

THE JOB

SURVIVAL

GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome!

We know that this may be a very trying time in your life and we are praying daily that God will see you through it. We would like to take a moment to introduce you to the Job Assistance Ministry at The Heights.

We want you to know how this Ministry can help in your job search. We would also like you to know what role you should play to assist in your own job search.

The Job Assistance ministry was developed primarily to help unemployed members of The Heights Baptist Church find new employment.

Our goal is not to teach you how to write a resume or conduct an interview. Rather, our goal has been to help you identify resources that can help you transition into a new opportunity. With a wealth of information at your disposal, you can sometimes feel overwhelmed and we want to help you sort out what information you need and provide you with ways to obtain it. And of course our most important goal, prayers, prayers and more prayers!

What The Ministry Can Do For You:

1. Post your name on the prayer list at THBC
2. Post your resume in the Job Seekers book located in the administration building on the south end of the church. (Your resume will remain in the book for 90 days from the date of posting. It is your responsibility to inform us if your resume is still valid before the 90-day period has expired).
3. Provide you with this Job Search Survival Guide to help you identify how to successfully search for a position. (Don't forget to check out the Internet Job Search Guide, which is also available for downloading from our web site).
4. Provide encouragement and prayer. Each team member is available to help you if you have questions or just need someone to talk to regarding your search.
5. Provide ongoing communication regarding events (not jobs) in the community that can also help in your search.
6. Maintain a Job Opportunities Book, which is located in the administration building on the south end of the church.

What You Can Do For Yourself:

1. Review this Job Search Survival Guide and the Internet Job Search Guide. There are places listed where you could join networking groups, learn interview techniques and review resume samples among other things. We think you will find it to be very valuable guide.
2. Review the Job Posting book located in the administration building or the current job postings on the web site at least weekly. The book and web site will have many current openings that have been forwarded to THBC along with a description of the position, requirements and application procedures provided by the hiring company. The web site will also include many upcoming job events.
3. Tell us how you're doing. As this is an on going ministry and we want to know if and how we have helped you, as well as, any other feedback or suggestions you may have.
4. Now this last item is, without a doubt, the most important thing you can possibly do for your self – stay grounded in his word and ALWAYS trust in our Lord and Savior. He will never let you down nor abandon you.

A Little More Info For You To Digest:

If you are new to this document, we are glad you have decided to use it. This document was created to provide a resource for unemployed members of The Heights Baptist Church. No website, networking group, etc. is endorsed or recommended. The author takes no responsibility for the operation or content of the websites listed in this document, nor are the websites presented here a complete list of all the job search and career information available on the Internet.

We hear quite a bit about job searching on the Internet these days. You might think it is the only place to do a job search. *Absolutely not!* Using the Internet is a very passive job search. Once you have searched and e-mailed, once you have posted your resume and set up e-mail notification accounts, there's not much to do until a prospective employer or recruiter contacts you. Rarely do you know if anyone has seen your resume, much less read it. There is nothing you can follow up on, no one to contact. Keep in mind, though, that the Internet is *one more tool* to use in your job search, *not the only one*.

Next, we encourage you to take charge of your job search! It is your job search — not the fax machines or Postal Service's or the Internet's or your local newspaper's job search. Follow up on all contacts you make and everywhere you send your resume, if at all possible. We are always surprised when an individual says, "I can do that?" Well, yes, you can — and you should. Just remember that there is a fine line between taking care of yourself and being a pest!

Finally — network, network, and network. Talk to anyone and everyone possible. Let them know you are looking for work and what you are looking for. Networking — using personal contacts — is still where the majority of the job offers originate. Ideally you want your first contact with a prospective employer to be a personal one — usually by phone. If asked for a resume, you can then direct it to a specific person who truly wants to read it. Be sure to let friends, relatives, former coworkers and supervisors, neighbors, and people you meet at various groups know that you are in the job market, what you are looking for, and how to contact you.

Here is a hint: Create a business card that lists your name, contact information and a powerful, concise, focused statement about yourself and the type of work you are seeking. Hand the card out whenever it seems right. It is just different enough to be noticed.

Be sure the people who agreed to be your references each have a copy of your resume. Touch bases with your references every month or so; check to see if they are being contacted by employers, and let them know how you are doing with your job search. Let each of them know when you start working again. Send a thank you when you are done.

If you know someone (or two or three) in your industry that has experience reviewing resumes or interviewing candidates for openings in your line of work, ask if they will review your resume and offer suggestions.

And finally, whatever your individual needs and however you use this document, the Jobs Assistance Ministry has this request: Enjoy, have fun, explore, and share the Good News of Jesus Christ! With all that out of the way, let's go! Good luck and God Bless. And remember, we are praying for you.

HELPFUL SCRIPTURE

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned, struck down, but not destroyed.

(2 Corinthians 4:8-9)

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

(Ephesians 4:32)

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

(Romans 15:4)

I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths.

(Proverbs 4:11)

The blessing of the LORD brings wealth and he adds no trouble to it.

(Proverbs 10:22)

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously, and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

(James 1:5)

I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.

(Psalm 32:8)

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

(Psalm 119:105)

Your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right or to the left"

(Isaiah 30:21)

For such is God, our God forever and ever; He will guide us until death.

(Psalm 48:14)

Commit your works to the LORD, and your plans will be established.

(Proverbs 16:3)

For you are my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake you will lead me and guide me.

(Psalm 31:3)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

(Proverbs 3:5-6)

The LORD will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.

(Isaiah 58:11)

When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

(John 16:13)

AREA NETWORKING GROUPS

CAREER/HITECH CONECTION

Every Tuesday
 8:30am - 9:30am (New member orientation)
 9:30am - 10:30am (Round Robin Networking or a Speaker)
 10:30am - 11:30am (Job leads, Recruiters & Prospecting)
 11:30am - ??? (Resume Review Workshop by Don Brock)
 Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church
 9800 Preston Road, Dallas (at Walnut Hill Lane)
www.careerconnection.org

Professional Networking Groups for all industries. Establishes to assist professionals between jobs to network. Over 8,000 members have found new positions. Energetically directed by Lisa Miller, with 120 members, including about 20 new *joiners* each week. Check out the website *for* the meeting calendar as well as the calendar for the focus groups.

CAREER TRANSITION

(Executives & Professionals)
 Mondays 6:00pm – 9:00pm
 Northwest Bible Church (Held in the Christian Life Center)
 8505 Douglas Avenue, Dallas (NW Highway & Douglas next to the Toll Road)
 972-763-2439

The Career Transition Workshop, delivered by John McDorman, is a powerfully effective series of 13 seminars, guiding you through the process of career transition. The series is cyclical, so you can join anytime.

ALLEN JOB TRANSITION FOCUS GROUP

Wednesdays 9:30am - 11:30am
 First Baptist Church of Allen
 201 E. McDermott
 972-359-7219

ALLEN JOB/CAREER TRANSITIONS

Richardson First Baptist Church
 Arapaho & Central Expressway, Richardson
 (Building C, covered entrance Room C243, 2nd Floor)
 972-489-4820

JOB CONNECTION

Wednesdays 7:00pm – 9:00pm
 Lake Point Church 1-30
 701 I-30, (In Room A225) (At Ridge Road exit in Rockwall)
 972-771-2322

MID-CITIES CAREER NETWORK

Thursday 6:30pm - 8:30pm
 William Martin United Methodist Church
 2621 Bedford Road, Bedford
 817-354-9038

AREA NETWORKING GROUPS

JOB LINK

(Human Resource Professionals)

1st & 3rd Tuesday of each month - 8:30am – 10:00am

8500 Stemmons Freeway, Dallas (Empire Central exit - NE corner, white 2-story Bldg.)

214-631-8775

www.dallashr.org

JOB NET OF PLANO

Thursdays 7:00pm

Reform Church in Plano

5333 Independence Parkway, Plano

972-867-6704

www.jobnet.org

RESOURCE DALLAS

(Attorneys & Financial Professionals)

Wednesdays 9:00am – 11:00am

Wilshire Baptist Church

4316 Abrams Road, Dallas

972-407-4473

EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE GROUP

Meetings are usually the 2nd Tuesday of the month from 7:30pm - 9:00pm

Jewish Family Service

5402 Arapaho Road, Dallas

Contact - Camille Kramer

972-437-9950 (Call for information on Employment & Career Services programs offered.

No fee to attend.)

CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Call for Dates And Times

4550 Legacy Drive, Plano

Contact - Bruce Boyd

972-618-1554

CHRISTIAN CAREER TRANSITION

Call for Dates And Times

Fellowship Bible Church, Plano

Contact - Rod Taylor

972-442-8510

CAREER TRANSITION WORKSHOP MID-CITIES

Thursday 6pm - 9pm

First Baptist Church

1000 W. Airport Freeway Euless (Former Euless Worship Center)

817-267-3313

AREA NETWORKING GROUPS

CAREER CARE

Call for Dates And Times
St. Andrew United Methodist Church 1401 Mica
Vista Blvd, Plano

This ministry is established to help those individuals who are out of work or in the process of a career change. A support network has formed to lend spiritual support, as well as assist with job skills and contacts. Various programs and special speakers are offered. Meets each Monday, except for certain holidays that will be noted. Meeting registration and networking begins at 6:30pm. Meetings start at 7:00pm. Meeting information and other important Career Care information can be found at www.standrewumc.org - click on Career Care tab.

CUSTER ROAD CAREER OUTREACH

Tuesdays 6:30pm - 8:30pm
Custer Road United Methodist Church
6601 Custer Road, Plano

Program consists of an information session and informal networking as well as a speaker. You may pre-register by contacting Kathy Blank, Director of Congregational Care 972-618-3450, ext 242 or email kblank@crumc.org.

EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION & YOU

Tuesdays 6:30pm - 8:45pm
Prestonwood Baptist Church
6801 W. Park, Plano (at Park & Midway)
Main Bldg Rooms 205-206
Church: 972-820-5111 Ext. 6119
Cost: Free

Eight week program covering: How to Organize a Job Search, Resume Tips, Networking Skills, Perfecting the 2 -Minute Presentation, Interviews and Negotiations.
Facilitator: Lynn Guillory, Human Resource Executive

POWER LUNCH AT PRESTENWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH

Wednesday 11:45am -12:45pm
Prestonwood Baptist Church
6801 W. Park, Plano (at Park & Midway)
(Temporary Location - Sports and Fitness Center)
Church: 972-820-5111 Ext. 6119

Buffet Lunch - \$7 per person (No advance reservations required)

Phone Call Organizer

1. Contact
Name:

2. What materials are
needed?

3. Purpose of
call

4. Who referred you?

5. Beginning
Statement:

6. Comments to create common interests; reason for your interest:

7. Questions you have about the company/position/contact.

8. Confirm what you agreed to and clearly understand any steps.

9. Thank You

Weekly Goals and Objectives

For The Week Of: _____

<i>Daily Activities</i>				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.	1.	1.	1.	
2.	2.	2.	2.	
3.	3.	3.	3.	
4.	4.	4.	4.	
5.	5.	5.	5.	
6.	6.	6.	6.	
7.	7.	7.	7.	
8.	8.	8.	8.	
9.	9.	9.	9.	
10.	10.	10.	10.	
Goals: Number of Meetings: _____ (network contacts) Number of Telephone Calls: _____ (follow-up calls, set appointments, etc) Letters: _____ (ad responses, job leads, etc.)			Results: Number of Job Leads Obtained: _____ (from all sources) Number of Interviews Set: _____ (appointments mad this week)	

[Your Name Here]
[Street Address]
[City, State/Province Zip/Postal Code]
[E-Mail Address]

Fax Cover Sheet

Date: May 10, 2004 Time: 7:30 AM
To: [Names] Phone: [Their phone number]
 [Company Name] Fax: [Their fax number]
From: [Names] Phone: [Their phone number]
 [Company Name] Fax: [Their fax number]
CC: [Names]

Responding to the advertisement from: [**CLASSIFIED ADVERTISED NAME AND DATE**]

RESUME OF [YOUR NAME HERE] ATTACHED.

Number of pages including cover sheet: [Type number of pages here]

Message

[Type your message here]

Sources for Developing a Contact List

- **Your Friends** - make sure you contact your friends and be specific with them about what you want; contact them often to remind them of your progress.
- **Social acquaintances** - health clubs - other clubs; school organizations
- Your university - buy a copy of the university directory to investigate the college alumni that live locally.
- **Classmates** from any level of schooling
- Your current and past **neighbors**
- Family and other relatives
- Co-workers and former co-workers
- **Organizations** that you worked with in your previous job: advertising agency, PR agency, outside contractors
- **Recruiters** that you have worked with in the past
- Venture Capitalists
- **Church** acquaintances
- Your local **minister**
- **Teachers/Professors** that you have had
- **Anyone that you do business with:** this includes your insurance agent, accountant, real estate agent, stock broker, doctor, dentist, banker
- Local **Chamber of Commerce** executives and members
- **E-mail** acquaintances
- **Local Business** organizations
- Trade Associations
- **Peers** that you met that you met at conventions
- **Competitors** that you know by name

Tips & Techniques:

- **Been There, Done That:** One of the best sources of information is someone who has recently completed a similar job search.
- **Double Exposure:** If you are currently employed then you usually need to be discreet. If you are unemployed, let everyone know that you are looking.

Resume Check List

Resume Lead-in (Objective or Profile):

- Does it use business language that is action oriented?
- You need to have a specific job title that you are seeking (resumes must be tailored to each recipient, particularly if you are sending a resume for a specific position)
- Show your most prominent strengths.
- Indicate the type of responsibility that you can hold.
- Show how your contributions will specifically benefit the employer.

Professional Qualifications:

- Does this section highlight each of your major strengths?
- Are all of the qualifications/achievements related to the career objective?
- Is there appropriate usage of key action words that connote your sense of urgency?
- Have you described each in such a way that the reader clearly understands the benefits of your achievements?

Experience:

- For each job listed, have you listed the Job title, Function and Employer's name?
- Have you updated the language of your resume to include updated jargon that is widely used in your targeted industry?
- Will the reader understand the level of responsibility that you had from reading the information?
- Does this section talk about accomplishments and not about responsibility? Do you try to quantify your accomplishments?
- Don't be timid about listing non-paid accomplishments that you may have achieved for an organization.

Education:

- Does the section begin with the highest academic achievement and work downwards?
- Did you include other training (even if it is non-academic) that might be relevant?
- Have you listed credits that might be irrelevant?

Professional Organizations and Community Activities:

- List only those items that have specific relevance to your career objective
- Does it list any organizations that don't present a professional image?
- Does it highlight organizations that will give you prospective employer an advantage with your contacts and business relationships?
- Does it refrain from personal information

Overall:

- Does the resume look great? Have you highlighted or boldfaced titles, subtitles and other important information?
- Is there enough white space - does the text flow for 'easy reading'?
- Has the resume been checked by you and at least two others for spelling, punctuation, syntax and grammar? Have you checked it at least 10 times?
- Does the body of the resume complement the career objective?
- Does the resume focus on what the employer wants to see?
- Does the resume use the word "I" - it shouldn't.
- Don't include references on the resume.
- Would you consider this resume to be an excellent sales tool for your performance and past accomplishments?

When you are ready:

Print it as needed on a laser printer if you have one. Avoid paper colors other than white or ivory. Modify the resume for a position that you are keenly interested to personalize your specific advantages.

Tips & Techniques:

- *It's All She Wrote: A resume should never be longer than two pages. It's your job to get noticed not the interviewers to find out what matters on your resume.*
- *Industrial Strength: If you have worked for Blue Ribbon companies use a resume format that highlights employers. If you had interesting assignments, then highlight experiences with resume format*
- *Power Statement: Replace job objectives with a power statement that describes your area of expertise (e.g. "Organizational Design Specialist" not "Human Resources Generalist"), demonstrates what you do (e.g. "align HR systems with organization strategy "not" design and develop . . .") and how you do it (e.g. "value - added consultative style")*

Resume Action Word List

Accelerated	Bargained	Converted
Accepted	Began	Conveyed
Accompanied	Bolstered	Convinced
Accomplished	Briefed	Cooperated
Accounted For	Broadcast	Co-Opted
Achieved	Brought	Con
Acquired	Budgeted	Coordinated
Acted	Built	Copied
Adapted	Calculated	Copyrighted
Added	Caste	Corrected
Addressed	Cataloged	Corresponded
Adjusted	Caught	Counseled
Administered	Caused	Counted
Adopted	Chaired	Crafted
Advanced	Changed	Created
Advertised	Charted	Critiqued
Advised	Checked	Dealt
Aided	Chose	Debated
Allocated	Clarified	Debugged
Allotted	Classified	Decided
Alphabetized	Cleared	Decreased
Altered	Cleared Up	Defined
Amended	Closed	Delegated
Amplified	Coached	Delivered
Analyzed	Collaborated	Demonstrated
Anchored	Collected	Described
Announced	Combined	Designed
Answered	Commended	Detailed
Anticipated	Communicated	Detected
Appeared	Compared	Determined
Applied	Compensated	Developed
Appointed	Competed	Devised
Appraised	Compiled	Diagnosed
Approved	Completed	Diagrammed
Arbitrated	Composed	Digested
Arbitrated	Computed	Diminished
Argued	Conceived	Directed
Arranged	Conceptualized	Disciplined
Articulated	Concluded	Discovered
Assembled	Condensed	Discussed
Assessed	Conditioned	Displayed
Assigned	Conducted	Distributed
Assisted	Conferred	Documented
Assumed	Confirmed	Downsized
Assured	Conserved	Drafted
Attained	Consolidated	Dramatized
Attended	Constructed	Drew Up
Audited	Consulted	Dropped
Auditioned	Contacted	Earned
Authored	Continued	Edited
Authorized	Contracted	Educated
Awarded	Contributed	Effected
Balanced	Controlled	Elaborated

Elicited	Greeted	Litigated
Eliminated	Grossed	Lobbied
Emphasized	Guided	Located
Employed	Handled	Looked
Encouraged	Harmonized	Made
Energized	Hastened	Maintained
Enforced	Heightened	Managed
Engineered	Helped	Mapped Out
Enhanced	Highlighted	Marketed
Enjoyed	Hiked	Mastered
Enlarged	Hired	Maximized
Enlisted	Hosted	Measured
Ensured	Housed	Mediated
Entered	Hunted	Memorized
Entertained	Identified	Mentored
Established	Illustrated	Met
Estimated	Implemented	Modeled
Evaluated	Improved	Modified
Examined	Improvised	Monitored
Exceeded	Incepted	Motivated
Excelled	Included	Moved
Executed	Incorporated	Named
Exercised	Increased	Narrated
Expanded	Indicated	Negotiated
Expedited	Individualized	Netted
Experimented	Influenced	Observed
Explained	Informed	Obtained
Exploited	Initiated	Offered
Explored	Innovated	Opened
Expressed	Inspected	Operated
Extinguished	Inspired	Ordered
Extracted	Installed	Organized
Facilitated	Instilled	Originated
Familiarized	Instituted	Outlined
Filed	Instructed	Overcame
Financed	Insured	Overhauled
Fixed	Integrated	Oversaw
Focused	Interacted	Paid
Forecast	Interpreted	Painted
Foresaw	Intervened	Participated
Forged	Interviewed	Perceived
Formulated	Introduced	Performed
Fortified	Invented	Permitted
Forwarded	Inventoried	Persuaded
Fostered	Investigated	Photographed
Found	Involved	Pinpointed
Founded	Issued	Pioneered
Freelanced	Jointed	Placed
Furnished	Kept	Planned
Furthered	Labored	Planned
Gained	Launched	Played
Gathered	Learned	Policed
Gave	Lectured	Portrayed
Generated	Led	Practiced
Governed	Licensed	Predicted
Graded	Listened	Prepared

Presented	Rescued	Stopped
Presided	Researched	Straightened
Prevailed	Reserved	Streamlined
Prevented	Resized	Strengthened
Processed	Resolved	Stripped
Produced	Responded	Structured
Programmed	Re-Staffed	Studied
Projected	Restored	Submitted
Promoted	Restructured	Suggested
Pronounced	Resulted In	Summarized
Proofed	Retained	Supervised
Proofread	Returned	Supplied
Proposed	Revamped	Supported
Proved	Revealed	Surmounted
Provided	Reviewed	Surpassed
Publicized	Revised	Surveyed
Published	Revitalized	Systematized
Purchased	Rewarded	Tabulated
Put	Rotated	Tackled
Qualified	Said	Targeted
Quickened	Sampled	Taught
Ran	Satisfied	Tested
Realized	Saved	Tightened
Received	Saw	Took Over
Recharged	Served	Totaled
Recommended	Set	Toured
Reconciled	Set Up	Tracked
Recorded	Settled	Trained
Recruited	Shaped	Transferred
Rectified	Shared	Transformed
Reduced	Shipped	Translated
Referred	Shored Up	Transmitted
Registered	Showed	Traveled
Regulated	Sifted	Treated
Rehabilitated	Simplified	Tutored
Reinforced	Smoothed	Typed
Related	Sold	Uncovered
Rendered	Solved	Underscored
Renewed	Sorted	Unearthed
Renovated	Sought	Updated
Renovated	Spearheaded	Upped
Reorganized	Specialized	Utilized
Repaired	Specified	Welcomed
Replaced	Spoke	Worked
Reported	Standardized	Wrote
Represented	Stated	

[Resume Example 2](#)**JAMES R. SMITH**

100 Lake Shore Drive
 Any Town, USA 00000-0000
 Voice-mail (000) 000-0000
 Fax (000) 000-0000
 E-mail: jrsmith@address.com

PROFESSIONAL TITLE**SUMMARY**

- Highlight your qualifications succinctly
- Use bullets to emphasize them
- Alter qualifications to match specific job you are seeking
- Qualification #4
- Qualification #5
- Qualification #6

EXPERIENCE

1986-1994

Company Name, Any Town, USA

Create clear and concise statements to convey your activities and responsibilities in the company. Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list. Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements.

