

Job Search Guide

The **Job Search Guide** on pages A-1 through A-4 includes practical advice to aid in marketing yourself, skills, and knowledge. It includes tips for updating your résumé, writing a cover letter, and practicing your interview skills.

Marketing Yourself, Your Skills, Your Knowledge

Practical Advice For Job Hunters

It is not uncommon to be looking for work. Whether you are changing jobs or looking for your first job it may not be easy. Two of the most important things employers look for in potential workers are experience and skills related to the job. Following are some suggestions that may help you to get experience and find the job you are looking for.

Volunteering

Volunteering is a good way to get on-the-job experience, and it may also help you decide if that field is one you want to work in. Some of the benefits of doing volunteer work may include:

- Learning new skills
- Increasing the number of references available to you
- Gaining experience in the workplace

Stay confident

The longer you are looking for work the harder it feels. Try to remember the skills you have are valuable. If possible think of the job hunt as a challenge and an opportunity to find out what you are interested in.

Talk to someone

If you are unsure about your career path, or field of work you wish to enter, there are people who you can talk to for advice. Try your career/guidance advisor, teacher, parent or you could talk to a counselor at your local NHES office.

Look after yourself

Part of staying positive is looking after yourself. Try and find time in the day to chill out and do something you enjoy. It may be hanging out with friends, listening to music, going for a walk, or reading a book. Eating well and exercising are also important ways to look after yourself.

Look in a range of places for jobs advertised

There are lots of places you can look for work. A few of these include:

- Newspapers
- Internet job sites
- NHES

Approach organizations/people

As well as applying for jobs advertised you may want to approach organizations or people who you are interested in working with. It is not uncommon for positions to be available, but they have not yet been advertised. Approaching the organization also lets people know you are enthusiastic.

Add to your skills

This increases your chance of getting work.

Create your own work

You may consider working for yourself, by starting a business.

Why have a goal?

There are many reasons you set goals for yourself. Some of these may be to:

- Help plan your time
- Balance all the things happening in your life
- Record your achievements

People set goals in their study, work, sporting life or personal life. Goals can be set for the short-term or longer term. An example of a short-term goal might be to finish an assignment by the end of the week or to exercise three times a week, while a long-term goal might be to get into a particular college course, get a certain job or reach the finals at the end of a sports season. Setting one or more goals for yourself may help you to manage your day-to-day life.

Setting your goals

When setting a goal for yourself it is a good idea to make your goal:

Realistic and achievable

To do this it might be useful to brainstorm how you can achieve your goal. You may also find that talking to someone you trust about your goal helps to keep it achievable. You may want to talk to a teacher, parent, friend, sports coach or counselor. If you are working you might be able to speak with someone in your workplace.

Specific and measurable

The more detailed your goal is the more able you are to gauge whether

you have achieved it. If you are able to measure your goal you can then celebrate when you have achieved it.

Working within a time frame

To help you focus on achieving your goal it may be helpful to have a time frame for achieving the goal. Try to make sure it is a realistic span of time.

Writing down your goal and keeping it in a place you can see it may also help you remain focused.

Reaching your goals

It can be a great feeling when you reach your goal and it is important to acknowledge your achievement. Everybody does this differently. Some people reward themselves by doing something they enjoy. For example after they finish a major project they may have a night out with friends or buy a CD.

Sometimes, we may not achieve the goal we have set. It is normal to feel disappointed. However, try not to be too hard on yourself. There may be a number of reasons why you haven't reached it. It may help to look at other ways for achieving your goal.

Say you didn't get into the course you wanted. An example of doing something different may be to take a similar course, then transfer or re-apply later. You may try to get work experience in the field you are interested in, which will put you in a better position to re-apply later.

