that will encourage the reader to respond. Be sure to communicate your plan to follow-up. You might state that you'll be in the area on a certain date and would like to set up a meeting, or you'll call on a certain date to set up a meeting. Finally, thank the employer for his/her time.

Sincerely,

## Cover Letter

### Points to Consider

- Whenever possible, address the cover letter to a specific person by name and title. This requires a minimum of research that will ultimately pay off in more interviews. The only time this may not be possible is when responding to a "blind ad" where there is no way to know the name of the company to research. In this case, send the letter to the title of the appropriate hiring manager, e.g., "Production Manager," "Maintenance Supervisor," "Office Manager," etc. Never use the phrase "To Whom It May Concern."
- Consider signing the letter in blue ink. It implies the letter is original. The only other ink color to use is black. Never use any other color on the cover letter.
- Structure the cover letter to reflect your individuality, but avoid appearing too familiar, overbearing, humorous or cute. Keep sentences short and to the point.
- Keep the cover letter brief, usually no more than three to five paragraphs on one page.
- The paper and style of your cover letter should compliment your resume. You might consider using the same paper stock for both your cover letter and resume.

themselves in any way on behalf of your job search. At the minimum, a written thank you should be sent after all interviews.

Thank you letters and notes should be standard tools in your job search. The thank you letter should follow a standard business letter format while the note may be a simple handwritten note or card. Which to send depends upon the situation and your personal style.

### Thank You Letter

#### Points to Consider

- Be brief and to the point.
- When thanking a potential employer, restate your interest in the position and the company.
- Always plan your follow-up. Make it a point to tell the person when and how they can expect to hear from you in the future.
- If there are multiple people involved, such as with a panel interview, be sure to thank each person. Send one letter to each person or send a single letter to a key person for distribution. When sending more than one thank you letter, it is very effective to vary each one.
- Always send a written thank you to a person by name.
- The thank you is an opportunity to restate your qualifications. Include any pertinent information you failed to mention earlier. Be sure to reemphasize your skills and abilities.



### Sample Thank You Note

Dear Mr. Jones,

Thank you for the interview for the accountant position today. I appreciate the information you shared with me and enjoyed meeting Ms. Smith from the Accounting Department.

My interest in working for Lord's Industries is stronger than ever, and based on your description of the position, I know I can do a good job for you.

I will contact you by Tuesday of next week to learn of your decision.

Sincerely,

## Thank You Letters and Notes

"Thank you" is a powerful statement that is seldom heard. Every thank you is an opportunity to sell your qualifications and to leave a fresh impression in the mind of the reader. Send a thank you letter or note to employers and employment contacts whenever they have extended

### Basic Parts of a Thank You

- Statement of appreciation for the interview.
- Expression of interest in employment.
- Brief restatement of qualifications.
- Final "Thank You."
- Date and time you'll follow-up.

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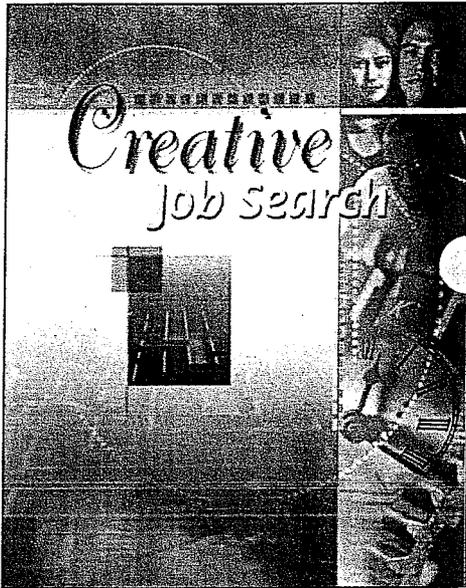
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# Dress and Grooming for Job Success

Many of us object to being judged for employment based on how we look. We prefer to be hired because of our skills and abilities, not because of our dress and grooming. But like it or not, appearance is important.