1984-1986

Company Name, Any Town, USA

Create clear and concise statements to convey your activities and responsibilities in the company. Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list. Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements.

1981-1984

Company Name, Any Town, USA

Create clear and concise statements to convey your activities and responsibilities in the company. Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list. Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements.

1980-1981

Company Name, Any Town, USA

Create clear and concise statements to convey your activities and responsibilities in the company. Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list. Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements.

EDUCATION

University or College, Title of Degree, 1980

University or College, Title of Degree, 1976

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Enter group names here

CIVIC ACTIVITIES

Director, Member on boards, task forces

[Resume Example 3](#)

JAMES R. JONES

100 Lake Shore Drive
Any Town, USA 00000-0000
Voicemail (000) 000-0000
Fax (000) 000-0000
E-mail: jrjones@address.com

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Highlight your qualifications succinctly
- Use bullets to emphasize them
- Alter qualifications to match specific job you are seeking
- Qualification #4
- Qualification #5
- Qualification #6

EMPLOYMENT

Company Name, Any Town, USA 1984-1996

Title & Position Held

- Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity
- Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list
- Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

Title & Position Held

- Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity
- Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list
- Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

RELEVANT SKILLS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Job Skill / Title: Develop creative and concise paragraphs to help convey accomplishments and skills acquired and where.

Job Skill / Title: Develop creative and concise paragraphs to help convey accomplishments and skills acquired and where.

Job Skill / Title: Develop creative and concise paragraphs to help convey accomplishments and skills acquired and where.

EDUCATION

Degree Title, 1984 - University or College, Any Town, USA

Degree Title, 1980 - University or College, Any Town, USA

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

List awards and certificates presented.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Current and past professional affiliations should be listed here.

Resume Example 4

JAMES R. SMITH
 100 Lake Shore Drive
 Any Town, USA 00000-0000
 Voicemail (000) 000-0000
 Fax (000) 000-0000
 E-mail: jrsmith@address.com

OBJECTIVE Create a strong opening objective using tools provided in Resume Checklist and Action Word List

SUMMARY

- Highlight your qualifications succinctly
- Use bullets to emphasize them
- Alter qualifications to match specific job you are seeking
- Qualification #4
- Qualification #5
- Qualification #6

EXPERIENCE

COMPANY NAME—brief description of company

Title, Any Town, USA (1984-1996)
 Generalize overall responsibility

- Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity
- Avoid using terms such as “responsibilities included” or “responsible for” and select words from the Action Word list
- Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

COMPANY NAME—brief description of company

Title, Any Town, USA (1980-1984)
 Generalize overall responsibility

- Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity
- Avoid using terms such as “responsibilities included” or “responsible for” and select words from the Action Word list
- Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

COMPANY NAME—brief description of company

Title, Any Town, USA (1975-1980)
 Generalize overall responsibility

- Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity
- Avoid using terms such as “responsibilities included” or “responsible for” and select words from the Action Word list
- Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

EDUCATION

Degree Title
 University or College Any Town, USA

[Resume Example 5](#)

JAMES R. SMITH
 100 Lake Shore Drive
 Any Town, USA 00000-0000
 Voicemail (000) 000-0000
 Fax (000) 000-0000
 E-mail: jrsmith@address.com

<p>Summary of Strengths</p>	<p>Create a strong opening statement describing related skills using tools provided in Resume Checklist and Action Word List</p>
<p>Professional Skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · List specialty skills that may or may not apply to position. They may be assets they weren't looking for but will appreciate. · Use bullets add emphasize · Ease of reading is important
<p>Computer Skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · List hardware · Application · Networking
<p>Professional Experience</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Company Name, Any Town, USA 1992-Present</p> <p>Title & Position Held Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Company Name, Any Town, USA 1990-1992</p> <p>Title & Position Held Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Company Name, Any Town, USA 1986-1990</p> <p>Title & Position Held Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">University or College, Any Town, USA 1990</p> <p>Degree Title</p>

[Resume Example 6](#)**JAMES R. SMITH**

100 Lake Shore Drive
 Any Town, USA 00000-0000
 Voicemail (000) 000-0000
 Fax (000) 000-0000
 E-mail: jrsmith@address.com

Related Skills

Create a strong opening statement describing related skills using tools provided in Resume Checklist and Action Word List

Education

1990 **University or College, Any Town, USA**
 Degree Title

Experience

1992-Present **Company Name, Any Town, USA**
 Title & Position Held

Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity

Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list

Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

1990-1992 **Company Name, Any Town, USA**
 Title & Position Held

Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity

Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list

Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

1986-1990 **Company Name, Any Town, USA**
 Title & Position Held

Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity

Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list

Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

Professional Affiliations

1992-1994 Board, chairman, director, organization

[Resume Example 7](#)**JAMES R. SMITH**

100 Lake Shore Drive
 Any Town, USA 00000-0000
 Voicemail (000) 000-0000
 Fax (000) 000-0000
 E-mail: jrsmith@address.com

Summary of Strengths	Create a strong opening statement describing related skills using tools provided in Resume Checklist and Action Word List
Professional Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · List specialty skills that may or may not apply to position. They may be assets they weren't looking for but will appreciate. · Use bullets add emphasize · Ease of reading is important
Computer Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · List hardware · Application · Networking
Professional Experience	<p style="text-align: center;">Company Name, Any Town, USA 1992-Present</p> <p>Title & Position Held Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Company Name, Any Town, USA 1990-1992</p> <p>Title & Position Held Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Company Name, Any Town, USA 1986-1990</p> <p>Title & Position Held Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements</p>
Education	<p style="text-align: center;">University or College, Any Town, USA 1990</p> <p>Degree Title</p>

Resume Example 8**JAMES R. SMITH**

100 Lake Shore Drive
 Any Town, USA 00000-0000
 Voicemail (000) 000-0000
 Fax (000) 000-0000
 E-mail: jrsmith@address.com

Summary of Strengths

Create a strong opening statement describing related skills using tools provided in Resume Checklist and Action Word List

Professional Skills

- List specialty skills that may or may not apply to position. They may be assets they weren't looking for but will appreciate.
- Use bullets add emphasize
- Ease of reading is important

Occupational Specialties

- Highlight your qualifications succinctly
- Use bullets to emphasize them
- Alter qualifications to match specific job you are seeking
- Qualification #4

Professional Experience

Company Name, Any Town, USA **1992-Present**
Title & Position Held

Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity

Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list

Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

Company Name, Any Town, USA **1990-1992**
Title & Position Held

Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity

Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" and select words from the Action Word list

Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

Company Name, Any Town, USA **1986-1990**
Title & Position Held

Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity

Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for".

Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

Education

University or College, Any Town, USA **1990**
 Degree Title

Resume Example 9

JAMES R. SMITH
 100 Lake Shore Drive
 Any Town, USA 00000-0000
 Voice-mail (000) 000-0000
 Fax (000) 000-0000
 E-mail: JRSMITH@ADDRESS.COM

OBJECTIVE Example text placed here for your for your creative objective using select words from the Action Word List

HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Enter Years of experience of a particular qualification. Don't forget to use the Action Word List.
- Describe special qualifications that you hold personally in your field.
- Enter more bullet text describing your qualifications here.
- Enter more bullet text describing your qualifications here.
- Enter more bullet text describing your qualifications here.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Experience Title

- Descriptive text highlighting specifics of the above titled experience. Use words for the Action Word List.
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Experience Title

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Experience Title

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- Descriptive text highlighting specifics of the above titled experience. Use words for the Action Word List.

WORK HISTORY	1990-91	Title of Position Held	Company Name, City, ST
	1987-90	Title of Position Held	Company Name, City, ST
	1989	Title of Position Held	Company Name, City, ST
	1984-1987	Title of Position Held	Company Name, City, ST
	1981-1984	Title of Position Held	Company Name, City, ST
	1980	Title of Position Held	Company Name, City, ST

EDUCATION

College or University Name, City Location, ST
 Degree, Title

College or University Name, City Location, ST
 Degree, Title

College or University Name, City Location, ST
 Degree, Title

[Resume 10](#)
JAMES R. SMITH

100 Lake Shore Drive
 Any Town, USA 00000-0000
 Voicemail (000) 000-0000
 Fax (000) 000-0000
 E-mail: jrsmith@address.com

EDUCATION

University or College, Any Town, USA Expected 1999
 Degree Title

University or College, Any Town, USA June 1984
 Degree Title

EXPERIENCE

Field January 1993-Present
 Title & Position Held
 Company Name, City, State

- Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity
- Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" Select words from the Action Word list
- Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

Title & Position Held September-December 1992
 Company Name, City, State

- Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity
- Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" Select words from the Action Word list
- Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

Title & Position Held 1990-1992
 Company Name, City, State

- Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity
- Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" Select words from the Action Word list
- Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

Field Summer 1990
 Title & Position Held
 Company Name, City, State

- Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity
- Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" Select words from the Action Word list
- Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

Title & Position Held 1989-1990
 Company Name, City, State

- Use bullets to concisely convey measurable achievement, or defined activity
- Avoid using terms such as "responsibilities included" or "responsible for" Select words from the Action Word list
- Generate positive image of your activities, responsibilities and achievements

[Sample Reference Page](#)

James R. Johnson

100 Lake Shore Drive
Any Town, USA 01234-0000
(000) 000-0000 (000) 000-0000 Fax
E-mail: jrjohnson@address.com

REFERENCES

James D. Carlton, President
Adams Transportation Group
800 Madison Road
Any Town, USA 00000-0000
(000) 000-0000 (please see attached letter of recommendation)

Paul William, Manager
Jamestown Manufacturing, Inc.
481 Fifth Avenue
Any Town, USA 00000-0000
(000) 000-0000

Meredith Brown, Vice President
Jefferson Industries
1200 Industrial Way
Any Town, USA 00000-0000
(000) 000-0000

Tips & Techniques:

- With friends like you. Few resumes include references because the candidate usually likes to brief the reference on the job before the company calls. Once you have given someone as a reference, make sure you brief the person.

James R. Smith

100 Lake Shore Drive
 Any Town, USA 01234-0000
 (000) 000-0000 (000) 000-0000
 E-mail address: jrjones@address.com

December 12, 2002

Ms. Jane Jones
 ABC Company, Inc.
 100 North West Street
 Any Town, USA 01234-0000

Dear Ms. Jones:

This letter is in reply to your advertisement in (list the name of the publication) on (date ad ran in the advertisement) for the position of (name the position).

Then use a two-column format that matches the requirements of the job and your qualifications.

Example:

Requirement	Qualification
Seeking senior Manager of Software Quality Control.	Seasoned Quality Assurance Manager for World Class Software Companies.

Follow this with requirement 2, 3, 4 and match with Qualification 2,3,4 etc.

As you can see from your list of requirements, there is an excellent match with my qualifications. I would like to set up a time when we might meet to discuss this further. I will call on [specify date] to confirm a convenient time.

Your interest and consideration are greatly appreciated and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

James R. Smith

Enc.: Resume

[Sample Cover Letter-References](#)

James R. Jensen

100 Lake Shore Drive
Any Town, USA 01234-0000
(000) 000-0000
E-mail address: jrjensen@address.com

December 12, 2002

Ms. Jane Jones
ABC Company, Inc.
100 North West Street
Any Town, USA 01234-0000

Dear Ms. Jones:

[Name of referrer] suggested that I contact you. [Name of referrer] and I [define your relationship with this person - for example, worked together at Acme Corporation].

The reason I am contacting you is to [briefly state your professional direction]. Then briefly describe your experience.

Please understand that I do not expect

I will call you on [specify date] to set up a meeting at a convenient time.

Sincerely,

James R. Smith
Enc.: Resume

Sample Letter-Confirming Receipt Of Resume

James R. Smith
100 Lake Shore Drive
Any Town, USA 01234-0000
(000) 000-0000
E-mail address: jrsmith@address.com

December 12, 2002

Ms. Jane Jones
ABC Company, Inc.
100 North West Street
Any Town, USA 01234-0000

Dear Ms. Jones:

I am writing to confirm the receipt of my resume for the position of [name position].

I remain interested in the position because [state reason].

In this paragraph, state the skills that you have that are relevant to the position.

I look forward to a meeting with you to discuss this further. Please contact me at the address above or you can also reach me at [telephone number].

Sincerely,

James R. Smith

Arm Yourself With a First-Rate Resume

Your resume has only a few seconds to impress - or to end up in the trash. A strong resume needs a solid foundation, and no amount of trickery can mask poor organization.

Start with these basics:

- **Contact Information:** List your contact information at the top of the resume. Include your full name, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address. If you have a personal Web site, include the URL only if the site shows off your skills or applies to your career goals.
- **Objective:** The objectives section gives recruiters an immediate sense of who you are and what you're looking for, without forcing them to wade through the entire resume. If you decide to include an objective, stress what you'll add to the company, not what you're looking to take away.
- **Experience:** List your experience chronologically, with your most recent job first. If your latest experience wasn't the most impressive, arrange your list by importance. Include the company name, location, your title and dates of employment. Also, give a brief description of your accomplishments.

Remember these tips:

- Emphasize your most important responsibilities even if they weren't your primary duties.
- Use an active voice. Strong sentences are those in which a subject performs an action (active voice) as opposed to an action being performed on the subject (passive voice). "I planned an event," creates a stronger impression than "An event was planned by me."
- Impress employers with cause-effect relationships and tangible results. Quantify your achievements with percentages and numbers like "increased enrollment 20 percent" and "supervised three-person staff."
- Use descriptions to highlight your sense of initiative. Paint yourself as a "go-getter" with strong verbs like "proposed," "launched" and "managed."
- **Skills/Interests:** Today's workers are more tech-savvy than ever, so make sure you mention your technical and computer skills. List programming languages, software programs and operating systems you've used as well as certifications you have. Don't forget "soft skills" like foreign languages and public speaking.
- Always include memberships in professional organizations, because it shows you're serious about your career. Mentioning your interests is optional. Listing activities and hobbies can portray you as a well-rounded person, but it can raise eyebrows, too. Be careful what you list. (You should probably keep your passion for professional wrestling to yourself.)
- **Education:** List your most recent education first and work backward. State your degree, major, minor, dates of attendance and the school's name and location. You may also want to add your GPA (if 3.0 or higher).
- **References:** Don't waste valuable space on references. Employers assume you'll provide them upon request.

Finishing Touches:

- Create several versions of your resume, each tailored to the type of position you're applying for. Writing multiple resumes can be time-consuming, but it's a small price to pay for the job you want.
- If you're applying for a specific job, research the position and company. Pay attention to the job requirements, and highlight your qualifications as they reflect the hiring company's needs.
- Be concise. Stick to one page. Make sure every word is meaningful.
- Choose fonts that are easy-to-read, clean and consistent. Don't use non-traditional or overly creative fonts.
- Read, edit and re-read your resume to make sure it's well written, clear and typo-free. Do it again. Then, ask your friends and family to do the same.
- If you use an online resume, consider saving a text (".txt") version that will look good on any computer. Send your resume as an attached file and also paste the text into the body of the e-mail just to be safe. Online resumes should also include plenty of keywords, since they may be searched.

With some self-evaluation, careful organization and savvy choice of words, your resume will rise to the top of the pile on any recruiter's desktop.

Decorate Your House -- Not Your Resume

The least creative people I know for some reason love to muck up their resumes. You could put a jumbo box of crayons and a table-size drawing pad in front of these folks and they'd write their name. But, get them anywhere near a resume and stand back! They use childish fonts, like Comic sans; print their resumes on pastel yellow or pink paper; even add graphics. In a good resume, skills and experience speak for themselves. If recruiters want to see jazzy fonts and patterned paper, they'll dig through all those resumes in their trashcan.

Make Quality Choices:

For print resumes, use a common font like Arial, Helvetica or Times New Roman. Choose a high quality paper that looks like paper -- not gift-wrap. Print your resume on a laser printer. If you want to make copies of the original, use a good copy machine. If you don't have access to one, check the phone book for your closest copy center. Your brother's dusty dot-matrix printer or the 10-year-old copy machine in the reference section of the local library will not do.

Follow Directions:

For e-mail resumes, pay special attention to the recruiter's instructions. Most HR folk will specifically ask for what they want: "Send Microsoft Word version of your resume," "Send text resumes only." Follow their instructions to the letter. For Microsoft Word resumes, avoid unusual fonts (Chiller, Gigi, RaveDaddy), as the recruiter who receives your resume may not have these fonts installed on his computer. Avoid excessive formatting. If you use bullets, use standard styles -- not smiley faces, pointing hands or other images you've downloaded from the Web. For text resumes, keep it clean and consistent. Since you cannot use standard bullets in a text document, consider using asterisks (*) or hyphens (-).

Make Life Easier for Recruiters:

If your image of a recruiter is someone sitting on the edge of their seat waiting for your resume to hit their in-box, you'd better wake up and smell the Sanka. Recruiters are busy! Too often, they're not only responsible for bringing in new talent, but also running HR -- making sure everyone gets their paycheck, for example. A good resume is a quick and easy read. It contains no fluff. There are no unnecessary words. It's a streamlined, job-getting machine. Recruiters appreciate people who make their lives easier.

Words of Wisdom:

When it comes to your resume, you have immediate control over three factors: How it looks, what it says and whom you send it to. This week, we looked at resume formatting -- that is, how your resume looks. I could write miles and miles of advice on this topic, but the reality is that at some point I have to go home. So, take this little rhyme and use it wisely: "A good resume is clean, concise and consistent. On this, recruiters are quite insistent. To not follow these guidelines is a sin, which could land my resume in the recycle bin."

Effective Resumes: An 'Objective' Debate

Are you for job objectives or against them? Most job seekers -- and even career experts -- have strong opinions. Those in favor say objectives are the simplest, quickest way to target a specific position. Those against charge that objectives waste valuable space and limit you to just one position when you might be qualified for others. Whether you are pro or anti-objective, here are tips for writing a resume that will grab recruiters' attention from the get-go.

Putting Your Goal on Paper:

Job objectives work best for two types of job seekers:

- Those who know exactly what job they want, and
- Those whose career goal is not obvious on their resumes.

If you include an objective, place it directly under your name and contact information. An objective typically begins with "to." For example, "Objective: To obtain a position ... " Your objective should be simple, specific and brief -- no more than two or three lines. It should highlight what you have to offer the company, such as a specific skill or experience. A recruiter is more interested in what you can give the company than what you hope to get from it. Here's an example of an effective job objective:

- Objective: To obtain an entry-level account management position in financial services utilizing my strong analytical and interpersonal skills.
- Review your objective each time you send a resume and make sure it fits the job you're applying for. Just as you should have several versions of your resume, you should also have several versions of your job objective.