Writing Your Cover Letter

1. Always write to a specific individual rather than a personnel office. Whenever feasible, use networking sources to introduce yourself in the opening paragraph of your letter. Be sure you spell the individual's name correctly.
2. Show the employer that you've done your homework and have a genuine grasp of the organization's personnel needs and philosophy of business. Be sincere in your praise, but don't over do it!
3. Write each cover letter separately, even if you use a common framework. Personalize the letter with a sentence or two designed to reflect your sincere interest in the specific employer.
4. Use natural language in simple, clear sentences. Don't try to impress the reader with unusual vocabulary or complicated sentence structures.
5. Express your capabilities with confidence, but avoid exaggerating your level of experience. Two part time jobs at a department store do not constitute "extensive" retail management experience.
6. Check and recheck your letter for correctness with regard to spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. Be sure to have someone who is a good writer review your letter with you.
7. Make sure the final letter is completely professional in appearance. Use standard business letter format on stationery that matches your résumé. Do not use dot matrix printers or inferior typewriter ribbons.
8. Finish your letter with a strong closing which indicates the action you desire. Take the initiative by requesting an interview and/or stating your intention to call in a week or two.
9. Let your personality and energy shine through your words. Use a few vivid details about your background to capture the reader's interest.
10. It is important to mention activities, honors, and special skills. These can show the skills that employers look for such as leadership, organization, critical thinking, teamwork, self management, initiative, and influencing others.
11. Keep copies of everything you send, and follow up according to your stated intentions. However, don't rely too heavily on cover letters to get your job. Pursue other avenues of inquiry as well.



The Résumé

Your résumé is an important marketing tool. It is essentially an advertisement of your qualifications and abilities. Its purpose is not to get you a job, but to get you an interview for a job. It should entice prospective employers to want to meet you by highlighting what you can do for them with your experience, education, and skills.

Because employers may receive hundreds, even thousands, of résumés a week, it is important that yours be visually appealing and brief but informative. Keep it as short as possible. One page is best but never more than two. One page of well-organized, relevant information will say more about you than several pages of unnecessary details.

Typical résumés get 20–30 seconds of attention the first time through, so make it easy for the readers to find what they are looking for.

Format

There are three formats for résumés: chronological, functional, and combination. Deciding what format to use is an important decision ... so give this some thought. Choose the one that shows your experience to its best advantage.

Chronological

This is the traditional style résumé that lists your professional experience chronologically, starting with your most recent position. The majority of résumés are written in this format, and this is also the format most employers are accustomed to seeing. This style is particularly effective in the following cases:

- You have professional experience in the field of interest.
- You can demonstrate measurable results from work activities, for example, "Marketed departmental events, resulting in 50% increase in attendance."
- You've held impressive job titles, and/or have worked for big-name employers.

This format is excellent for people with steady work histories or previous jobs that relate closely to their career objective. It is not the best format for career changers, people with inconsistent work histories, or new entrants to the workforce.

To create a chronological résumé, list each position you have held, starting with the most recent and working backward.

- Give the job title, name of the company and number of years you worked there.
- Relate the duties and accomplishments of each job using action statements, not sentences.
- Be specific, but not too detailed.
- Three to five statements per job is usually sufficient.
- Describe jobs relevant to the position you are applying for more thoroughly than others.

Functional

This style résumé became popular in the 1970's and 1980's but is still viewed skeptically by some employers. The functional résumé format summarizes your professional "functions" or experience and avoids or minimizes your employment history. Keep this in mind: since employers are used to seeing chronological résumés, make sure you have a definite reason for selecting a functional résumé format. This format is often used in the following instances:

- *Older workers*, since it minimizes dates.
- *Career changers*, since it outlines transferable work skills.
- *Recent graduates* that don't have a lot of professional experience in their field, but do have relevant coursework or training.
- *Returning employees* after an absence from the workforce, since it minimizes dates.
- You want to emphasize old skills that haven't been used in recent work experiences.

To create a functional résumé:

- Identify three or four primary skills required for your target job.
- For each skill identify three to five concrete examples to demonstrate that ability.
- Use action phrases, not complete sentences.
- Arrange skill headings in order of importance, or to match a job's requirements.
- End with a brief work history listing job titles, company names and years employed.

Combination

The combination résumé utilizes the best components of the functional and chronological styles. More recently, the combination résumé has included accomplishments under each position or function, rather than simply

outlining duties and responsibilities. This style allows for flexibility in designing a résumé.

With many variations, a common one is to begin with a chronological format, but then subdivide each job description

Functional
Résumé

[Your Name Here]
[Street Address] (603) 555-2100
Hometown, NH 03002 Email: [Your e-mail address]

PROFILE
Recent MBA graduate with customer relations, sales, and administrative support experience in financial services and retail industries. Background includes working directly with the public, sales related to customer needs, staff supervision, quality assurance, budgeting, and cost controls. Ability to identify, analyze, and solve problems. Excellent interpersonal, oral, and written communications skills. Computer experience includes Microsoft Office Word, Excel, and Access.

SELECTED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Customer Service
Marketed company services to prospective clients resulting in opening new accounts and sales of products and services related to customer needs. Assured customer satisfaction through maintaining highest standards of products and services. Recognized by management for excellent results.