Employers hire people they believe will "fit" into their organization. Skills, experience and qualifications are important, but so are dress and grooming. Your appearance expresses motivation and professionalism. Dress as though you want the job, as though you already have a job. A visit to the company may help you decide the appropriate clothing to select for your interview. A good standard is to dress a step above how the best-dressed person dresses for a similar job. When in doubt, err on the conservative side.

Your appearance is a statement of who you are. Your clothing and grooming should create the image that will help you get the job offer.

*Dress and Grooming for Job Success*

## First Impressions

Most of us have heard the expression, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Remember this when preparing to meet with a prospective employer. The picture you create will greatly influence your chances of being hired. Most employers form a first impression during the first seven seconds of a meeting. Not much is said in this short time; early judgment is based strictly on appearance. Furthermore, studies reveal that employers consistently ask the question, "Does the individual look right for the job?"

## Clothing

There are no absolute rules regarding dress. Your selection will vary based on your occupation, location and preference. A business suit for a construction job or overalls for an office job would not be appropriate dress. The goal is to look the part, to have your appearance be consistent with your occupation. Neat, clean work clothes would be suitable for assembly, production or warehouse positions. Sales and office positions require business clothes. A conservative suit would be the recommended style for professional and managerial positions. The clothes you wear affect all your attitude and confidence levels. When people take the time to dress for success, they tend to feel good about themselves.

Image alone will not win the job offer, but it will go a long way in building respect.

Common sense and good taste are the best guides in selecting clothing for the interview. Avoid faddish styles and loud colors. Jewelry should be conservative and kept to a minimum. Clothing should fit comfortably. A basic rule is to dress one step above what you would wear on the job. You want the employer to focus on your skills, not your clothes.

## Grooming

Personal grooming is just as important as what you wear. You may select the right clothes, but neglecting personal hygiene can ruin the image you wish to present. Review the following grooming checklist before meeting with an employer.





ITEM	GROOMING
Hair	Clean, trimmed and neatly combed or arranged.
Facial Hair (men only)	Freshly shaved; mustache or beard neatly trimmed.
Fingernails	Neat, clean and trimmed.
Teeth	Brushed and fresh breath.
Breath	Beware of foods that may leave breath odor. Beware of tobacco, alcohol and coffee odor. Use a breath mint if needed.
Body	Freshly bathed/showered. Use deodorant.
Make-up (women only)	Use sparingly and be natural looking.
Perfumes/Colognes/ After-Shave	Use sparingly or none at all. Your scent should not linger after you leave.

### *Goals of Appropriate Dress and Grooming*

The primary goal is to feel good about the way you look and project a positive image. When you feel good about yourself, you naturally convey confidence and a positive attitude. These nonverbal messages are as important in the interview as the verbal skills you use in selling your qualifications. Persistence and follow-up are the keys to a successful job search. If you are serious about employment, plan your follow-up. There is no such thing as a wasted effort, and the only dead lead is the one you chose to kill. Situations change and the employer who is not hiring today may be looking for someone with your qualifications in the future.

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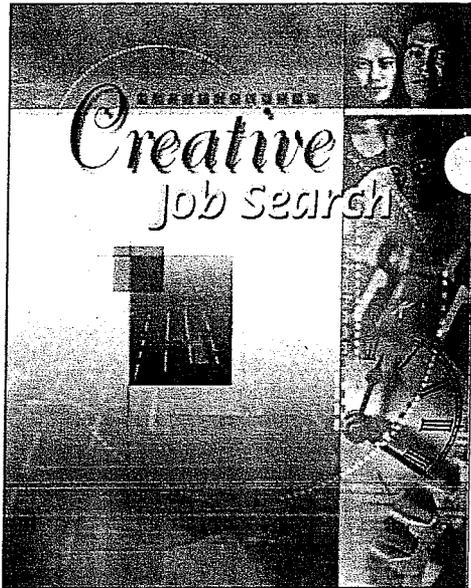


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# Job Success Skills

Once you've made the big transition through job searching and landed the job, the next goal is job success. There are specific skills you need to know and use to be successful at your job. It's important to practice these skills prior to starting the job. First impressions show from day one. You only get one first impression.