Summarizing Your Skills:

Not 100 percent sure what job you want? Then you may find a summary statement more effective than an objective. While an objective focuses on the job, a summary statement focuses on the job seeker. A summary statement is a one- to two-sentence overview that captures the essence of your skills and experience. It highlights what makes you a qualified candidate as well as what makes you different (and better) than other applicants. Tailor your summary statement to highlight the experience that is most relevant to the job. Here's an example of a strong summary statement. Summary: Public relations professional with five years of experience managing PR campaigns across multiple media, working with national and local press and coordinating large-scale events.

Highlighting Your Achievements:

Sometimes a job objective is too targeted. And sometimes a summary statement is too short to highlight all your accomplishments. If that's the case, you have another option: A summary of qualifications. A summary of qualifications is similar to a summary statement, but differs in two key ways: It's formatted as a list of items rather than a single statement, and it highlights specific accomplishments rather than general achievements. It's most useful for job seekers who have a long work history or who are applying for senior positions. It's an effective way to highlight the most important, relevant parts of a long, detailed resume.

This section goes by many names, like "Key Accomplishments" and "Career Highlights." It's placed just where a job objective or summary statement is, under your contact information. A summary of qualifications is a list of your most significant career accomplishments. For maximum effectiveness, the list should include no more than five items and be results-oriented. The summary of qualifications is usually a list of short phrases. You can use a bulleted list, with each qualification on its own line. Or, to conserve space, you can arrange them in paragraph format, with a period after each one. Here's an example of an effective summary of qualifications:

Summary of Qualifications:

- Skilled pharmaceutical sales manager/executive with nine years sales experience and advanced degree in biology.
- Consistently surpassed annual revenue goals by 35 percent-plus.
- Named 2001 "Salesperson on the Year." Managed regional sales staff of 175.
- Job objectives, summary statements, summaries of qualifications -- all are useful resume options. Your best choice will depend on your experience and the type of job you're interested in.

[First Send a Resume, Then Follow Up](#)

You've found your dream job. You spot the job posting, craft a winning resume and e-mail it to the recruiter. Then the waiting game begins. After you've sent a resume, it's tempting to sit back and hope the recruiter will call. But—make no mistake—you SHOULD follow up. You just need to figure out when and how to do it.

Wait a Week, Recruiters Say:

The ideal amount of time to wait before following up on a resume you've sent: One week. The majority of recruiters (53 percent) say candidates should wait one week before following up. Some recruiters prefer you act sooner: Twenty-one percent said candidates should wait less than one week. And others prefer you wait longer: Eight percent said candidates should wait two weeks. And some even rather that you wait for them to call you. Nineteen percent of recruiters surveyed said they preferred to contact candidates, rather than for candidates to contact them. Your best bet? Go with the majority opinion and wait a week.

Send a Short E-Mail Message:

E-mail is a great follow-up tool because it not only lets you remind the recruiter that you've applied for a job, but it also lets you submit a resume again without seeming too pushy. A week after you've submitted a resume, send the recruiter an e-mail to follow up.

Use these tips to write your follow-up e-mail:

- Put your full name and the title of the position you've applied for in the subject line.
- Write a professional note that reiterates your qualifications and interest in the job.
- Attached your resume again. (Don't make the recruiter have to dig through old e-mails to look for it.)
- Include your full name in the file name of your resume.
- Don't forget to proofread carefully before you hit "Send"!

Phone With a Friendly Reminder:

If you decide to follow up on a resume over the phone, be sure to rehearse what you want to say to the recruiter:

- Keep it short and sweet.
- Introduce yourself and remind the recruiter that you submitted a resume recently.
- Make sure you state exactly what job you're interested in. You can also ask if they received your resume and if they're still considering candidates for the position.
- If you get a recorded message, you may want to call again later. Call a few times in hopes of speaking with a real, live recruiter before resorting to leaving a message.

You also need to know even to put down the phone. Calling recruiters repeatedly isn't going to make them more likely to call you back. It's probably just going to irritate them.

Almost half (47 percent) of recruiters claim that their biggest pet peeve is candidates who keep calling them.

Should You Just Resend Your Resume:

Have a few weeks passed since you sent a resume and you still haven't heard from the recruiter? Are you considering simply reapplying for the position? Don't. Recruiters usually keep resumes on file, and they'll likely discover that you've already sent one. Worse, they may think that you didn't even realize that you'd already applied for a position. Only resend your resume to a recruiter when you want to apply for a different position at a company. Otherwise, you should e-mail or call to follow up.

Resumes, CVs and More: Organizing Your Qualifications

Salespeople have a variety of pitches they can make when selling a product. It's just a matter of deciding which pitch is the right one for that customer. Now, think of a potential employer as a customer and yourself as the salesperson -- and the product. In order to successfully sell yourself, you have to face a tough decision: How to advertise your qualifications in the most effective way possible. It may involve a chronological resume or a functional resume ... or perhaps no resume at all. Here are your basic options:

Chronological Resume:

"Chrono" is Greek for "time," so it's no surprise that a chronological resume is organized by your employment timeline. Chronological resumes are the most common choice for job seekers -- and for good reason: They're easy to write. The organization is predetermined, so it's one less thing to stress over. Recruiters prefer them. A recent survey revealed that 84 percent of recruiters prefer chronological resumes. So unless you have a good reason, you should generally stick to the chronological resume format. To create a chronological resume, begin with your most recent experience and work your way back. For each job, list the name of the company, your title, where the job was located, your dates of employment and a few bullet points discussing your major achievements and responsibilities.

Functional Resume:

Chronological resumes are great if your career path has been sure and steady. But there are circumstances where a chronological resume may not be the best choice. For instance, maybe you have a major time gap on your resume, a hodgepodge of experience without an overall focus, or a desire to change career fields. In these situations, a functional resume might prove more useful than a chronological one. Functional resumes highlight your skills instead of the companies you worked for. Functional resumes also downplay time gaps and career missteps. A functional resume generally splits your work history into two sections. In the first section, list the skills and experience you have that relate to the job you're applying for. In the second section, provide a list of the places you have worked, as well as the dates you worked there. Recruiters tend to be wary of functional resumes, but if you suspect that a chronological resume won't get you through the door, a functional resume is a good second choice.

Curriculum Vita:

When most job postings ask for a resume, the implication is that they want a chronological or functional resume -- one page long, work experience, all that jazz. But some jobs out there -- especially in the education and research fields -- require a curriculum vita (CV). CVs are not resumes. Commonly used among academics in the U.S., CVs are much more comprehensive than resumes. A CV lists almost every work-related accomplishment you've ever had, from papers published to presentations given to classes taught to awards won. In short, they're long. Some CVs extend over 30 pages. CVs for non-education related fields are sometimes used in other countries. In Europe, for example, CVs are generally accepted for everyday jobs. In the U.S., however, you should never send a CV unless the job ad specifically asks for one.

Candidate Profile: The Anti-Resume:

You may be surprised (and relieved) to learn that there is some movement away from evaluating job seekers only by their resumes. Some employers, faced with a stack of resumes, are using an alternative: Candidate profiles. Candidate profiles ask online applicants to rank themselves on job related characteristics, including the ability to manage stressful situations, creativity and problem-solving ability, according to the Sydney Morning Herald. Employers use the results to find qualified candidates and reserve traditional resumes for later in the selection process.

While candidate profiles probably won't mean the death of the resume, it may take some of the pressure off having a perfect one.

As you decide which organization works best for you -- chronological resume, functional resume, curriculum vita or candidate profile -- keep in mind that employers don't hire pieces of paper.

They hire people. So do your best to let the real you shine through.

The Resume: A Living Document

A document is said to be “living” when it is subject to ongoing interpretation or revisited repeatedly. In the United States, the Constitution is perhaps the best example of a living document. Courts, congresses and presidents constantly define the meaning of the words first put down on parchment over two centuries ago.

Chances are your resume is not living, but revived only when you need to jumpstart your job search. This is understandable, but not ideal. You should sit down with your resume regularly (even if you’re comfortably employed) and also factor it into major career decisions.

Your resume, specifically your desire to have a strong resume, can bring long-term career goals into sharper focus and help you make wiser career decisions. When grappling over a difficult career decision, ask yourself:

- How will this affect my resume?
- Will it be difficult to explain this to future employers?
- Your vigilance will allow you to avoid some common resume pitfalls.
- Here’s an example. You decide to quit your job and take a year off. You immediately ask yourself, “How will this affect my resume?”

To answer the question, you do some research that reveals that employers do not like to see long stretches of empty time on a resume. So, you decide to take the time off on the condition that you spend a portion of the break freelancing and taking some career related courses. The alternative is being in the unenviable position of not having a positive way to explain your extended absence from the working world.

The Here and Now Resume:

A resume is an amalgam of past, present and future. Though necessary, this creates practical problems for job seekers, such as the tendency to focus only on the present or most recent experience, while neglecting the past.

There’s a common feeling that the lower sections of chronological resumes are “finished” or “just right.” No section of your resume is finished, until you decide to stop working. If you decide to take the time to tailor your resume to a specific position (and it is a good thing to do), modify as much of your resume as necessary.

There is one exception I can think of: If you are submitting your resume to a company that already has your resume on file, you may want to modify only the present section. Otherwise, a recruiter who compares the two resumes may think that you’re fabricating rather than revising.

Resume Rules Changing With the Times:

Keep on top of the latest resume developments. The Internet and online recruiting have changed the way resumes are delivered and evaluated. E-mail is more popular than ever as a way to submit resumes and cover letters. The majority of recruiters prefer e-mail to every other delivery method for resumes, according to a Society for Human Resource Management survey. ASCII (or plain text) is becoming a popular choice for formatting resumes, because of its ability to translate across operating platforms and, after viruses ran up a reported \$4.4 billion in damages to companies and countries, recruiters are understandably wary of opening e-mail attachments from strangers.

Five Resume Essentials

Proofread Your Resume:

"I read it when I wrote it!" my sister yells when I ask her if she proofread her resume. "Hmmm," I say, looking over the piece of paper riddled with typos. "That's why it says you have 'good people kills.'" Maybe not the strongest qualification for the bank manager position she was going for. The best practice is to put your resume in front of a couple of different folks - your boss excluded - and listen seriously to their suggestions.

You Are What You Read:

What amazes me is that people will stampede to get the latest Suzanne Somers' diet book, but go catatonic when someone suggests they buy a career-related book. Believe me, the right book will pay for itself. If you're stashing your cash for a Thigh-Master, explore the career section at your local library.

Be A Resume Voyeur:

It is very informative. Look at other people's resumes whenever you get the chance. You'll find good ideas - and bad ones. Consider using the best ideas for your own resume, as long as they relate to your experience.

What ASCII Stands For:

Have you ever had a company ask you to send your resume as an ASCII? ASCII is an abbreviation for "The American Standard Code for the Interchange of Information." Or, put simply, plain-text format. Look at the keys on your computer keyboard. All the characters you see there, excluding the function keys, compose the ASCII family. Online job boards and some recruiters prefer ASCII resumes, because they retain their formatting, regardless of the software used to view them. If you plan to post your resume online or to e-mail it to a recruiter, you'll want to have an ASCII version.

More Resumes Mean More Chances:

You finally updated your resume, but you shouldn't stop there. If you're going to apply to a variety of jobs, make sure you have a resume tailored for each. A writer, for example, might have as many as six resumes: One for writer with additional versions for editor, copy editor, reporter, marketing manager and freelancer.

[How to Create And E-Mail A Plain Text Resume](#)

Unlike Microsoft Word and other word processors, plain text does not allow bold, italics or different fonts. While it may seem boring, this simplicity allows recruiters to view resumes the same way regardless of the software they use.

Tools You Will Need:

If you don't already have a text editor (and most people with computers do), you can get one for free online. As far as text editors go, I like two in particular:

- Notepad: If you're running Microsoft Windows software on your computer, chances are you have Notepad, which is Microsoft's default text editor.
- Note Tab Light: If you don't have Notepad or can't find it on your computer, you can download Note Tab Light for free here: <http://download.com.com/3000-2352-8235248.html?tag=lst-0-4>

Creating Your Plain Text Resume:

There are two ways you can enter your resume into a text editor.

- From scratch: Once you've found a text editor, start it up and begin typing in your resume. Keep the organization clean and simple, as you will not be able to use bold, italics or fonts in different sizes.
- Copy and paste: If you cut and paste a formatted resume into a text editor, you'll notice that a lot of the formatting will be lost. Your font will be uniform and any text with bold or italics will be replaced with plain text. If you are using a text editor, your document should automatically be saved as text. Double-check this by making sure your document has a txt file extension.

Also, text editors do not typically have spell check. So, copy and paste your text resume into Microsoft Word or another word processing program with spell check. Spell check the document. Be sure to make any necessary changes to the text document and save it again.

Creating a Plain-Text E-Mail:

If a job description asks you to include a plain-text resume in the body of an e-mail, make sure your e-mail software is set to send plain text. Otherwise, your e-mail browser will add formatting to your resume and the recruiter may assume you didn't follow instructions.

The method for sending a plain-text e-mail depends on the e-mail program you're using. I've included directions for some major e-mail programs below. If your e-mail program isn't listed, look in the "help" section of your e-mail or consider calling your Internet Service Provider.

- Yahoo! Mail: Create a new e-mail. At the bottom of the e-mail, click the "plain text" button. Then, simply copy and paste your resume into the e-mail. You may have to make some minor formatting changes.
- Hotmail: Create a new e-mail, in the pull-down field labeled "Tools" make sure the "Rich Text Editor" is off. You'll be able to tell if you've successfully turned the Rich Text Editor off, as all the formatting options will disappear from your composition screen. You may have to make some minor formatting changes.
- Microsoft Outlook: Create a new e-mail, click on the "Format" button and choose the "Plain Text" option. Then, simply copy and paste your resume into the new e-mail. You may have to make some minor changes, but most of your formatting should remain intact.

Helpful Formatting Tips:

Use all caps to make headers stand out from body text. Since plain text does not allow for bold and italics, it can be difficult to distinguish between resume sections. I use all capital letters for "OBJECTIVE," "WORK EXPERIENCE" and "EDUCATION" to give them prominence. You can use bullets in a plain-text document, but it's not as easy as clicking a button. If you want to use a bullet point in your plain-text resume, copy and paste this bullet (-) without the parentheses into your resume. Otherwise, you can use an asterisk (*) or dashes (--). Avoid using the "Tab" key, because plain text when saved may not retain the tab command. Instead, use the space bar. Always e-mail a copy of your plain-text resume to yourself before sending it to a recruiter. This gives you a chance to see the resume as the recruiter will see it.

Good Idea, Bad Timing

Inspiration often happens when we're least prepared to receive it. I get some of my best ideas during the five minutes before I fall asleep. Lying in bed, a great idea suddenly comes barreling down the pre-dream highway. It's very cruel the way this works. I'm too tired to get up and find a pen and paper to record the thought. So, now, before I go to bed, I make sure there's a pen and paper on my nightstand.

Over the years, especially when I have a job search on my mind, I've gathered some useful thoughts on my resume, including improvements on the overall organization, my personal-skills inventory and different types of jobs my resume is suited for.

The beauty of the process is that it requires no effort. If I were to force myself to think about my resume before bed, I'd never get to the intersection between "awake" and "dream" that has been such a boon to artists and others. Now, everyone is different. I know some writers who get their best ideas in the gym, at the grocery store or even in the shower. Keeping a notebook and pen nearby is as good a solution as I've ever heard.

As for my showering thinker, I'm afraid her ideas are destined to be all wet.

Why Bullet Points Matter

You'll probably spend more time reading this article than the average recruiter will spend reading your resume. The majority of recruiters spend less than three minutes reviewing a resume, according to a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management. That's why resumes need good organization. A well-organized resume allows recruiters to quickly find what they're looking for. Bullet points help organize information into nuggets and make resumes more manageable.

Bullet Points That Go Bang:

While quite lengthy, this bullet point from the resume of an advertising industry veteran is still one of the best I've seen in years:

- Eleven days after script approval, had an abandoned runway cleared, an authentic-looking bus stop built, nine talent cast, a DC- 10 commandeered for taxi and takeoff, an off-hours pilot co-opted, and four spots transferred, edited, voiced and folioed, all on time and under budget.

It makes sense that this bullet point comes from someone with a background in advertising; he does a fantastic job here of advertising himself.

I like this bullet because it clearly communicates that this person is capable of completing multiple projects in a high-stress environment; it seamlessly incorporates successes with the details of the job; and it has a perfect ending: The "on time and under budget" is icing on the cake.

Use Bullets Sparingly:

Often people complain that they just can't summarize their jobs with less than five bullet points. But, when I came across this resume for a cytotechnologist, I couldn't help but wonder: "If he can summarize his job in four bullet points, can't you do the same?"

- Responsible for the day-to-day operation of the cytopathology section of the laboratory.
- Conducted highly complex cytopathological testing of clinical specimens, quality control, and quality assurance in all aspects of anatomic pathology.
- Cross-trained as a histotechnologist and perfected special staining techniques to assist with the day-to-day operation of the histology section.
- Promoted hospital's FNAB service substantially increasing departmental revenues and visibility.

A cytotechnologist, by the way, studies human cells for signs of cancer or other diseases. And, this one seems to also be a good writer of resume bullet points.

Put Success Before the Rest:

Prioritizing the order of your bullets is critical. Why? It's called "the primacy effect" - whatever people see first, they remember best. So for your resume to be truly memorable, your strongest qualifications and achievements should go in the top bullets.

Don't bury your best as this job seeker did:

- Department Store, Any town, USA Sales Clerk, March—June, Year
- Assisted customers
- Put out inventory
- In charge of planogram / floor changes
- Recipient of "Top Twenty Salesperson of the Month" Award

The first thing I would do is move the award to the top of the list - it's this candidate's most impressive (and unique) achievement. Then, I would work on the other bullets, focusing more on specific achievements than day-to-day responsibilities. "Assisted customers" is not terribly informative. A sentence on how the job seeker "boosted sales 10 percent" or some other tangible example of success would be better. The final result: A stronger resume.

- Department Store, Any town, USA Sales Clerk, March—June, Year
- Recipient of "Top Twenty Salesperson of the Month" Award
- Boosted sales 10 percent within three months
- Coordinated and maintained 30 planograms / floor changes, all while continuing with daily customer assistance and presentation duties

Avoid Repetition:

It can be hard to avoid repeating words in bullets, but consider what would happen if you didn't:

- Writing GUI-based documentation
- Writing conceptual, procedural and reference documents
- Writing Quick Reference Guides
- Writing documents for end users
- Writing documents for administrators

The resume writer sampled above could have condensed these into one bullet:

- Write GUI-based documentation; Quick Reference Guides; and conceptual, procedural and reference documents.

Or used words other than writing:

- Write GUI-based documentation
- Develop conceptual, procedural and reference documents
- Create and implement Quick Reference Guides
- Produce documents for end users and administrators

If you're having a hard time finding alternative words, use a thesaurus, but carefully. Never use words that you cannot define.

What Do Recruiters Want Anyway?

No one is more qualified to give you job searching advice than the people behind your next job. For that reason, surveys of recruiters and hiring managers are the gold standard by which all other job searching advice should be measured. Here are the results of the most recent "Cover Letters and Resume Survey" by the Society for Human Resource Management

Majority of Recruiters Want Resumes Via E-Mail:

Rarely will you get 83 percent of folks to agree on anything. So when that percentage of recruiters told us they preferred to receive resumes via e-mail, we listened. This information is particularly useful for job seekers who are submitting resumes "cold" -- not in connection with a specific job opening. However, if you are sending your resume in connection with a specific job, the best way to determine the delivery method is to carefully read the job ad and follow the instructions to the letter.

Recruiters Prefer Chronological Resumes:

When it comes to resume format, the chronological resume is the undisputed champ. Eighty-four percent of recruiters surveyed said they preferred chronological resumes to functional resumes. Chronological resumes list work experience from most to least recent and include dates (usually month and year) of employment. Some people abandon chronological resumes in an attempt to hide their age. I haven't seen any data -- scientific or anecdotal -- that suggest this strategy works. One possibility for job seekers concerned about their age is to break the "Experience" section into two parts:

- Relevant Experience: List work experience and accomplishments as they relate to the job opening.
- Work History: List dates employed, title, employer name and location.

This technique allows you to include dates, but lower in the resume. It looks something like this:

JOHN DOE
555 Mockingbird Lane
New York, NY
(555) 555-5555

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:

Editor, ACME Publishing

- Edited stories for clarity and accuracy
- Managed copy editing team
- Interviewed prominent political figures
- Staff writer, Poobah Publishing
- Covered celebrity events
- Monitored news feeds for breaking stories
- Assisted senior editorial team with research

WORK HISTORY:

- 1981-present Editor, ACME Publishing, New York, NY
- 1977-1981 Staff writer, Poobah Publishing, New York, NY

EDUCATION

- Boston University, BA, English, 1977

Recruiters Relaxing One-Page Resume Rule:

Most surveys designed to measure the preferences of recruiters ask about resume length. The problem is this: Few surveys ask this question the same way. The Society for Human Resource Management survey asked recruiters how they reacted to a one-page resume versus a two-page resume. The survey also asked recruiters if it was acceptable for a resume to be longer than one page. Not surprisingly, the two questions answers differed. The SHRM survey found that 55 percent of recruiters respond positively to a one-page resume versus 40 percent for a two-page resume. Only four percent of recruiters responded positively to a resume that exceeded two pages. Taken together, these two questions suggest that a two-page resume, when warranted, may not hurt your chances of moving to the next stage of the hiring process. That's good news for many of you who've written me to say that one page was just not enough to fit in all your career experience. Recruiters seem to agree that the length of the resume should, within limits, reflect the experience of the candidate.

What Do Recruiters Do With Unsolicited Resumes:

While it may seem as if your unsolicited resume gets pulled into a virtual black hole from which no light (or opportunity) can escape, most recruiters file unsolicited resumes. The meaning of "file" varies across companies, with more companies replacing "hard files" -- think filing cabinet and manila folders -- with sophisticated databases that allow recruiters to perform complex searches in their quest for the perfect candidate. This increases the chances that your resume actually will emerge from oblivion. Thirty-eight percent of recruiters surveyed said they consider unsolicited resumes for positions currently open at the company. If a match is not found, the resume is typically filed. A chilling 17 percent of recruiters said they "discard" unsolicited resumes. While the survey did not define "unsolicited resume," it's generally taken to mean a resume that is not sent in connection to an available job opportunity. Many career experts suggest, and the survey seems to agree, that informational interviews and networking may be the best way to express your interest in working for a company when there are no relevant job openings available.

Words Every Resume Should Include

Every word on your resume counts in today's competitive job market. But some words count more than others -- especially those that refer to soft skills. Soft skills are increasingly important in the workplace. In fact, 86 percent of employers considered soft skills to be among their most important hiring criteria in a recent survey by two University of Massachusetts economists.

Teamwork:

Teamwork is more important than ever in the workplace. The ability to work well with others to accomplish a common goal is vital for a harmonious workplace. Employees are often organized into teams to manage projects. And many employers believe collaboration increases the quality of work and improve productivity. A team player is an attentive listener, a cooperative colleague and is willing to help others.

Flexibility:

Employers value workers who are flexible and able to juggle multiple tasks simultaneously. In other words, it's sometimes just as important to be a jack-of-all-trades as a master of one. You can show that you're flexible by demonstrating a willingness to take on new and varied projects and an ability to handle changing priorities and deadlines. Ultimately, being flexible doesn't only increase the odds that you'll get a job -- it also improves your chances of keeping it should layoffs occur.

Detail-Oriented:

Employers want to know that they can trust workers to handle a project down to the last detail. Being "detail-oriented" means being organized and meticulous about your work. It also implies that you can work without constant supervision and act independently.

Self-Motivated:

Employers value employees who are self-starters. These workers can generate their own ideas and follow them through to fruition. A self-motivated worker goes the extra mile. She regularly takes on tasks that may not be part of her job description. She's inspired to work hard not just to reap rewards but also for personal satisfaction.

Words That Weaken Your Resume

More than just your accomplishments make your resume stand out. How you communicate them matters too. A strong resume gives potential employers a concise, clear picture of your skills and experience. And, it's the crucial first step in securing an interview and hopefully a job offer. For maximum impact, keep your resume as concise as you can. You need to include all your achievements in only one to two pages so don't waste space on meaningless words. Plus, an employer doesn't want to spend time trying to understand vague phrases or decipher confusing jargon.

Assist, Contribute and Support:

An employer won't know what you did if the wording on your resume is too vague. Words like "assist," "contribute" and "support" all say (or don't say) the same thing. They say you helped, but they don't say how. They beg the question: Exactly how did you assist, contribute or support a person or project? Use these words sparingly and always follow them with a description of your role and responsibilities. Let an employer know the part you played and how you affected the outcome.

Successfully:

Of course you want to show all that you've accomplished on your resume. But your achievements will be more impressive if you give concrete examples of what you've done and how you've been successful. You don't need to use words like "successfully" or "effectively" to show an employer that you're a good worker; your experience should speak for itself. Instead of explicitly saying that a project was successful, state your achievements clearly and factually. Then give examples of how or why the project was a success.

Responsible For:

The phrase "responsible for" can make your resume feel like a laundry list. Instead of just listing your responsibilities, try to stress your accomplishments. Your resume will also have more of an impact if you quantify your accomplishments. Use figures to show how you affected growth, reduced costs or streamlined a process. Provide the number of people you managed, the amount of the budget you oversaw or the revenue you saved the company.

Interface and Other Buzzwords:

Don't flower your resume with fancy words. By trying to sound intelligent or qualified, you may end up annoying or confusing your reader. You don't want an employer to need a dictionary to discover what you really did at your last job. Avoid buzzwords that have become cliché and words that are unnecessarily sophisticated. "Synergy" and "liaise" are examples of buzzwords that have been overused and abused. Say what you mean plainly and simply. For example, instead of "interface," say "work." Instead of "impact," say, "affect." Instead of "utilize," say "use." Here's what you always SHOULD include in your resume: Keywords. Recruiters use keywords to search for resumes. So choose some of the basic, important keywords in your field and pepper them throughout your resume.

Words to Avoid in Your Resume

Most resume-writing guides focus on "power words" -- words that promise to grab the attention of recruiters as they scan hundreds of resumes -- but few tell you what words to avoid in your resume. Below is a list of words and word types that your resume would be better without.

Abbreviations and Acronyms:

AFPCA, CHIGFET, FIPL, MRSRM, ZWE: Looks like a fresh game of Scrabble, doesn't it? Too many abbreviations and acronyms in a resume make it unreadable. As a rule, avoid using abbreviations and acronyms unless they are commonly recognized. If you work in an acronym-heavy industry, such as technology, use acronyms sparingly.

Personal Pronouns:

It seems odd to avoid personal pronouns (I, me, my) in your resume -- a document that is all about you. But, it actually does make sense. Since your resume is all about you, the addition of "I" or "me" is redundant. Since a resume should contain no unnecessary words, there is no place for the personal pronoun. Your resume, after all, is not a memoir but a concise summary of your skills and experience.

Negative Words:

These words spell death for a resume. Words like "arrested," "boring," "fired," "hate" and "sexist" catch a recruiter's eye like to a two-ton magnet catches a paper clip. If there are difficult issues you want to bring up, save them for the interview.

Keep These Words to a Minimum:

There are other words that are sometimes necessary in a resume, but that should nevertheless be kept to a minimum. Among these: Abused words: a, also, an, because, the, very
Any word you can't define: You may think using these words make you sound smart, but if you use them incorrectly they could kill your chances of landing the job. Words that can be embarrassing if spelled wrong: assess, skills

E-Mail Can Be Key to Employment

E-mail can speed up your job search. It makes it faster and easier than ever to communicate with recruiters and hiring managers. Unfortunately, e-mail is also often used incorrectly. And a simple mistake can cost you an interview or even a job offer. But, by following a few simple steps, you can help ensure that your e-mail gets a response when communicating with recruiters and hiring managers. Here's the first tip: Always put your name in the subject line. Don't assume you're the only job candidate named "Pat." Include your full name (first and last) as well as the topic of the message in the subject line. Here are some other tips on how to e-mail your way to employment.

Keep Your Contact Information Handy:

Of course your contact information is front and center on your resume. But there's another place you should also include it: In the body of your e-mail. This will make it easier for recruiters and hiring managers to reach you. You can create an e-mail signature that will automatically appear in each message. Or, type your name, address, phone number and e-mail address at the bottom of every single e-mail you send. You shouldn't assume someone will take the time to look for your contact information in his or her files.

Attach Then Open:

Always double-check attached files AFTER attaching them to your message. Many people have multiple versions of their resumes and cover letters. Make sure you're sending the most appropriate resume or the cover letter addressed to the correct person. Attaching the wrong file, especially if it's a personal file, can be disastrous.

Be the Sender and the Recipient:

Be smart: Test your e-mail messages by sending them to yourself. If you're worried that a message won't look right or will have formatting problems, send it to yourself before sending it to the recruiter or hiring manager. You'll see exactly what they'll see, and you can fix any problems first.

Before You Hit Send:

Leave the "To" field for last. You don't want to accidentally send an incomplete or error-filled e-mail to a recruiter or hiring manager. Don't fill in the recipient's e-mail address until right before you hit "Send." Adding the e-mail address should be the very last thing you do. Check the spelling, do a final proofread and THEN fill in the "To" field.

[Do Cover Letters Really Matter?](#)

Cover letters are an important part of your job search. Over 80 percent of recruiters surveyed by the Society for Human Resources Management said cover letters are a "necessity." Doing a cover letter poorly, however, is worse than not doing one at all. A whopping 76 percent of recruiters surveyed said they would not consider applicants who had errors in their cover letters. How can you make sure your cover letter helps more than hurts? Follow these basic tips.

Customize Your Cover Letter:

Contrary to popular thought, your cover letter is less about you than how you match up with the job being advertised. Before you sit down to write your cover letter, get a copy of the job description you're applying for. If you found the job online, the job description is usually the job ad itself. If you found the job in a newspaper, it's unlikely that the job ad contains the full job description, so you'll either have to go with the information you have in the brief ad or write to the employer and request a job description. Read the job description carefully a couple of times. Then, note parallels between your own skills and those required for the position. Many job descriptions also mention software that applicants should be familiar with. Be sure to take an inventory of your own software skills and note which of these matches up with the job description. These notes will make up the body of your cover letter.

The Outline and Header:

You may find that you have a lot to include in your cover letter. That, by the way, is a good sign that you're a strong candidate for the job. Pick out the strongest parallels using the job description as your guide. Ask yourself: What does the job description prioritize as the primary responsibilities? Once you've decided what to include, decide the order in which you'll address the parallels by laying them out in a brief outline. It is important to feature only the strongest points in your cover letter, as the letter should be no longer than one page. Almost one quarter of recruiters surveyed by the Society for Human Resources Management said they would not consider applicants who submitted cover letters that exceeded a page.

The Header:

Here's the basic format for the header of a cover letter:

March 11, 2002

Mr. John Smith
1313 Mockingbird Lane
Somewhere, NY 55555

Dear Mr. Smith:

It includes the date, the recipient's name and address and a brief salutation.

The Body:

Begin the body of the letter by expressing your interest in the position, the title of the position (and any identifying code listed in the job ad) and where you saw the position advertised. The last point is very important. Many job ads insist on this information -- and for good reason. Recruiters want to know which advertising vehicles are showing good returns, so they can optimize their spending. After this brief intro, begin a new paragraph and spell out in clear, simple and brief sentences how your experience parallels that of the job description. As you're doing this, be sure to refer to your resume. Here's a fictional example illustrating you where we are in the process:
March 11, 2002

Mr. John Smith
1313 Mockingbird Lane
Somewhere, NY 55555

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing to express my interest in the editorial position, reference code RIP13, as advertised on your homepage. As my attached resume notes, I have six years of editorial experience. ...

The Closing:

Closing the body of your letter is pretty standard fare. Give your phone number, including the area code, and thank the recruiter for his time. Adding this information, the cover letter looks like this:

March 11, 2002

Mr. John Smith
1313 Mockingbird Lane
Somewhere, NY 55555

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing to express my interest in the editorial position, reference code RIP13, as advertised on your homepage. As my attached resume notes, I have six years of editorial experience. ...

If you have any questions or would like to schedule an interview, I can be reached at: 555-555-5555 (Home) or 444-444-4444 (Cell).

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Chris Jones

Your cover letter, of course, would have a couple more paragraphs relating your experience to the requirements of the job. Some parting thoughts: Always have a friend or family member (not a coworker) read your resume for typos and grammatical errors. If you're stuck on a grammatical point, consult a grammar guide.

Five Common Cover Letter Mistakes

Recruiters read thousands of resumes over their careers. After a while, all those resumes start to blend together. So how can you, an anonymous job seeker, catch a recruiter's eye? Introduce yourself with an effective cover letter. Sure, a resume lists all of your achievements, but a resume can't capture your personality, passion or desire for a particular job. A cover letter is the perfect place to let potential employers know you as a person: What you've done, what you can offer and how you express yourself. And there's an added bonus: You can write in full sentences instead of fragments or bullet points. Many job seekers spend hours crafting each item on their resume. Then they whip out a quick-and-dirty cover letter full of mistakes -- not realizing that a cover letter is just as important as a resume. One common cover letter goof: Typos and spelling errors. To avoid spelling errors and typos, write your cover letter using a word processing program, such as Microsoft Word. Next, spell-check the document. Then read the document out loud -- you may catch spelling errors the computer missed (such as accidentally writing "jog" instead of "job"). Only after you have double-checked your cover letter should you attach it to your resume and send it off. Here are some other all-too-common cover letter blunders and how to fix them.

Name That Job:

That's one of the first things you should do after greeting the reader of a cover letter? State exactly which job you're applying for. Include the exact name of the position. If the ad provided a job ID number, then include that too. It's also a good idea to mention where you heard about the opening. There's a good reason for being so specific: Many recruiters handle hundreds of job openings, so they won't automatically know which one you're gunning for. By reminding them of the specific opening for which you're applying, you'll make it more likely that the right person will read your resume. And besides, anything you can do to make a recruiter's job easier will put you on their good side.

The Danger of Form Cover Letters:

Do you send the exact same cover letter to every employer, only changing the name of the person to whom you're sending it? Big mistake. The point of a cover letter is to make a personal connection with the reader. So to write a successful cover letter, you should tailor it specifically to each company you send it to. For instance, display knowledge of the company history or write about recent events or projects the company has undertaken. This will show that you have taken the time to research the company before sending in your resume -- and prove that you really want the job.

Don't Repeat Yourself:

A common trap that many job seekers fall into when writing a cover letter is to simply regurgitate everything that's in their resume. But if it's already in your resume, then you're just wasting your breath ... and a chance at the job. A cover letter should not be a rehash of your resume; instead, it should offer deeper insights into what your resume does NOT say. Provide an in-depth explanation of some of your key achievements at your last job, for instance, and how those accomplishments could help the company. Or tell a story about a tough problem you solved. The point is: The recruiter already has your resume; the cover letter should add to it, not repeat it. So when writing a cover letter, make sure it elaborates on what's already in your resume or provides some new information.

What Can You Do for Me?

When writing a cover letter, many people discuss why they need the job:

- "I need the money."
- "I find the position interesting."
- "I've wanted to work for you since I was a kid."
- "I need more experience in the industry."
- "Since your company is the best in the industry, a job there would help my career."

Here's a newsflash: Companies don't really care about your needs. They're not hiring you to enrich your life or provide you with an income. They're hiring you because they need a job done. That means your cover letter should focus on the company's needs and how you can fulfill them, not what the company can do for you. A good way to start: Look at the requirements for the position in the job ad. Then, in your cover letter, discuss point by point how you meet (or even exceed) those requirements. By using the job ad as a guide, you'll show the company how hiring you benefits them and not just you. One last note: Try to be both confident and humble when discussing what you can offer the company. While you certainly want to appear competent, arrogance can turn off a recruiter. Show enthusiasm and keep a positive attitude, and your cover letter will take you far.

Killer Cover Letters

Whether you're submitting a resume cold or responding to a job posting, always include a cover letter. Yes, they're tedious to write, but a solid cover letter can make the difference between getting the job and getting nowhere.

Address the Recruiter:

Start your letter with the date. Skip two lines and write the recruiter's full name, preceded by Mr. or Ms. Then, list the recruiter's title and the company name and address. If you don't know the recruiter's name, simply list the company name and address.

Say Hello:

Two lines below the header, greet the recruiter with "Dear Mr." or "Ms.", followed by his/her last name and a colon. Don't use the first name, even if you've met the recruiter before; it's unprofessional to be immediately informal. If you don't know the recruiter's name, address the letter, "To Whom It May Concern."

Introduce Yourself:

State your letter's purpose in the first paragraph. Tell the recruiter which position you're applying for and why it interests you. Briefly list your top qualifications. If you're responding to a job posting, mention where you saw it.

Sell Yourself:

The second paragraph is the most important: It's your sell. Summarize your credentials, but don't reiterate your resume. List your most relevant accomplishments from previous jobs, internships or volunteer work. Emphasize your qualifications for the job by highlighting applicable skills. If you're responding to an ad, you have an edge: You already know the job requirements. Make sure you address them.

Flatter Your Reader:

The third paragraph should clarify why you want to work at this particular company. Explain why you and the company are a good fit. Show the recruiter that you've done your research. Mention a recent company event or express your interest in an aspect of the company that isn't widely known. Remember, everyone loves flattery, but don't go over the top.

Follow-Up:

Your final paragraph should be only a few sentences. Thank the recruiter for reading your letter, then request an interview and provide your phone number. Or, be proactive and state that you'll call in a week to follow-up. Then do it.

Wrap It Up:

Two lines below the last paragraph, conclude with "Sincerely," Three lines below that, type your full name. Don't forget your signature.

Leave a Great Impression:

Three lines below the finish, type "Enclosure" (referring to your resume). You'll look professional, detail-oriented and oh-so-savvy.

The Quick List:

Do not send form letters. Tailor each letter to the company, department and, if possible, specific position. The extra effort pays off. Recruiters read hundreds of cover letters. Brevity is key. Keep the letter to one page. When touting your achievements, be confident but don't exaggerate, brag or lie. Read, edit and re-read your letter for typos. Ask a friend to read it, too. A cover letter's strength lies in its language and detail, so do your research and take your time. Use a professional tone, but don't be stiff. Be yourself. Take advantage of this opportunity to show off your dynamic personality as well as your skills.

Job Interview Preparation

Preparing for Your Interview

Review all of the information you have about the position:

If you are working with a headhunter or recruiter, ask all the questions you want before you arrive.

Learn all you can about potential employer:

- Get a copy of the company's annual report and read it.
- Visit the company's web site on your PC or at your public library. This will be your most up to date view of the company.
- Be prepared to discuss the company's competitive environment; if possible get copies of the competition's company materials as well.
- Assess what the company's major challenges are and how you can help them.
- Contact anyone that may have an "insider's" view of the company to glean more about the company's personality.
- Read as much about the company's products as possible.

Identify the qualifications that the company is seeking with this job hire:

- Understand the functions of the specific job.
- Attempt to speak with someone who might have a similar position.
- Be prepared to show how your background has prepared you for these specific requirements.
- Prepare illustrative stories to highlight your strengths.
- Tie these anecdotal stories to what is on your resume and how they apply to the job responsibility.
- Be prepared to discuss your management style and personal style.
- Anticipate the questions you are likely to be asked (review the most common question checklist)
- Wear clothing in which you feel comfortable and confident.
- Ensure that you leave plenty of time to get to your appointment.
- Check your appearance
- Bring additional copies of resume
- Pen & notepad (for post interview review)

During

- Many questions seem like they might require simple yes or no answers. Avoid using a yes or no response. Explain your response.
- Emphasize the positive side of a potential weakness
- Concentrate on the complementary skills that you have that match the job requirements

- ___ Detail how you contributed to increased efficiency/profits.
- ___ Use terms that show you know the field.
- ___ Ask questions that reveal you studied up on the company.
- ___ Demonstrate your interest by making practical suggestions.