This isn't a complete list. It's a good idea to check with your supervisor about what's most important. Employers say many people lose their job because they don't use good work habits and not because they are unable to do the job. The following list of suggestions is based on feedback from a majority of surveyed employers.

## Employer Expectations

- A positive attitude is one of the most important factors in achieving job success. Don't carry negative feelings into your new workplace. Resolve them elsewhere.
- Always be on time. How long will it take to get to work? Allow a few extra minutes for traffic problems and getting children to daycare. Set an alarm clock to help you get up. Being reliable and dependable gains the trust and respect of your new employer.
- Good attendance and promptness are always important. If you're going to be unavoidably late or out sick, ask your supervisor the proper method of informing them.
- Know and follow all office rules, policies and procedures. Read the employee manuals.
- Listen and learn. Be open to new ways of doing things, even if you were taught differently in school or on a different job. Don't be quick to find fault, criticize or complain until you can prove you can do something a better way.
- Meet and exceed your employer's expectations.
- Learn all you can about the job you were hired to do before thinking about moving up.

## Communication

- When you need to talk with your supervisor, ask when would be a good time to meet.
- Take advantage of your performance reviews. Stay calm. Learn from them. Ask how you can improve. Show results or job-related classes you've taken. Most supervisors appreciate employees who are concerned about performance and in finding ways to improve. Your job success is also their success.
- Be a team player. Be willing to help. Know the goals of your job and how your job fits into the overall organization. Avoid a "know-it-all attitude." Try to fit in with the team. Keep your sense of humor.
- Ask for help when you need it. If you make a mistake, let your supervisor know immediately. Find out how you can fix it.
- Follow the proper chain of command. Discuss items with your supervisor first.

Job Success Skills



## Personal

- Prior to starting the job, have all of your appointments with doctors, dentists, etc., out of the way. Have your transportation and daycare lined up so you don't immediately have to take time off. Have an emergency plan for daycare and transportation.
- Be willing to learn new skills. Keep a record of classes you're taking that relate to the job. Review this with your supervisor at an appropriate time.
- Take time in making new friends. Find positive and upbeat coworkers. Avoid negative, critical and gossiping people.
- Be clean and well groomed. Wear clean and job-appropriate clothes. Pay attention to how your coworkers are dressed. Avoid wearing strong perfumes or colognes.
- Keep your personal life and problems at home. Don't use the employer's equipment and time to do personal things like making personal phone calls, using the copy machine or resolving your personal problems on the job. If you're having trouble resolving personal problems, counseling, support groups or employee assistance programs may be useful.
- Create the image. Dress for the job you want next.
- Be patient with yourself and your employer. It takes time to get used to, learn and like a new job.
- Volunteer for projects and committees if your work is completed and your supervisor approves.

## Getting Along With Others

- Don't express your opinions, biases or prejudices about others while you're at work. Diversity is a priority in the workplace.
- Accept criticism as constructive. Don't become defensive or take criticism personally. Thank the person for their input. Consider changing if it's warranted. If you're unsure how to handle the situation, check with your supervisor.
- Always be friendly to everyone. Be willing to go the extra mile. This creates goodwill with employers, coworkers and customers.
- Notice who your boss relies on and model yourself after them.
- Find a mentor, someone who knows the employer and the job well enough to coach you or show you the ropes.
- Realize playing politics or power games could be dangerous and backfire on you.
- Treat everyone with courtesy and respect. Remember that as you climb the career ladder, you may meet the same people on your way down the ladder.
- Keep your emotions under control. The job isn't the place to express or show your opinions or feelings.
- Show appreciation. Let your supervisor know you appreciate their training, support, input, feedback, etc.
- Strive to be positively recognized. Be friendly and helpful to everyone at all levels.



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