- Speak ill of no one in an interview, especially your current or former employers.
- Avoid a discussion of salary until you have established a solid base for your qualifications
 - ___ Don't hesitate to ask for more than you are currently making or expect to receive
 - ___ Attempt to understand the role of other important benefits - see compensation and benefits check list
- Be enthusiastic during the interview; even if the job is not a match, you may be referred to another area if you leave a good impression
- Glean what the negative aspects of the job/organization might be.

Ask questions that will help you determine if this is the right job:

- ___ What are the possibilities for growth/advancement?
- ___ Why (and where) did person who held job go?
- ___ How many people would have to okay decisions made by you?
- ___ What is the official job classification?
- ___ What is the policy on salary review?
- ___ What are the fringe benefits?
- ___ Who would you report to and what is this person's position?
- ___ Other
- ___ Other
- Leave extra copies of your resume with interviewer.

After

- Write down everything you can remember about the interview.
- Send a follow-up letter.
 - ___ Restate what went well.
 - ___ Correct what did not go well, if possible.
- Telephone to see if any decision has been made. (Wait a week.)

Tips & Techniques

- Friends at First Sight: When you are first greeted - smile, make eye contact and talk.
- Fear Knows No Friends: Your first thought should be "I am really delighted to meet you" and then say it like you mean it.
- The Longest Mile: Use time on the walk from reception area to compliment the company, office, staff (i.e. receptionist). Be sincere.
- Arm and Arm: Never walk behind the interviewer unless you must. Walk together as colleagues.

Most Commonly Asked Interview Questions

Review the following questions and write responses to help prepare and familiarize yourself with them.

Previous Job experience

- Why did you leave your current job?
- Why are you looking for a new position (if you are currently employed)?
- Did you leave your job voluntarily or were you fired?
- What are the accomplishments that you are proud of?
- Which of your previous jobs have you liked the best?
- What didn't you like about your previous position?
- Tell me about yourself.
- What would your boss (staff) tell me about you?

Questions relevant to this particular job

- What do you think you can contribute to this company?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What are your immediate and future job objectives?
- What is your minimum salary requirement for this job?
- What other jobs are you considering?
- How long would it take for you to make a contribution in this job?
- Why do you want this particular job with this company?
- What interests you most about this job?

General Questions / Personal

- How do you work under pressure?
- Were you ever fired? Why?
- What would you like to be doing five years from now?
- What kind of manager do you like to work for?
- How do you describe your management style?
- Have you ever fired someone? (Be prepared to talk about the process and how it made you feel.)
- What do you think about your current/former employer?
- What are your hobbies and outside interests?
- Are you planning to continue your education?
- Are you a decisive individual?
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- How would you describe your social skills - do you get along with people?
- Tell me about yourself.
- What would your current/former bosses say about you?
- What would your current/former direct reports say about you?
- Do you have any questions? (See related document - Questions you should ask in an Interview)

Questions you might want to consider asking:

- What are the key metrics for success in this job?
- Why did the previous person leave?
- What are the opportunities in this company over the next five years?
- Could you tell me a little about the culture of the company?
- What are the skills and attributes of an individual that is most likely to succeed in a job at this company?
- Who will your competition be in the next five years?
- Who will report to me - Can I get to meet them?
- Why did you [Interviewer] join the company? (What keeps him there?) Tell me a little about your experiences with the company.

Tips & Techniques

- Move it Along: The most common interview problem is over-talking. Answer questions within three minutes. Practice and time responses.
- Lights, Camera . . . and Action: It's okay to use your hands (but don't fidget) to describe something. If you are making a gesture - make it a big one. This adds visual interest and deepens your breathing.
- Forward Momentum: Lean forward once in a while, particularly if you want the interviewer to be interested. Show your excitement.
- "I'm Losing Him": Have a colorful and relevant story to restart a 'flat-line' interview.

Interview Evaluation

Company Name:

Date and Time:

Name of Interviewer:

Title:

Phone:

Contact Source:

Personal Characteristics of Interviewer:

Title of Position for This Interview:

Responsibilities:

Reports to:

Title:

Next career step:

What I learned about the company:

My Qualifications for position include:

Perceived weaknesses:

What attracts me to this position?

What I don't like about this opportunity:

Salary Negotiations:

Bonus, Benefits:

Self-assessment of interview:

Strengths were demonstrated how:

Weaknesses came through:

Next steps:

Follow-up letters:

Follow-up phone calls:

Other:

Need to emphasize the following in the next interview, follow-up:

[Sample Letter-Interview Follow-up](#)

James R. Smith

100 Lake Shore Drive
Any Town, USA 01234-0000
(000) 000-0000
E-mail address: jrsmith@address.com

December 12, 2002

Ms. Jane Jones
ABC Company, Inc.
100 North West Street
Any Town, USA 01234-0000

Dear Ms. Jones:

Thank you for meeting with me on [specify date] to discuss the opportunity of [specify position] at your company.

During our meeting we discussed [specify some itemized details, needs and responsibilities that were discussed].

Based on your company's specific needs and my specific skills, which we also discussed, I am confident that I can make a contribution to your company in the following ways:

Raise your profitability by [state how you will do this]

Point # 2

Point #3

This position offers me a challenge for which I am clearly prepared and energized. I am enthusiastic about your company and the contributions that I would like to make.

Your interest and consideration are greatly appreciated. I will follow up with on [specify action] to discuss [specify any open issues or specific next steps].

Sincerely,

James R. Smith

[A Crash Course in Interview Preparation](#)

Everyone loves to get this phone call: "This is Jane Doe. I'm calling to see if you would like to come in for a job interview." Your pulse races: A job interview! It isn't until the night before the interview that your stomach drops, a feeling of slight dread sets in and you ask yourself, "What am I going to wear?" "What am I going to say?" You've got a case of the pre-interview jitters:

A good sign that you haven't spent enough time preparing. Getting ready for an interview should begin at least three days before the interview is scheduled to take place. This week, we'll run down the top things you should do before the big day arrives.

The Clothes Make the Job Seeker:

Make sure your interview clothes are clean and pressed a few days beforehand.

The last thing you want to worry about the night before an interview is pleading with your drycleaner or getting burned by a hot iron. Also, make sure you have a neutral colored umbrella on-hand in case of rain.

Don't Forget Your Resumes:

Make good-quality copies of your resume on a nice grade of paper. Take more copies than you will possibly need -- just in case. Store the copies in a folder where they will stay clean and unwrinkled. Organize your portfolio, tear sheets, professional reference lists or any other papers you think your prospective employer would like to see. Make sure your purse or briefcase is stocked with everything else you'll need: A working pen (no pencils!), a notebook, breath mints, a comb, the umbrella I mentioned and some tissues.

Practice Makes Perfect:

Like most things, people get better at interviewing with a little practice. Dedicate one night prior to the interview to a mock Q and A. You can set this up with a friend or conduct the interview yourself with a list of frequently asked interview questions and a mirror. Don't panic if, during the actual interview, you are not asked any of the questions you practiced. The point of practicing is to "warm up" to the process of answering questions on the fly.

Do Your Homework:

Spend at least two days before the interview researching the company. Take notes. Memorize important facts. A little preparation goes a long way. A couple of hours researching the company and practicing answers to interview questions can give you that extra bit of confidence you need to ace the interview.

[A Question of Thanks](#)

It used to be that the thank-you note was as sacred to the job search as the two-page resume was taboo. But today the humble thank-you note is surrounded by controversy. One popular career author says thank-you notes are not worth the paper they're printed on; almost every other career author says exactly the opposite; and even experts are not sure whether or not it's OK to send a thank-you note by e-mail.

Thanks, But No Thanks:

Conventional career wisdom holds that a thank-you note should be sent after every interview, but at least one career author says otherwise. "I think they're a bad idea," said H. Anthony Medley, author of *Sweaty Palms, the Neglected Art of Being Interviewed*. Medley speaks not from a human resources perspective, but from that of a hiring manager -- the folks who usually make the final decision on whether or not a candidate is hired. In his role as hiring manager, he finds thank-you notes to be "an irritant." "All of a sudden," he said, "you get inundated with these thank-you letters. They're insincere. What do you do? Throw them away, file them, and write them back?"

"I don't agree with him," said Katharine Hansen, a career author whose works include *A Foot in the Door* and *Dynamic Cover Letters*. "Most career experts advise job seekers to send thank-you notes." Hansen estimated that only five percent of job seekers actually send thank-you notes.

"That's one reason why you should send a thank-you letter," she said, "because you'll stand out."

"I think thank-you notes are still important," said Kate Moody, Vice President of Human Resources at Oxygen Media, LLC. "It definitely makes an impression when a candidate takes the time to follow up."

E-Mail Thank-You Notes:

People are increasingly sending thank-you notes the same way they send resumes: By e-mail.

"Experts are really not in agreement on whether e-mail thank-you notes are acceptable," said career author Katharine Hansen. So, how do you decide whether you should handwrite your thank-you note or e-mail it? "Be guided by the company culture," Hansen said.

"I think in today's era of e-mail communication, it's totally acceptable to have a thank-you note come by e-mail," said Kate Moody, Vice President of Human Resources at Oxygen Media, LLC.

"Simply the fact that someone takes the time to respond to the interview is important. Whether they do that by e-mail or hand is not as important," Moody added. Being prompt, however, is key. "If someone sends me a thank you more than two days after I met them, I may not make the connection," Moody said.

"That's another way e-mail has an advantage."

For e-mail thank-you notes:

- Choose a legible, conservative font in black.
- Do not send the interviewer an e-card.
- Do not carbon copy or "CC" others.
- Spell check before sending.

Handwritten Thank-You Notes:

A handwritten thank-you note requires more time and effort than an e-mail, but it will almost certainly make you stand out. "Nobody sends handwritten thank-you notes anymore," said Seraphim Carlson, a New York based recruiter. "I've probably gotten five handwritten notes, and I've hired over 120 people." "I like getting them," Carlson added, "and I still remember those five candidates." Use these tips when creating a handwritten thank-you note:

- Write your message in ink -- not pencil.
- If you make a mistake, trash the note and start again.
- Have someone proofread your work.
- Mail the card within 24 hours of the interview.

If It's Not Worth Doing Right:

A poorly constructed and error-ridden thank-you note will hurt -- not help -- your chances.

"Sending a bad thank-you note is worse than sending none at all," said Aleyda Robatto, Recruitment Manager for MTA New York City Transit. "I think people really focus on their resume and cover letter, but for some reason they don't seem to have a chance to work on their thank-you notes." "A good thank-you note summarizes what we spoke about [during the interview] and crystallizes additional points that may not have been brought up," said Robatto. In the final analysis, the thank-you note is like any other tool. It can prove productive or destructive to your search depending on how it's used.

Closing an Interview: Tips to Seal the Deal

Your job interview has been going great, and it's coming to a close. The final few minutes are crucial. You don't want to blow it by saying the wrong thing on your way out the door. To leave a good impression with the interviewer, your final words and gestures should be enthusiastic and confident.

It's All in the Delivery:

Are you unsure how to close a job interview? Take your cue from the interviewer. During the interview, pay attention not only to what the interviewer says but also to how she says it. Notice her body language, tone of voice and level of formality. And then tailor your closing remarks accordingly. But, no matter how the interview behaves, always be confident. Look them in the eye when speaking. Thank them by name and firmly shake their hand when saying goodbye.

Accentuate the Positive:

Use the final few minutes of your job interview to emphasize the skills that make you right for the job. This will ensure that your strengths will be one of the last things that the interviewer hears -- helping him or her remembers them. Rehearse your closing so that you are not fumbling over your words. You'll want to sound smooth and natural, not boastful. Start by saying how impressed you are with the company and the people you've met. Then transition into why you'd be a good fit for the position.

End Notes:

You should end your job interview on an enthusiastic, but not aggressive, note. Reiterate your interest in the job, but try not to sound anxious or desperate. Instead, express how exciting and challenging you think the role would be -- and what a good fit you'd be for it. Finally, ask the interviewer if there's anything else you can do to show your strengths as a candidate. For example, you can offer to send samples of your work if appropriate.

The Next Step:

Don't leave a job interview without knowing the next step in the hiring process. For example, will the company be calling candidates back for another round of interviews? Are they planning to check references? When do they anticipate that a hiring decision will be made? You may also want to ask the recruiter how he would prefer you to follow up with him. Can you call him on the phone, or would he rather that you email him? Not only will this information help reduce post-interview anxiety, it also shows the interviewer that you're thorough and conscientious.

Five Ways to Rescue a Dying Interview

There are many ways for an interview to go wrong. You show up late. There's a stain on your shirt. You accidentally insult the interviewer's mother. All avoidable mistakes. Sometimes, however, there simply isn't a clear explanation for why an interview isn't going well. Sometimes, no matter what you do or say, an interview just fizzles. Don't panic -- you can save this interview.

The first step: Smile. Body language plays an important part in an interview. If you relax your shoulders and give a big old grin, you'll feel more comfortable, and so will the interviewer. Smiling also helps increase your energy and project confidence -- all plusses in an interview.

While smiling is a good start to turning an interview around, there are other steps you can take.

Ask the Interviewer Questions:

This is known as the "switcheroo." If you feel that you just aren't giving the right answers to an interviewer's questions, try changing tactics -- and ask the interviewer a few questions of your own. If you momentarily switch the focus from yourself to the interviewer, it will give you a chance to regroup and compose yourself. Also, it will make the interviewer do some talking, perhaps giving you a clue to what he or she is looking for. Be sure to prepare your questions in advance and make sure they are appropriate.

Some examples:

- What's your favorite thing about working at this company?
- How would you describe the working environment here?
- What's a typical day like in the department?

Get Feedback:

If an interviewer seems bored or cold while you're answering a question, all is not lost. Stop and ask if your answer is going in the direction they're looking for. That way, you can avoid talking about the wrong things and begin talking about the right things. Maybe you misunderstood the question. Or maybe the question wasn't phrased clearly. That doesn't mean you have to struggle -- just ask the interviewer for some clarification. If you still feel like the interview is going poorly, ask if the interviewer has any concerns or questions regarding you as a candidate. That way, you can respond to any worries directly. The key point to remember: If an interviewer is getting bored or appears distracted, cut your answer short and get some feedback.

Flattery Will Get You Everywhere:

Everyone likes to feel good about him or her selves. Even interviewers. So to put an interviewer in a better mood, offer a compliment. Say a nice word or two about the company, the office's location, and the view from the window -- something that will make the interviewer feel good. Paying a compliment also indicates you are a positive person, an attitude many hiring managers seek in candidates. Giving a compliment about the company is especially useful, since it will offer you a chance to show that you did research on the company before the interview, proving you're well prepared. A note of caution: Your compliments should not be too numerous, too obvious or too personal. If you suddenly begin gushing about how GREAT the interviewer's haircut is, the interviewer will see right through your charade. Better to keep your compliment simple and safe, such as saying how friendly everyone seems to be.

You May Not Be the Problem:

If you feel like you've done everything possible to succeed in your interview but you're still getting the cold shoulder, then follow this advice: Just do your best and move on. Perhaps the interviewer fought with his or her spouse that morning, or perhaps the interviewer is sick. Or perhaps, for no reason, the interviewer is just in a foul mood. There are innumerable reasons why an interviewer may have been in a bad mood ... many of which have nothing to do with you. Interviewers are people too and everyone has bad days. So remember to trust yourself and not let it get you down. Just do the best you can and try not to worry about things you can't control.

Four Don'ts When Dealing With Recruiters

What's the first step to getting a job interview? Getting past the recruiter. Recruiters are usually your first contact with a potential employer. And they often decide whether your resume lands on the hiring manager's desk or in a far-off filing cabinet. While it's important to know the basics of what recruiters do, you also need to know what they DON'T do. After all, you don't want an inappropriate request to ruin your chances for an interview. Here are four things you shouldn't ask of a recruiter.

Don't Be Overly Friendly:

Sure, recruiters are usually warm, friendly and helpful. After all, it's their job to put you at ease and guide you through the hiring process. But they're professional colleagues, and it's crucial that you never forget it. Think of the recruiter as a respected coworker and treat them accordingly. Be friendly, but not overly casual or familiar. It's wise to keep personal conversations, jokes and physical contact to a minimum. After a tough interview with a hiring manager, you may be relieved to see a recruiter's smiling face. Don't be tempted to let your guard down though; you're still "on," even if the interview has ended. A useful rule of thumb: Don't say or do anything in front of a recruiter that you wouldn't say or do in front of your boss (or your mother).

Don't Expect Career Coaching:

The recruiter's goal is not to help you get a job. It's to help you navigate the hiring process at one specific company. Recruiters aren't career coaches. It's not appropriate to ask them to help you craft your cover letter, edit your resume or plan your career path. You can ask questions about the company or industry in general, but try to relate your questions to the job you're being considered for. And save your best, most thoughtful questions for the hiring manager -- that's who you need to impress most.

Don't Ask for Insider Information:

There's only one job candidate you really need to worry about: You. Though it may be hard to resist, don't ask about whom you're up against for a job. Recruiters generally won't share information about other candidates. And asking for specific details about the competition makes you look insecure in your own skills. However, questions about the hiring process or the position itself are fair game. Here are a few questions you can feel comfortable asking:

- Are you still interviewing candidates?
- How large is the current pool of candidates?
- How would you describe the ideal candidate for the job?
- Is there anything I can do to make myself a stronger candidate?
- What is the best way to get an edge on the competition?
- Make yourself a more competitive candidate.

Don't Request Special Treatment:

Although you may wish you were, you're probably not the only candidate for the job. And, while recruiters are often happy to help, their aim is not to be your advocate to the hiring manager. Their aim is to fill a position. Never ask a recruiter to put in a good word for you with the hiring manager. If they think you're a strong candidate, they'll probably sing your praises anyway.

Also, don't ask them to relay a message to the hiring manager for you. Instead of saying, "Tell So-and-So it was very nice to meet him..." send a thank you note.

Taking the initiative and speaking for yourself shows the hiring manager that you're capable, confident and conscientious. Remember, if you treat the recruiter well, chances are they'll treat you the same way.

Four Questions to Ask a Potential Manager

Happiness on the job sometimes comes down to one person: Your manager. Your manager can matter more than money, title or benefits. People do not always quit jobs - they sometimes quit bosses. Many workers leave a position because they're unhappy with their bosses. On the other hand, if you genuinely like and respect your boss, your job can be rewarding, fulfilling and even fun. But how can you ensure that you and your potential boss will get along? While there are no guarantees, you can often recognize a boss who's right for you -- if you ask the right questions.

The Ideal Employee:

Do you want to know what your potential manager will expect from you?

Ask her, "What's your ideal employee like?"

- If her ideal employee works long hours on a regular basis, expect to do the same.
- If her ideal employee is someone who never questions procedure, don't plan to arrive and immediately implement new ideas.
- If her ideal employee works independently, rest assured that you wouldn't be micro-managed.

You're likely to be happier on the job if you and your potential manager have similar working styles. After all, everyone deserves a manager who thinks that they're the ideal employee.

The Skinny on the Staff:

You can tell a lot about your potential manager from his staff. Ask him:

- Can you tell me about the people I'd be working with?
- How long have you worked with them?

Pay attention to how well your potential boss seems to know his staff. Can he list their individual accomplishments? Is he proud of them? Note his tone and energy when he talks about his team. Does he sound upbeat and positive? Or is there a hint of frustration or disappointment in his voice? Also note how long his staff has worked with him. High turnover can be a red flag, and happy employees are more likely to stay put.

Results and Rewards:

Do you want to excel on the job? If so, then you need to know how a potential manager defines excellence. Ask him, "How do you measure success on the job?" You may be accountable to complete projects to deadline and under budget. Or perhaps you'll need to reach a certain benchmark in your performance, for example a dollar value in revenue or a percentage of satisfied customers. You should also ask about the typical career path for an employee who successfully meets his goals. After all, you want to work for a manager who recognizes and rewards excellence.

A Problem Solved:

Sooner or later, a problem will arise. And you need to know how a potential manager will handle it. Ask him, "What's your approach to solving problems?" Knowing how a potential manager solves problems can give you insight into his management style. Does he prefer to take charge and make a decision independently? Does he delegate the decision to a staff member? Or does he favor a more collaborative style of problem solving? Finally, keep in mind that a potential boss' overall attitude toward answering questions can be very telling about his management style. If he's open to questions and answers thoughtfully, he's likely also open to exploring and improving his working relationships. And that's one quality that makes for a great manager.

[How to Ace a Meal Interview](#)

Interviews can often be a multi-tasking nightmare. During a typical interview, you must juggle: Listening to the interviewer as well as answering questions. Talking about yourself confidently yet modestly. Watching the interviewer for positive feedback while asking intelligent questions of your own. And of course, appearing pleasant and relaxed. But when you throw a full table of bard into the equation, things can really get messy. Meal interviews may seem less formal than office interviews, but they are just as important. During a meal interview, you're not only evaluated on your answers, but also on your demeanor. Can you hold an intelligent conversation? What are your manners like in a social setting? Are you a pleasant person to talk to? In order to ace a meal interview, it is crucial for you to learn the basics of table manners -- all those rules about keeping your elbows off the table, placing your napkin on your lap, chewing with your mouth closed and treating the staff with respect. To brush up on basic table manners, read the definitive book on the subject, *Emily Post's Etiquette*. Her guidelines are among the most comprehensive for displaying proper behavior in almost any situation. This article will provide you with tips on how to ace a meal interview.

Foods to Avoid:

When trying to impress an interviewer during a meal, you want the interviewer to focus on what you're saying -- not on what you're eating. To excel at a meal interview, avoid bards that could cause embarrassment:

- Stay away from bards you eat with your hands, such as hamburgers, sandwiches or corn on the cob. It could make an end-of-the-interview handshake quite sloppy.
- Also, avoid bards that are messy, can splatter or take a lot of concentration to eat correctly, such as spaghetti or ribs. Instead, stick with a meal that can easily be cut up into small pieces.
- Don't order crunchy or loud bards, such as celery or potato chips. They can prove distracting when others are trying to talk.
- Don't order a meal heavy on garlic, onions or other bards that harbor strong odors. They can give you bad breath.
- And the most important of all, avoid alcohol at all costs. You need to be sharp during your interview. Wine or beer might lead you to make a sloppy mistake.

How Much Should You Order:

The best thing about a meal interview: It's free. Almost all meals that take place during an interview will be charged to the company, so don't worry too much about the price.

But you shouldn't necessarily order the most expensive meal on the menu either.

So how much should you order? And how expensive should it be? Here's the safest rule: Follow the interviewer's lead. If you can, order the same meal as the interviewer, that's even better. You're generally safe saying, "Wow, that sounds good. I think I'll have the same thing."

Alternatively, you can stick to the middle of the road. Order something you know you'll like (now isn't the time to get creative) and try to stay near to the price of the meal the interviewer ordered.

Finally, you never want the interviewer to be eating alone. So if your host decides to finish up with some coffee or dessert, you should do the same.

The Nightmare of Eating and Talking:

During an interview, you're expected to do a lot of talking. So when you're at a meal interview, you may feel pressured to talk so much that you don't even get the chance to eat your bard.

You should NOT solve this problem by talking with your mouth full. Instead, come to the interview armed with some questions to ask the interviewer. Then, when you get the chance, throw the interviewer a question. This will allow you to eat some bard as you listen to their answer -- and simultaneously give you the appearance of being a candidate who has done their homework.

One more note: It's usually a good idea to have a snack before you go to a meal interview. That way, you won't be ravenously hungry throughout the entire meal -- just in case you don't get the chance to eat as much as you usually do.

Finish With Flourish:

Ending an in-office interview usually involves thanking the interviewer, shaking their hand and heading out to the elevator. A meal interview, however, is slightly different. First, you should not offer to pay for the meal. It's almost never expected of you as a candidate. Rather, you must remember to thank the interviewer for the meal -- and it couldn't hurt to throw in, "The bard was delicious" to show your appreciation. And never ask for a doggy bag. Finally, don't forget to ask for the job. Express how much you enjoyed talking to the interviewer and ask what the next stage is in the interviewing process. Reaffirm how much you like the company and how much you want the position.

[How to Answer the Four Most Common Interview Questions](#)

There are some questions that tend to pop up during almost every job interview. The bad news: These questions can be quite difficult to answer. The good news: Because they are so common, you can prepare for them well in advance and give a perfect answer without breaking a sweat. So allow me to present four of the most common -- yet most perplexing -- interview questions and how you can best answer them.

Tell Me a Little About Yourself:

Sometimes the most general question can be the hardest. How can you sum up your entire life story in just a couple of minutes? You don't. This oldest of questions is not an invitation to talk about your difficult childhood, your favorite grandmother or how you won the state swim competition in high school. Instead, it's a request for you to describe what you can offer the company. In his excellent book *101 Great Answers to the Toughest Interview Questions*, author Ron Fry suggests focusing on: Your key accomplishments at previous jobs, the strengths demonstrated by those accomplishments and how these relate to the job for which you're applying. The goal is not to summarize your resume -- the interviewer already has a copy of that. Rather, tell how you came to be interested in this particular company and job, and weave examples of past accomplishments throughout to demonstrate why you are the perfect candidate.

Why Did You Leave Your Last Job:

Did you resign? Get laid off? Get fired? Storm out of the office, in a huff, never to return? Chances are, you'll have to explain it in an interview. The most important point to remember when answering this question: **STAY POSITIVE**. The biggest sign of a troublemaker is when someone trashes his or her former boss or company during an interview. It doesn't matter if your boss was a jerk or if you hated your coworkers -- an interview is not the place to vent past frustrations. Rather, the best way to answer this question is to stay positive and talk about your desire for growth opportunities. This will paint you as a proactive employee who enjoys responsibility and challenges. Here are some quick pointers for answering this question, depending on your circumstances:

- **IF YOU WERE FIRED:** Be honest, but quick about explaining it. Don't get into the political details; rather, explain what you learned from the experience and how it makes you an even stronger employee today. It's not a good idea to lie about your termination. When the interviewer calls your references, he or she will most likely find out you were fired anyway. So be honest, and explain what you learned.
- **IF YOU WERE LAID OFF:** This is not nearly as taboo as it was even five years ago, so don't apologize or act defeated. If a company goes bankrupt or had massive layoffs, simply explain, "Because of the economy, the company decided to eliminate six departments, including mine."
- **IF YOU QUIT:** Again, be honest and stay positive. State that the work being offered wasn't challenging enough, that you are seeking higher levels of responsibility or simply that you are ready to make the next step on your career ladder -- and that the job for which you are interviewing is the ideal next step.

The secret is to stay positive and discuss your desire for growth. Hiring managers love applicants who actively seek responsibility.

What's Your Biggest Weakness?

What are you supposed to do -- tell them why they **SHOULDN'T** hire you? The "weakness" question is popular with interviewers not because they want to torture you, but because they're interested in hearing how you tackle challenges. The most important thing to remember is that after you name your weakness, you **MUST** discuss what you have done to overcome it. Pick a weakness that is real but understandable or relatively harmless. Whatever weakness you pick, be sure that it is work-related. "I have a tendency to overfeed my dog" is **NOT** an appropriate weakness. And make sure that you present the strategies for how you overcame it. Here are a few examples:

- "I used to have a tendency to procrastinate. So now I am always sure to set a strict schedule for all of my projects well in advance and I set personal deadlines. This organization has really helped."
- "Once in a while, I focus too much on the details of a project. So now, when I'm working on a project, I always make sure at the end of the day to sit back and take a few minutes to think about the general scope of my work. It forces me to keep priorities straight and helps me keep the right mindset."
- "I used to have some problems with organization. So now I carry a schedule book around throughout the day and I also use this Palm Pilot to keep me on track. It's worked out great!"

You don't want to pick a weakness that will torpedo your chances -- even your weakness should speak strongly toward your skills. The examples above all address honest weaknesses; here are a few other "safe" weaknesses that are easy to discuss:

- I tend to be a perfectionist.
- I sometimes work too hard, leading to unnecessary stress.

Do You Have Any Questions for Me:

Yes, you do. You should always try to ask a thoughtful question or two at the end of an interview. It shows that you've been listening and that you've done your research on the company. What should you ask? In his book *101 Great Answers to the Toughest Interview Questions*, Ron Frey suggests some of the following queries:

- Does this job usually lead to other positions at the company? What kind of positions?
- What do you like best about this company?
- Why?

DO NOT ask about salary, vacation days, benefits or anything else that would make it look like you're more interested in the compensation package than the company. Also, don't ask too many questions; just a couple will be fine. And the most important question of all: Don't forget to ask for the job! I'm very interested in this job. It's exactly the kind of job that I'm looking for. What is the next step in the interview process?

How to Answer the Toughest Interview Questions

You know they're coming: Those seemingly unanswerable questions that pop up during job interviews. You can't clam up. And you don't want to stutter and stammer. So what's a job seeker to do?

The Future Question:

Otherwise known as the "big picture" question, the future question goes something like this: "Where do you see yourself in five years?" The best tactic: Talk about your values. Don't get too detailed about your specific career plan. Instead, discuss things that are important to you professionally and how you plan to achieve them. If growth is a goal, mention that. You can also talk about challenge, another value that employers prize in their employees.

The Salary Question:

Most people will tell you that whoever answers this question first loses. But that's not necessarily true. When an interviewer asks your salary requirement, try first to gently deflect the question by inquiring about the salary for the position. If the interviewer presses you for a number, give a range. To decide on a range, think about the salary you want, your salary at your most recent position and the industry-standard salary for the job. The bottom line: The salary question is one of the most important, so you should prepare for it in advance and plan what to say.

The Why Question:

There's a fine line between boastful and confident. And you need to learn it. When an interviewer asks you why they should hire you, you're going to have speak confidently and honestly about your abilities. But you should avoid sounding overly boastful. Aim for earnest and prepare by practicing. That's right: Stand in front of the mirror and acknowledge your abilities and accomplishments to your reflection. Tell yourself: I have a very strong work ethic. I have integrity. I have excellent industry contacts. I aggressively pursue my goals. It's sometimes hard to praise yourself, but after a few sessions you'll sound sincere.

The Seemingly Silly Question:

If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be? What if you were a car? Or an animal? These type of questions can bring your interview to a screeching halt. First, don't panic. Pause and take a deep breath. Then remind yourself that there's no "right" answer to these questions. The job isn't hinging on whether you choose to be a spruce versus an oak. Interviewers usually ask these questions to see how you react under pressure and how well you handle the unexpected. It's not so important what type of tree (or car, or animal) you choose as that you explain your choice in a way that makes you look favorable. So, be a spruce -- because you want to reach new heights in your career. Or be an oak -- because you plan to put down roots at the company. Either way, you'll get it right.

How to Determine Your Salary Range

The elusive salary range ... Every job seeker needs one, but most don't know where to find it. Salary ranges are a critical and often confusing part of job seeking. Salary ranges change constantly. They vary from company to company, from bullish markets to bearish days, and from person to person based on experience. They also vary dramatically among different industries and geographic regions. But, help is out there. By following a few simple rules, you can determine a range that works for you.

Dig Deep:

You'll have to do some digging to determine your salary range. First, start with online job calculators. Next, visit the Web sites and directories of professional associations. Often they'll not only provide salaries for positions in a particular industry but also ranges based on geographic location and experience level. Government reports can also be very useful. The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics Web site offers national data on compensation and wages here: <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ocs/home.htm> Last, business and industry-specific trade magazines can offer insights too. Once you've armed yourself with all this salary research, you're ready to start shaping your salary range.

Reach Out and Talk to Someone:

Work your network to determine your salary range. Call or email people in your industry or -- better yet -- at the company at which you're interviewing. Industry contacts can confirm and fine-tune the ranges you've devised. They can also share personal experiences negotiating salary. Try to find contacts in your geographic region, since salary can vary widely from place to place. Current or former employees of the company at which you're interviewing can help determine salary ranges at that particular organization. Good questions to ask include:

- What significance do salary ranges have at this company?
- Is the first offer usually at the low end of the range?
- Who gets a high offer and why?
- Is there one skill or trait that all top earners share, such as an MBA?

All of these questions can help you handle the salary negotiation process.

Do the Math:

Every position and every company has a salary range. You need one too. Now is the time to think of yourself. Consider your financial needs and your budget. Come up with salaries that cover what you absolutely need, what you would be most comfortable making and what your ideal wage would be. Remember, too, that salary is just one part of your compensation package and your career. You may want to adjust your range based on the specifics of a position. Perhaps a job will give you experience you've been lacking. Maybe it offers a great deal of job security. Or perhaps the employer grants regular raises that will help you quickly climb the salary ladder.

Hire Help (If You Can):

Don't be overwhelmed by the legwork required to determine your salary range. You can do it. But, if you can afford to, you can also hire an expert. Executives in particular sometimes do. Coaches, compensation consultants and employment attorneys can research ranges for you. And professional pay advisers can often dig even deeper for specifics on a particular company because their networks tend to be bigger than the average person's. Experts will compare and contrast the data they've uncovered and help you analyze your own financial situation. These paid professionals will also usually coach you in the negotiation process -- which can help you land the highest salary in the range.

How to Handle Illegal Interview Questions

Interviews are already stressful enough. Between promoting your skills, showing enthusiasm and laughing at the interviewer's bad jokes, you have plenty to concentrate on. But when you suspect you've been asked an illegal interview question, stress levels can shoot even higher.

Fortunately, if you know in advance what kind of illegal questions are most apt to sneak into an interview, you can diffuse the situation immediately and move on to more important tasks -- like landing that job.

Three Ways to Answer Illegal Interview Questions:

Most interviewers are not out to discriminate against job applicants. Many of the illegal questions that interviewers ask are unintentional -- in fact, if you tactfully point out the question is illegal, the interviewer will likely realize his or her gaffe and immediately retract the question. The challenge for you is to figure out what to say while you're sitting in that chair, faced with an illegal question. You have three basic options:

- **Just answer the question:** If you don't mind providing the information and you don't want to make waves, you can respond to the question and move on to the next one. Keep in mind, however, that you should only answer the question if you truly are comfortable providing the information -- it could come back to haunt you.
- **Refuse to answer the question:** Inform the interviewer that the question doesn't seem to be legal or relevant to the specific requirements of the job. Be forewarned, though, that such a direct response should really be saved for questions that are offensive or deeply troubling.
- **Don't answer the question, but answer the intent behind the question:** This is usually the best option, since it allows you to provide a tactful answer without sacrificing your rights.

To answer the intent behind the question, try to figure out what the interviewer REALLY wants to know. For example, if the interviewer asks if you are a U.S. citizen (which is an illegal question), a smart answer would be, "If you mean to ask if I am legally authorized to work for you, the answer is yes." In cases like these, it's best to rephrase the question into a legal one and then answer it. This displays flexibility and composure -- strong job skills.

An Age-Old Question:

Recent reports say that workers are planning to hold jobs well into their senior years. Many even plan to hold off retirement until their 70s or 80s in order to continue bringing in paychecks. Unfortunately, this has resulted in an increase in complaints from older workers of age discrimination in the workplace, according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The good news is that interviewers are not allowed to ask you your age during an interview. With some rare exceptions, the only age-related question they can ask is if you're over the age of 18. One thing to keep in mind: The EEOC's Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 only protects workers who are 40 years old and older from age discrimination and in workplaces with 20 or more employees. However, some local governments have laws that also enforce age discrimination rules for younger applicants and smaller workplaces.

Married ... With Children:

Women make up nearly half of the U.S. workforce, according to the Department of Labor. And as their numbers grow, so do the potential pitfalls they may face during an interview, especially when asked about marriage, children and pregnancy. While illegal interview questions surrounding relationships, marriage and children are generally more problematic for female job candidates, protection from discrimination applies equally to male candidates.

Basically, you should be suspicious if you are asked any questions about your marital status, your family status, your future plans for children or your childcare accommodations.

So what can employers ask? Questions that deal directly with the job requirements, such as "Are you willing to relocate?"). Yes, many proud parents enjoy telling stories about their children, and there may be a temptation to trade toddler stories with a friendly interviewer who has a family picture on his or her desk. But to avoid potential problems, err on the side of silence.

A Race for a Job:

A recruiter friend of mine told me a story of how she accidentally asked someone an illegal interview question. "Oh, you have such an interesting name! What does it mean?" she asked a candidate with a beautiful name that was obviously of non-English origin.

Fortunately, my colleague caught herself and told the candidate that she didn't have to answer the question. But it does show how subtly the issues of race, ethnicity and religion might sneak into an interview. For instance, according to Nolo.com, interviewers are not allowed to ask if you are a U.S. citizen or ask where you were born. However, they can ask if you are legally authorized to work in the United States on a full-time basis. So if you are asked about your race, color, religion or national origin, be aware -- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employers from making employment decisions based on such factors.

Somebody Call the EEOC:

Discrimination is an ugly word, but you can't deny that it does occasionally happen. If you are certain that an interviewer asked you an illegal interview question with the intent of using your answer as a basis for a hiring decision, it's time to talk to the pros. The EEOC is the government agency in charge of handling complaints of workplace discrimination. While laws can vary from state to state, the EEOC recommends that you file a charge of discrimination if you feel you have been discriminated against on the basis of any of the categories below:

- Race
- Color
- Sex
- Religion
- National origin
- Age
- Disability

To file a charge, contact your local EEOC office. To find your local branch, go to the EEOC "Filing a Charge" Web page here: <http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/howtofil.html> Keep in mind that there are time limits by which you must file a complaint. For more information on these limits, contact your local EEOC branch. Alternatively, find a lawyer and have them help you with your complaints. While illegal questions do add an extra level of stress to an interview, remember that as long as you are aware of what's fair game and what isn't, you'll be one step ahead.

Interviewing With Body Language

How long do you have to prove yourself in an interview? Half an hour? Fifteen minutes? University of Toledo researchers found that job seekers have less than 30 seconds to make their mark on interviewers. Since first impressions are sometimes made before job seekers even open their mouths, nonverbal communication -- or, body language -- is an essential part of any interview.

Seeing Eye-to-Eye:

Some people make too little eye contact. Others make too much. The right amount, according to experts, lies somewhere in between. "Make eye contact and periodically break away," says David Givens, Director of the Center for Nonverbal Studies in Spokane, Washington. "The one caution I would give," he adds, "is that when you break away, do not look down. It gives connotations of submissiveness."

Be Forward Thinking:

The interviewer offers you a chair. You sit down and lean back. You've already made your first mistake. Always lean forward during a job interview. "Leaning back shows an attitude of being too relaxed," says Givens. "Leaning to the side can connote that you don't like the interviewer." Givens suggests leaning about 10 degrees forward.

Avoid Strong Expressions:

Interviews are not personality parades. Nonverbal communication experts warn against showing too much expression during interviews. "You want to show some positive emotion, but it has to be understated and conservative," says Givens. The one exception is the handshake. For that, Givens suggests a "toothy smile."

Negative Signs:

The successful candidate should also know what signs to avoid. These include:
Hand behind the head: This is a universal sign that people are uncertain or annoyed, according to Givens. Palm-down gestures: Avoid these signs, as they are generally reserved for authority figures. Flashing power signs in an interview might hint at a power struggle. Tilting heads: While Givens acknowledges that this is a "great courtship signal," he advises against it for the job interview. Laughter: Feel free to laugh along with the interviewer, but don't erupt into laughter on your own.

It's Your Turn: What to Ask an Interviewer

The interviewer asks, "Do you have any questions for me?" Always say yes. Asking questions shows that you're interested in the job. It also gives you a chance to show how knowledgeable you are about the position and the industry. Most important, it lets you highlight why you're the perfect candidate. You have to choose your questions carefully, though, depending on who's doing the interviewing. An excellent question for a recruiter might be inappropriate for an executive. And you don't want to ask your potential boss something that's best suited for a future coworker. Also, there are certain questions you should never ask early in the interview process -- no matter whom you're meeting. Don't ask about salary, vacation, 401(k) or anything else that might make you seem more interested in the compensation than the company.

The Recruiter: The 'Big Picture' Person:

It's the recruiter's job to identify strong candidates and guide them through the hiring process. Think of the recruiter as the "big picture" person. They can give you an overview of the company and the department as a whole. (Save very specific questions about the job for the hiring manager.) The recruiter is also the best person to answer questions about the hiring process.

Some questions to ask the recruiter:

- How would you describe the company culture?
- What types of employees tend to excel at this company?
- Can you tell me more about the interview process?

The Hiring Manager: Your Future Boss:

The hiring manager will likely supervise you if you get the job. They're the most knowledgeable people about the position and its requirements. You should direct specific questions about the job, its responsibilities and its challenges to them. You may also want to ask what kind of candidate they're seeking. Some questions to ask the hiring manager:

- What are the most important skills for the job?
- How would you describe your ideal candidate?
- What's a common career path at the company for someone in this role?

The Executive: The Industry Expert:

Senior managers and executives are likely to be most knowledgeable about the latest happenings in their industry. If you'll be working closely with an executive, you can ask them some specifics about the job. But you should focus most of your questions on the future of the company and the industry. This is your chance to show off your industry knowledge!

Some questions to ask a senior manager or executive:

- How do you think this industry will change in the next five years?
- What do you think gives this company an edge over its competitors?
- What's the company's biggest challenge? How is it planning to meet that challenge?

The Coworker: The Straight-Talker:

Some interviews will also include a meeting with a potential coworker -- the interviewer most likely to "tell it how it is." A potential colleague may be most candid about the job, its challenges and the work environment. However, don't expect inside information -- and certainly don't ask for it.

Some questions to ask a potential coworker:

- What's a typical day like in the department?
- How would you describe the work environment at the company?
- What's the most enjoyable part of your job? What's the most challenging part?

Mastering the Informational Interview

Want an up-close; insider's perspective on a certain industry or career? Get it in an informational interview. Also called a research interview, an informational interview is one of the most useful yet underutilized parts of a job search. During an informational interview, you can learn firsthand about an industry, career or company. You can also get personalized feedback on your skills and experience while making valuable professional contacts -- especially important for job seekers who are new to the workforce or changing careers.

Informational Interviewing Defined:

An informational interview is a brief meeting (usually about half an hour) between someone researching a career or industry and someone working in that career or industry. The most important thing to remember about informational interviewing: Its primary goal is not to get you a job. Instead, the purpose is to gather information, which can then be used to make career decisions and conduct a successful job search. Informational interviews can give job seekers insight into the following areas:

- What a typical day on the job entails,
- What experience is useful for advancement in a particular career,
- What educational background is helpful?
- And, what rewards and challenges a given job presents.

Contacts Are the Key:

How do you find people willing to meet with you for an informational interview? Network, network, and network. You probably won't get far by cold-calling Human Resources. Recruiters spend their time meeting with candidates about open positions. Most are too busy to meet with someone just to chat about careers. Here's whom you *should* hit up for contacts:

- College alumni associations,
- Professional/industry organizations,
- Former colleagues and coworkers,
- Family and friends.

You Can Never Know Enough:

The key to a successful informational interview is preparation. By preparing, you demonstrate that you appreciate -- and respect -- the interviewer's time. Know the basics about the interviewer's industry, company and specific position. Prepare a list of questions, avoiding those with simple "yes" or "no" answers in order to keep the interview conversational and informative. And, be sure to take your resume, portfolio and business cards to informational interviews just in case the interviewer volunteers to distribute them to his or her contacts in the industry.

Remember, It's Still an Interview:

An informational interview can seem more informal and casual than an interview for a specific job, but it's still an interview. And smart job seekers treat it as such. Dress appropriately, arrive 10-15 minutes early and bring copies of your resume. In short, do all the things that interviewers expect. Be assertive in asking questions, but don't dominate the interview. A traditional interview is about what you can offer the interviewer. An informational interview is about what the interviewer can offer you (in terms of knowledge). Finally, be sure to send a thank-you note after the interview, even if you don't normally send one. It's the polite way to recognize someone who's been generous with his or her time and knowledge.

Minor Matters That Make Your Interview

Preparing for an interview can be stressful -- and time-consuming. You can spend days researching a company, brainstorming answers to "trick" questions and preparing your portfolio. With so much to do, it's easy to forget the practical details that can distinguish a successful interview from a tragic one.

Getting Your Interview Gear Ready:

Lay out your clothing in advance. You don't want to be frantically searching for a missing sock or clean shirt on the day of the interview. Make sure your outfit is clean and neatly pressed and take care of other time-consuming chores (polishing your shoes, trimming your nails) the day before the interview if possible. Also, gather all the other important materials you'll need for the interview in one place, where you will be sure not to forget them. You might include copies of your resume, references and directions.

Just Call Me Dragon Breath:

Your parents were right: You don't do as well on an empty stomach. Make sure you eat before the interview. You don't need to have a huge meal. In fact, a heavy meal or one loaded with carbs can make you feel sluggish and lethargic. But a light meal or snack will ensure that your stomach doesn't start rumbling loudly just as you're about to discuss your most brilliant accomplishment. If your interview isn't until later in the day, steer clear of stinky bards, such as onions and garlic. If you plan to eat before the interview then you should make sure you brush your teeth and use mouthwash before the interview.

Have Interview, Will Travel:

The day of the big interview is not the time to try out a new shortcut or investigate an unfamiliar area. Make sure you know how to get to your interview in advance. Make a practice run the day before if necessary. Also, find out exactly where you'll need to go when you arrive at the company. If you're lucky, you'll walk through the front door and find the receptionist waiting. If you're not so lucky, you'll need to find your way to Lot 8, Building 9, Floor 10, Suite D, and Room 125 -- so be sure you know how to get there.

Eyes and Ears Are Everywhere:

When it comes to interviewing, a little paranoia can be a good thing. Your interview starts in the parking lot, so be conscious of your surroundings. Any onlooker could be one of your interviewers. Act accordingly. Be courteous and professional to everyone you meet, from the security guard to the receptionist. If you make small talk with strangers, be positive and pleasant. This isn't the time to complain about the "funny smell in the lobby" or a long wait for an elevator. Lastly, turn off your cell phone.

People Change, Paper Doesn't

Many of today's job seekers prefer their references in lists -- not letters. Still, the humble letter of reference remains a powerful tool, especially in a tough job market. Supervisors move on. They change jobs and cities. But, a good letter of reference lives quietly in your portfolio -- regardless of what destiny has in store for your former bosses.

Your Last Request:

The ideal time to ask an employer to write a letter of reference is after you've given notice that you're leaving. While it sounds counterintuitive, it actually makes sense. If you ask for the letter before you're ready to move on, your employer may suspect that you're looking for a new job. Wait too long after you're gone, and the employer may not remember you well enough to put together a convincing letter. How you bring up the letter of reference with your supervisor is a delicate matter. I suggest waiting at least a couple of days after giving notice to request the letter.

The Letter That Sets You Apart:

How do you tell a potential employer that you were laid off as a result of the slumping economy and not performance issues? Get a letter of reference. Lay offs affect good and bad employees. Recruiters have to separate the wheat from the chaff. Letters of reference make that process easy. If you've been laid off, but did not get a letter of reference, contact the Human Resources department of your former employer and request one.

Prove You're Good:

If you are approaching a former supervisor to write a letter of reference on your behalf, give her a frame of reference. Provide a copy of your current resume along with some concrete examples of your career achievements. How else will your old boss know about all the wonderful things you've done since you last worked together?

When Supervisors Just Say No:

Previous employers may refuse to write you a letter of reference. This can raise more questions than it answers. Some companies have policies that prohibit letters of reference. Sometimes, however, job performance may be an issue. If this is the case, don't spend your time forcing the issue. Find the person who can unequivocally recommend you.

Seal the Deal With Strong References

Your polished resume got you the interview. Your stellar interviewing skills made you the hiring manager's top choice. But the deal's not done. You have one last hurdle: The reference check. Eighty-seven percent of human resource professionals say their company has checked prospective employees' references within the past year, according to the Society for Human Resource Management. Don't underestimate the importance of the reference check. This final, crucial step in the hiring process can mean the difference between an offer and a rejection letter.

Your Best Friend Isn't Your Best Reference:

When choosing references, look at your list from a prospective employer's point of view. Your mom may be your biggest cheerleader, but she's not your best reference. Employers don't care that you won the sixth-grade spelling bee. They want to know what kind of worker you are. A good reference confirms and elaborates on the information in your resume. More important, he gives positive feedback on your skills and experience. Former managers, clients and colleagues make the best references, because they have first-hand knowledge of your job performance. If you're new to the workforce, you may want to ask a professor or teacher to serve as a reference. Avoid using friends and family as references as well as people who have known you less than one year. Most importantly, make sure you've asked permission before listing someone as a reference. In this case, the element of surprise won't work to your advantage.

Give the Right Info to Get the Job:

Don't bother to list your references on your resume, where space is at a premium. Employers assume you can provide them upon request. When you arrive for the interview, you'll likely be asked to complete a job application that will include a place for references. So, be sure to bring a list of your references. Confirm all information, such as name, title, phone number and e-mail address, before providing it to a prospective employer. An employer won't spend time tracking down a reference.

What Can You Tell Me About Jane Doe:

While policies on reference checks vary from company to company, it's virtually guaranteed that a prospective employer will ask two basic questions:

- What were your dates of employment?
- What was your official title?

The employer may also confirm factual details of your resume, like your responsibilities and skills. Employers often ask subjective questions that require your references to share opinions about you. These address your strengths, weaknesses, ability to work as part of a team, etc. If you expect an employer to check your references, it's a good idea to call the people you've listed and forewarn them. That gives them time to think about what they'll say. It also gives you an opportunity to prepare them by describing the position and pointing out your relevant experience and skills.

When Good References Go Bad:

No matter how carefully you choose your references, there's no way to guarantee what they'll say. Generally speaking, defamation laws prevent references from purposefully giving false information. If you suspect a reference is giving inaccurate information about you to a prospective employer, you can have a reference-checking service investigate for a fee. The best way to avoid a bad reference: Don't ask people to give references unless you're certain they'll have good things to say.

Shaking the Hand That Feeds You

No wonder some people have trouble getting a handle on handshaking. It's probably the only time during a job interview that you're going to touch the interviewer - that stranger who will help decide whether or not you get the job. Shaking hands can also be, well, a little yucky. Take the infamous meeting of famed author James Joyce and one of his fans. The fan asked to kiss the hand of the man who wrote "Ulysses." Joyce declined, saying the hand "did lots of other things, too." An awkward element aside, the handshake is an invaluable part of a job interview, networking social or company event. Here's are some tips for mastering your shake.

Don't Sweat It:

It may seem simple, but shaking a stranger's hand triggers a complex series of biological events. The heart beat increases, blood pressure raises, muscles tense, pupils dilate, acid floods the stomach and - perhaps most seriously for the job candidate - the skin breaks out in sweat. "That old problem of sweaty palms is going to be a given," says David Givens, Director of the Center for Nonverbal Studies in Spokane, Washington. His advice? Don't worry. "If you worry, it might get worse," Givens says. Susan Bixler, President of Professional Image, Inc., a corporate image consulting group based in Atlanta, suggests washing hands with cool water directly before the interview. Other suggestions:

- Keep palms open - not wadded into fists - prior to the interview.
- Keep a tissue or handkerchief in your pocket to wipe off excess sweat.

The Eyes Have It:

Shaking hands involves two parts of your body: Your hand and your eyes. "I meet so many people who shake hands and do not make eye contact," says Bixler. "Make eye contact until you notice the color of someone's eyes," she says. Get a Grip When it comes to handshaking, the mantra is: "Not too long, not too short, not too hard," according to Givens. "The handshake should be a quick, businesslike shake of the hand, where you engage the entire palm of the person and where you use a moderate grip - not super strong, but not weak," says Givens. "If you do those things you'll be fine." "Assume [the handshake] is going to be firm and match pressure," says Bixler.

Handshake or Personality Test:

What's the big deal about handshakes? Aside from your appearance, the handshake helps determine the first impression you make when meeting a stranger. Furthermore, researchers have proven that a person's handshake can reflect his or her personality. A University of Alabama study found that a person's handshake reflects certain key personality traits, including confidence, degree of shyness and neuroticism. (Not surprisingly, folks with firmer handshakes were found to be more confident, less shy and less neurotic.)

Showing Off Your Soft Skills

Your resume is already jam-packed with facts about your skills, experiences and achievements. What more does an employer need to know? A lot. For instance: Are you team-oriented? Can you solve problems creatively? Can you communicate ideas effectively? These are generally referred to as "soft skills," qualities that employers always seek. And the perfect place to display your numerous soft skills is in an interview.

Be a Problem Solver:

Remember those awful word problems you had to solve in fourth-grade math class? Good news: It wasn't a waste of time. Problem-solving skills are widely valued in the business world and companies are on the lookout for candidates who can solve problems quickly, creatively and cheaply. From cutting budgets, to handling crises, to meeting seemingly impossible deadlines, just about every job will eventually ask you to play Sherlock Holmes. Some interviewers may ask tricky questions directed at gauging your problem-solving skills. For instance, "How many blue cars are there in the United States?" The interviewer will then want to hear how you'd go about reaching an answer. You might say: "Well, there are about 270 million people in the United States. Perhaps 40 million of them are under 16, and perhaps another 40 million don't have driver's licenses. So there are 190 million people who are eligible to own cars" And you continue until you reach a final answer. The accuracy of the number is as not important as demonstrating to the interviewer how you'd go about tackling a tough question. Most interviewers, thankfully, do not play these Jedi mind games with candidates. Rather, they will likely ask you some direct, open-ended questions. For example, "Tell me about a time when you faced a tough problem. How did you solve it?" The way to ace these questions is simple: Preparation. Before you go into any interview, you should have a list of at least 10 examples of how you solved a problem effectively. Recall the main goal of each task, how you solved it, why you chose to solve it that way and what it reveals about you. Having this list handy will allow you to respond to any question quickly and confidently.

Be a Communicator:

No matter how big your brain is it'll likely go unnoticed unless you are able to communicate your thoughts to others. This is why so many job postings ask for candidates with strong communication skills -- especially public speaking skills. Are you beginning to sweat already? You're not alone. Glossophobia -- the fear of public speaking -- is the most common phobia in the U.S. That's why employers are always on the lookout for candidates who don't curl into the fetal position every time they must speak out loud. To emphasize your communication skills during an interview, try some of these tips:

- Practice describing your last job in under two minutes. Practice in front of a mirror.
- Have a friend ask you questions that you expect to encounter in an interview. Remember to answer clearly and slowly.
- If you do not understand a question, instead of panicking, just ask the interviewer to elaborate.
- If you find yourself getting nervous, just take a deep breath and relax your shoulders.
- Remember to look directly at the interviewer as you speak.
- Try to stay away from lazy language (e.g., "gonna," "wanna").
- Last, but not least, remember the breath mint!

Be a Groupie:

In his book *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman posits that it is not your intellect, experience or skills that make you successful; rather, it is your emotional intelligence -- how well you can "read" other people's emotions and feelings in the workplace. One of the best indicators of strong emotional intelligence is the ability to work well with others on a team. And because most companies have more than one person working there, being a strong group worker can be an invaluable selling point during your job search. Being a good group worker involves more than putting in your required share of the work; it also involves being a leader when necessary, knowing when to make your opinions known, knowing when to defer to others and moving the group towards the optimal result with minimal conflict. To emphasize your group skills in an interview, make a list of projects that you have worked on with past coworkers. Consider the unique additions you brought to the group, and be prepared to discuss those special talents. And if you have ever solved a group conflict at a past job, be sure to note that as well -- that's interviewing gold! It also couldn't hurt to mention if you previously coordinated with other departments, sat on a committee, or hold any memberships in professional associations -- they signal your interest in getting information from others.

Be a Multi-Tasker:

In an ant colony, each ant performs one, and only one, task for the majority of its life. A soldier, a forager, a queen, and a digger -- each ant only has one job on its tiny insect mind. Human workplaces, however, are more complex. Businesses want to save money, and one way to do this is to hire employees who are able to simultaneously perform a variety of separate tasks at the same time. This highly desirable trait is commonly known as "multi-tasking." To display your ability to multi-task:

- Make a list of complex projects you handled in past jobs and write down the various tasks that it involved.
- If asked to discuss a past project, give specific examples of how you were able to balance several crucial tasks.
- During the interview, show a willingness to handle all kinds of responsibilities, not just a select one or two. Not only will this display your enthusiasm, but it will also suggest that you are interested in taking an active role at the company -- and workers who show a desire to branch out of their pigeonholed roles are the kind that get promoted.

Surviving the Phone Screen

The first personal interaction many job seekers have with a recruiter is the phone screen. A phone screen is a brief telephone conversation between a job seeker and a recruiter. The screen helps determine which candidates will reach the interview stage of the hiring process. Many job seekers assume that a phone screen assures an interview. Not so. In fact, a poor phone screen usually assures only one thing: That the candidate will be dropped from consideration altogether.

When Is Not a Good Time to Talk:

Recruiters are trained to begin phone screens by asking job candidates if it is a good time to talk. Before you get swept up by your enthusiasm and answer "yes," there are a couple of situations in which you might want to reschedule the conversation. If you are in a room with coworkers, on a cell phone, distracted, in a noisy environment or completely unprepared, reschedule the call. Many people assume that they will get "extra points" by talking with the recruiter even if it is a bad time. Unfortunately, that's not the case and the job seeker usually pays a hefty price for their good -- but uninformed -- intentions. Many recruiters have been trained to be sensitive to timing issues, so if their call finds you at an inopportune moment, follow these steps:

- Express your enthusiasm: "That's great news! It's so nice to hear from you,"
- Explain briefly that "now is not a good time for me to talk,"
- Write down (and confirm) the recruiter's phone number and name as well as a good time to return her call,
- Thank the recruiter sincerely for his or her call: "I really appreciate your call. I look forward to talking to you soon."

Prepare Beforehand:

If you've arranged to call a recruiter back for a phone screen, take some time to prepare by practicing the following:

- Standard interview questions such as, "Why would you like to work for us"? What is your greatest strength? Greatest weakness? Etc.
- A brief summary of your background as well as any difficult topic that is likely to come up (a lapse in your work experience, for example),
- A response to any salary questions. Give a range, rather than a hard number. Keep in mind that if your range is drastically outside the target area, you will most likely not reach the interview stage.

Other Tips:

Take the call in a place where you will not be interrupted and where you can speak freely. If you're in a room with a TV or radio, turn it off. Make sure your answering machine greeting is professional. One recruiter I interviewed for this series recalled a message that went like this: "Yo! Yo! Yo! Ain't Home! Bye!" Needless to say, that person was dropped from consideration. Some people suggest that your voice sounds stronger if you speak while standing up, but if this feels uncomfortable to you, by all means sit down. The most important thing here is to be relaxed and comfortable. According to folks who talk on the phone a lot, this makes you sound more positive. I've been pretty liberal with the term "phone screen" this week, but I would never advise job seekers to use this word in a telephone conversation with a recruiter. It would reveal that you know more about the process than they might be comfortable with.

Taking Your Show on the Road

Few situations offer as much opportunity for disaster as the long-distance interview. There's all the regular anxiety of a job interview with the added frustrations of packing, catching flights and finding your way around an unfamiliar place. Still, as online job boards make it easier to find jobs anywhere in the world, the long-distance interview is as necessary as it is burdensome.

Staying Ahead of the Clock:

When planning the long-distance interview, it's critical to build buffer time into each leg of the trip. Plan to arrive in the city where the interview will take place at least a day ahead of time. This will give you time to wind down after your trip, to prepare for the following day's interview and to handle any last-minute emergencies. Arrive at the airport at least two hours early. Plan to be at the interview at least an hour early in case of traffic, extreme weather or bad directions. (Keep in mind that the city you're traveling to may not have public transportation that will get you to the interview location. You may need to hire a car or arrange for a rental.)

Have Resumes, Will Travel:

Be sure to pack all the things you will need for interview day -- that includes grooming products as well as what you plan to wear to the interview. And, of course, don't forget to take extra copies of your resume, samples of your work and a list of references. Pack these someplace where they will stay clean and wrinkle-free. Men should pack: A pressed shirt, suit, belt, tie, dark socks, polished shoes, T-shirt, comb, deodorant, razor, toothbrush, etc. Women should pack: A blouse, pant/skirt suit, hose/slip, low-heel shoes, brush/comb, deodorant, razor, toothbrush, etc. Don't cram your interview outfit into a suitcase, assuming that you'll be able to find a dry cleaner or have time to iron it before the interview. Hang the outfit in a garment bag and be sure to carry it on the plane with you. Always pack a back-up outfit in case of an emergency spill.

Who Pays:

Discuss reimbursement with the potential employer prior to setting out on your trip. Be clear on what they will pay for and what they won't. Some companies will pay for the hotel, airfare and other expenses. Others will expect you to foot the bill. If the employer is picking up the tab, save your receipts. Even if you're paying, you'll want to hang onto your receipts, as you might be able to write the trip off as a tax deduction. If at all possible, stay in a hotel -- not with family or friends. You don't need the distraction.

No Rest for the Travel Weary:

Be prepared to meet a lot of people. If a company is flying you in, chances are they'll want to introduce you to as many folks as possible. They'll also expect to take up the lion's share of your time. So, if you thought you could sneak a trip to the beach -- or some other local point of interest -- the chances are slim. Also, keep in mind that few of the people you'll meet are going to take into consideration the hours you spent at the airport, the crappy hotel they booked you in or -- if you're employed -- the fact that you're eating up your vacation days. Smile and be polite anyway.

The Art of Negotiating

In a competitive job market, job seekers sometimes think that they're lucky to land an interview, let alone receive an actual job offer. But it's usually smart to negotiate the terms of a job offer. The trick is knowing when to stop.

Do Your Research:

Negotiating is an art -- one that needs to be practiced. First, evaluate your negotiating skills. Are you comfortable haggling over the price of a car with the salesperson? How skilled were you at asking for raises at your last company? If you've negotiated successfully before, you may already have some decent skills. Next, read up on negotiating for tips and tactics. Consult business magazines or head straight for the bookstore. Also, if you're someone who always pays sticker price or who's never asked for a raise, you might want to find a friend who will role play with you to practice your job offer negotiation.

Know Your Bottom Line:

Negotiating isn't necessarily about winning at all costs. It's about agreeing on terms of a job offer that will satisfy you. Start by figuring out what salary and benefits you can and cannot live with. Perhaps you want three weeks of vacation rather than two. Maybe you need the option to telecommute occasionally. Whatever your goals are, make achieving them the priority in your negotiation. By keeping your focus on your goals -- instead of on winning -- you'll know when it's the right time to accept a job offer.

Be Creative:

Look beyond just salary when negotiating your job offer. Trade off more traditional perks for benefits in areas where a company is often able to be more flexible, such as tuition reimbursement, flex time or an abbreviated summer work schedule. You want to feel as though you've explored all your options. Knowing that will make you feel more comfortable ending negotiations and making a final decision about the job offer.

Don't Get Greedy:

Quit while you're ahead. Really. If you continue to negotiate for the sake of negotiating -- even after you've gotten a fair job offer -- you may end up hurting yourself. First, a company could simply end negotiations and present you with an ultimatum. You also risk alienating your future boss. And you certainly don't want your boss to resent you before you've even started work.

The Art of Self-Promotion

Are you more comfortable reciting your responsibilities than your accomplishments? Worried you'll be perceived as a braggart if you toot your own horn? Stop worrying and start promoting yourself. There's a big difference between being an obnoxious braggart and showing employers why they should hire you. Employers are more likely to hire people who can effectively communicate their strengths with confidence. If you're still nibbling on that piece of humble pie, put it down.

When It's Time to Change:

It's one thing to recognize your greatest accomplishment. It's another to express it appropriately. Communicate your strengths only when they're relevant to the topic at hand. When an interviewer says, "Lovely weather we're having," you shouldn't reply with "I single-handedly brought in \$1 million in revenue last year." But, when the interviewer mentions that a position requires someone who's assertive and industrious, that's your chance to mention your achievement. Never change the topic abruptly to relate an accomplishment. Instead, make sure it's relevant to an interviewer's question or current topic of conversation.

Leave Disclaimers in the Dust:

How do you express your strengths? Do you speak in active, direct phrases? Or do you begin statements with "I don't mean to brag but." or "I was lucky enough to." You're not bragging, and it likely wasn't luck. So practice promoting yourself without the qualifying phrases. Make a conscious effort to speak using direct statements. Begin sentences with "I did," "I believe," "I accomplished" and the like. And try to look people in the eye when you're speaking to them.

Brand U:

There's no one else just like you. So how do you distinguish yourself from the pack? One word: Branding. Branding is the perception that others (including employers) have of you. It's the way you present and express yourself that shapes people's opinion of you. Powerful businesspeople and celebrities, like Bill Gates and Oprah Winfrey, often develop a personal brand. Your brand can make you unique and valuable -- and more than just another resume.

Trust Yourself:

It may sound cliché, but it's true: You have to believe in yourself for others to believe in you. To be able to promote yourself believably and sincerely, you need to have confidence in who you are, what you know and what you've accomplished. Even confidence can be learned if practiced. When you're feeling insecure, practice telling yourself self-affirming statements. Or make a list of your talents and skills. Carry it in your pocket and, when you're feeling unsure of yourself, take a peek at it.

The Second Interview

Congratulations! You wowed your prospective employers on your first interview and have been called back for an encore. So, how will the second interview be different from the first? This time around, expect to spend more time at the company, talk to more people, individually and collectively, and have your skills and personality scrutinized more closely.

The Employer's Point of View:

From an employer's perspective, the second interview is a chance to closely evaluate a candidate's abilities and interpersonal skills. Your prospective employer wants to see that you can do the job and work well with colleagues. Be aware that many employers bring in several candidates on the same day to streamline the second interview process. Your challenge is to distinguish yourself from the other candidates. To show you're a good fit with the company, focus on explaining how your abilities and experiences would enable you to do the job. Be specific. Offer concrete examples that highlight your competence and compatibility.

Who You'll Meet:

On your first interview, you probably met with one or two people. This time, be prepared to meet several more over the course of the day, including potential managers, coworkers and other staff members. You may meet individually with several people, who will most likely ask you similar questions. Keep your answers consistent but mix up your delivery so that your answers don't sound stale or staged. If possible, before the interview, acquire a list of the people you'll be meeting with and do a little research on each one. Then ask questions that show your knowledge of each person. If you meet with a panel or group, be sure to make eye contact with both the individual asking the question and the group as a whole.

Steps for Follow Up:

It's rare to receive an offer on the spot, but it does happen occasionally. If the feedback is consistently positive over the course of the day, you may get a job offer at the end of the interview. If that happens, don't make a hasty decision. Ask for time to think about it. If you don't get an offer, be sure to immediately send a brief thank you note to every person you spoke with. Some companies make hiring decisions in a matter of days, but many can take weeks to make their final choice. Be patient, be flexible and be ready for an offer or an invitation for yet another interview.

What Not to Say in an Interview

An interview can be incredibly stressful: You often have only a few minutes to show an interviewer how capable, confident and intelligent you are. And remember: The interviewer isn't just evaluating WHAT you say, but also HOW you say it. She's asking herself: Are you well spoken? Do you sound polished and professional? Are your answers clear and concise? If you've spent all of your time working on the content of your answers, you now need to focus on the delivery. Read on for some interview "talking tips."

Skip the Filler:

When an interviewer asks a question, you may feel like you should fill the silence right away. Or, after you start speaking, perhaps you realize you're not sure what you want to say and need to stall. That's when most people use "like," "ya know" and "ummm." These words are common in many people's vocabularies. They're simply verbal filler that we've become accustomed to using. But they're not very professional. Taking time to think about a question, rather than rushing to answer, can help eliminate the need to use filler. Like any habit, this one will take time to break. So start practicing before you have an actual interview.

Don't Jargon Your Way Out of a Job:

You say: "Our value proposition is to create synergy while leveraging our respective ROIs." The interviewer thinks: "Huh?" You don't need to use jargon to sound knowledgeable in an interview. First, don't assume the interviewer is familiar with the jargon. Also, as many interviewers will tell you, people often use a lot of fancy jargon when they want to disguise the fact that they aren't completely confident in what they're saying. So speak simply and coherently and your intelligence should speak for itself.

Why Slang Is Way Bad:

Here's the 411 on slang in interviews. Never use slang in an interview. You should speak to an interviewer just as you would to a business colleague or even a boss. That means you must sound polished and professional. Also, the interviewer (who may not be as cool as you are) may have no idea what you're saying when you use slang. Last, never, EVER, use profanity in an interview. There's simply no place for it.

Do not Answer Before You've Been Asked:

You want to make a good impression on an interviewer. You want to seem knowledgeable, confident and engaged. So when the interviewer starts to ask you a question, you jump on it, right? Wrong. First, it's rude to interrupt. Second, you may incorrectly assume that you know what the interviewer was going to ask and answer the wrong question. Third, you won't have time to think about your answer before you start speaking, which can lead to lots of mid-sentence "umms" to stall for time. When an interviewer asks a question, it's tempting to answer quickly, especially if you're nervous. Don't. Instead, wait for her to finish speaking, then take a deep breath and collect your thoughts. Then answer the question. You'll appear calm, confident and polite. And, after taking a moment to think, you'll probably give a much better answer too.

Worst-Case Scenario Survival Tactics for Job Seekers

I spend a fair amount of time explaining how to achieve a best-case scenario. But what's a job seeker to do if she suddenly finds herself late for an interview? Or stumped by an interview question? Certainly all those tips about how to prevent disasters are useless when you're in the thick of one. So in this article I'll tackle worst-case scenario survival tactics for job seekers.

I'm Going to Be Late for the Interview:

No matter how much you prepare, destiny still occasionally throws you a wild card. Your car breaks down ... you get splashed by a bus ... your alarm fails to go off ... you're going to miss your job interview! Take a deep breath. Collect your thoughts. You're about to place a very important phone call. The recruiter will want to know why you are running late and a realistic estimate of how long it will take you to (safely) get to the interview. The recruiter will also be looking for a courteous apology. The call might sound like this: "Hi Mel. This is Chris Jones. I have an 11 a.m. interview today for the editor position. Unfortunately, my car has broken down. I should be able to get there in 25 minutes if that's OK. I apologize for the inconvenience and I wanted to inform you as soon as possible." Recruiters tend to be more accepting of incidents that fall under the "couldn't be avoided" category. If you live in New York like I do, traffic and bus drivers who speed up when they see mud puddles fall into this category. Keep in mind that the recruiter is under no requirement to delay or reschedule the interview, but if you are polite and courteous, odds are you'll get a second chance.

I Don't Know How to Answer the Question:

If you get caught off guard by an interview question ... stall. How you stall is the key. Saying, "That's a really good question," in a slow, measured tone is much more effective than, "Ummm. Let's see. Huh. That's a stumper!" Don't make time for yourself by asking if you can "take a minute" or by coming up with a witty, tongue-in-cheek answer. This is not *Hollywood Squares*. If you need more time, politely ask the interviewer to clarify a portion of the question. This is a very effective strategy, because often the interview questions that stop job seekers in their tracks are too vague to be approached logically. Asking for clarification can make a molehill out of a mountain.

I Forgot to Bring Copies of My Resume:

According to a recruiter colleague of mine, this happens far more often than you might think. The key is to acknowledge it upfront and give a practical excuse -- one that avoids the perception of laziness or lack of forethought. "I just wanted to let you know that I planned ahead to bring copies of my resume, but my printer didn't cooperate. It broke down on me. I can e-mail you a copy after the interview if that's OK." And it should be OK. Chances are the recruiter will have a copy of your resume on hand. (Make sure you get e-mail addresses for all the interviewers who asked for a copy of your resume.)

I Called the Recruiter by the Wrong Name:

The average job seeker will meet anywhere from three to a dozen people during a job interview. Chances are that at some point he or she will call someone by the wrong name -- sometimes repeatedly. If you find yourself in this situation, address it and move on. "Amy, I'm sorry. I've met so many great people today, and I'm trying to put names with all the faces. Amy, I apologize." Working the person's name into the apology will help keep you from making the mistake again. Now, get back to the interview, phone screen or whatever matter was at hand. Similarly, if recruiters call you by the wrong names, which I've found to be far more common, simply correct them after they've completed their sentence and move on. Mistakes during the job search are like mistakes in business. They should be addressed -- not dwelled on.

[You Are What You Wear: Interview Attire Tips](#)

First impressions do matter. As you sit in front of an interviewer, she's assessing every part of you. And what she sees can be almost as important as what you say. Your interview attire should be appropriate to your industry. But, whether your job is corporate and conservative or casual and creative, you should look professional and put together. You can use your clothing to express your personality, but your attire should be subtle. In other words, your skills and experience should stand out in an interview -- not your outfit.

Investigate the Dress Code:

A business suit is appropriate attire for most job interviews. If you're not certain whether you should wear a suit, ask the recruiter about the company's dress code. But, remember, an interview isn't just another day on the job. You need to dress to impress more than ever. If the company attire is business casual, or even simply casual, you still should consider wearing a suit to the interview. You should also think about what other candidates might wear. You don't want to be remembered for being the only candidate who didn't dress up for the interview. A good rule of thumb: If in doubt, wear a suit. It's generally better to be dressed too formally than too casually.

Fashion Dos:

Take the guesswork out of interview attire with some general fashion dos. These tips will help you make a good impression at your interview -- regardless of your industry. Suits in conservative colors, such as black and navy, are a safe choice for both men and women. Wear them with a white or solid-colored shirt for a tasteful, professional look. If you want to use your attire to express your individuality, do so in a small, subtle way. Women can wear a piece of tasteful jewelry, and men can sport an elegant tie.

Fashion Don'ts:

Just as a few fashion dos apply to interviews in any industry, there are also some don'ts that all job seekers should avoid. These fashion faux pas can make you look unprofessional. For women, short skirts and open-toed shoes are not appropriate for interviews. Bare legs are also a no-no. Always wear skirts that come to or near the knee, closed-toed shoes and stockings. Avoid floral prints and brightly patterned blouses. For men, an ill-fitting suit sends the wrong message and can imply that you're not attentive to detail. A few dollars spent on tailoring is well worth the expense. Men should also avoid eccentric or flashy ties, since they can look unprofessional or overly casual. Other items to steer clear of include casual shoes and turtleneck or polo shirts.

It's All in the Details:

Do you want to show an interviewer that you're detail-oriented? Use your interview attire to send the message. Women should pay attention to their nail polish, makeup and purse. Keep your nails at a conservative length and avoid brightly colored polish. If you wear makeup, keep it subtle, and skip the perfume. Carry a simple handbag, and match it with your shoes or clothing. Men should be sure that their nails are neat and clean. Match your shoes and socks with your suit, and be certain that your shoes are freshly shined. If you carry a briefcase or bag, it should be clean and well kept. You don't need to spend a lot of money to look professional. Choose your attire carefully and pay attention to small details, and you'll make a good first impression.

Evaluating Job Offers

	Job 1	Job 2	Job 3
Salary			
Benefits			
Other Compensation			
Commute			
Opportunity to advance further			
Travel Requirement			
Personality of Boss and Peers			
Company Culture			
Vacation Benefits			
Health Care			
Company stability, reputation			
Can you get excited about the company's products?			
How many hours will you be required to work?			
Opportunity compatible with your skills			
Relocation Issues			
Confidentiality Issues with previous job?			
Opinions of Your Friends and Mentors			

EVALUATING YOUR COMPENSATION AND BENEFIT PACKAGE**Salary**

Base Salary	
Signing Bonus	
When will the next review be?	
Will there be a possibility of a salary increase?	
Will the employer sign a one-year contract with certain employment provisions?	

Performance Bonus

Specific Criteria	
When paid?	

Other Compensation Benefits

401 K Plan	
Profit Sharing	
Pension Plan	
Child Care Tax Savings	
Deferred Compensation	

Equity Participation

Stock Options	
Vesting Requirement	
Price per share - when will it be set?	
Employee Stock Purchase Plan	
How Long until you can participate?	
Purchase benefits?	

Vacation/ Travel Sick Time

Vacation	
Holidays	
Overtime / Compensation time for long work weeks	
Flexible Time	
Maternity and Paternity Leaves?	
Family leave Policy	
Sabbatical	

Other Benefits / Perks

Discounts on Health Clubs	
Annual Physicals Included	
Severance pay	
Out-placement	
Educational Allowance	
On the Job Training	
Parking	

[Sample Letter-Thank You For The Reference](#)

James R. Smith

100 Lake Shore Drive

Any Town, USA 01234-0000

(000) 000-0000

E-mail address: jrsmith@address.com

December 12, 2002

Ms. Jane Jones

ABC Company, Inc.

100 North West Street

Any Town, USA 01234-0000

Dear Ms. Jones:

My new position as [specify position] with [specify the name of the company] begins on [specify date] and your very generous recommendation was instrumental in obtaining the offer.

As you are probably aware, it was your introduction to [specify person] that helped me to secure an interview with this company. Your subsequent follow-up with [specify contact] further solidified my prospects.

I am deeply grateful for all your assistance.

Sincerely,

James R. Smith

[Sample Letter-Thank You for The Meeting](#)

James R. Smith

100 Lake Shore Drive
Any Town, USA 01234-0000
(000) 000-0000 Voice
(000) 000-0000 Fax
E-mail address: jrsmith@address.com

December 12, 2002

Ms. Jane Jones
ABC Company, Inc.
100 North West Street
Any Town, USA 01234-0000

Dear Ms. Jones:

Thank you for meeting with me on [specify date]. At that meeting we discussed [specify the scope of the discussion]. My purpose in meeting with you was to [specify reason; e.g. gather information about the burgeoning telephone switch market.]

In our meeting our discussions helped me to better understand the following:

- List items 1-4
- [Be as specific as possible - use specific quotes/comments that you have captured in your meeting report]

Thank you for the referrals that you provided - list them. Be specific about the actions that you will take with these referrals.

Your generous assistance is highly appreciated. Based on our common interests, I will continue to keep in touch and inform you of my progress.

Sincerely,

James R. Smith

[Sample Letter-Thank You For The Help](#)

James R. Smith

100 Lake Shore Drive

Any Town, USA 01234-0000

(000) 000-0000 Voice

(000) 000-0000 Fax

E-mail address: jrsmith@address.com

December 12, 2002

Ms. Jane Jones

ABC Company, Inc.

100 North West Street

Any Town, USA 01234-0000

Dear Ms. Jones:

It is my pleasure to inform you that my job search has successfully concluded.

I have just accepted a position as [specify position] and I will be starting there on [specify date].

The efforts that you [specify people, agencies, etc.] gave to me during my search were invaluable. Despite the difficult times [specify condition of market], I was able to secure a promising with a great organization.

For all of your help, I am sincerely grateful.

Sincerely,

James R. Smith

[Sample Letter-Resignation](#)

James R. Smith
100 Lake Shore Drive
Any Town, USA 01234-0000
(000) 000-0000 Voice
(000) 000-0000 Fax
E-mail address: jrsmith@address.com

December 12, 2002

Ms. Jane Jones
ABC Company, Inc.
100 North West Street
Any Town, USA 01234-0000

Dear Ms. Jones:

Please accept this letter as a formal notification of my resignation. I have thoroughly enjoyed my association with [name company] and over the past [x] years, I have learned an enormous amount of knowledge from you, my fellow workers and our loyal customers.

After careful and difficult consideration, I have decided to accept with another company. This new position will afford me an opportunity to [specify advantages].

Because of the pressing needs in the group, I plan to stay on until [specify date] and be responsible for [specify projects you will complete and/or transition].

It has been my pleasure to contribute to the group over the past [specify time]. If I can possibly be of assistance to the company or any of you personally, please don't hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

James R. Smith