Management
Interviewed, hired, scheduled, supervised, and evaluated staff of up to fourteen people. Strengthened employee morale resulting in 75% reduction in turnover. Controlled labor costs; maintained inventory based on peak and non-peak hours. Managed cash flow and deposits on daily basis.

Administration
Provided full administrative support to company President and seven senior sales representatives. Assisted sales representatives at trade shows, providing potential clients with information on products and services. Negotiated rates and terms for services, arranged approvals, and invoiced clients. Calculated and processed client orders; compiled and prepared daily reports for management. Updated customer accounts payable.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Customer Service Representative, First National Bank, Bigcity NH 2006-present
Promoted from Part-time Teller in three months

Financial Services Representative, General Finance Co., Mytown NH Summer 2005
Temporary position during college summer break

Assistant Manager, Happy Guys Pizza Restaurants, Mytown NH 2000-2005
Part-time and summer employment

EDUCATION
MBA – University of State, Bigcity NH, 2008
BA – Mytown College, Mytown NH, 2004, Business Degree, Dean's List

Combination
Résumé

[Your Name Here]

Current Address
[Street address]
Hometown, NH 03001
(603) 777-9966
Email: [Your e-mail address]

Permanent Address
[Street address]
Hometown, NH 03000
(603) 555-7788
Email: [Your e-mail address]

Objective
To obtain a position in public relations using my communications and promotional skills.

University of State
Bachelor of Arts, English, expected May 2010
Minor: Business
GPA: 3.5/4.0, English Honors Society

Related Courses
Public Relations The Advertising World
Marketing Writing for Mass Media
Consumer Behavior Writing for Business

Program Coordinator, 2006 to present
Campus Activities Council, University of State
Initiated and organized the Campus Run for Charity
Promoted event with flyers, newspaper ads, and radio announcements
Over 1,000 students participated

Campus Tour Guide, 2003 - 2005
Office of Recruiting, University of State
Led weekly tours for prospective students and parents
Answered questions and addressed concerns
Wrote information sheet explaining campus housing policy
Selected to train new guides

Administrative Assistant, summers of 2002 and 2003
Better Business Company, Hometown
Drafted correspondence
Used Microsoft Word and Excel to type and edit reports
Complimented for accuracy and attention to detail

References available on request

into skill categories. Another variation uses the functional format, but lists where you were employed after each example of a skill.

Consider this style when:

- Each position you held involved a different job description.
- You have held internships or volunteer positions that directly relate to field of interest.¹

Scannable Résumé

With the advancements in technology, many companies are using scanners to filter through the hundreds, sometimes thousands of résumés received for a single job opening. When responding to an ad, you should first contact the company and ask if they scan résumés received for open positions. If yes, it is important for the job seeker to have a scannable résumé with their most current job experience, skills, and education readily available. A scannable résumé can be created following the same three formats outlined earlier in this article (Chronological, Functional, and Combination). However, a scannable résumé uses a simple and more technologically friendly format. When creating a scannable résumé you should avoid using stylistic touches or graphics used to catch the human eye, as this could easily be misinterpreted by the scanner. The following steps will help increase a scanner's ability to read your résumé.

- Use non-textured white or off-white paper with black letters.
- Choose a computer friendly font such as Helvetica, Arial, or Courier.
- Pick a font size of 10 to 14 points, and do not condense spacing between letters.
- Do not underline or italicize text, and do not use asterisks or parentheses. Modern systems can understand bold, but older systems might not. You can still distinguish headings by using capital letters.
- Avoid boxes, graphics, columns, and horizontal or vertical lines.
- Put your name on its own line at the top of each page. Also, give telephone numbers their own lines.
- Do not staple or fold your résumé.²

In addition to the steps listed above, employers who utilize scanner technology rely on key words to find a résumé that resides in their database, and the success of your résumé being picked depends on how many key words can be found on your résumé. For example, don't simply write "word processing: Microsoft Office." Instead, be more specific and write "word processing: Microsoft Office, WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint." Don't worry about being too wordy as the rules regarding the length of a résumé are generally more relaxed when in a digital format. Some career counselors even suggest adding a key word paragraph to the top of your résumé.

One additional tip would be to use key words specific to the job for which you are applying. This can be accomplished by reviewing the employer's ad looking for the key words that are important to the employer and to the position, then identifying and incorporating these key words into your résumé. You will find that many employers' ads will use the same key words, but keep in mind that you will need to customize each résumé for the position being advertised.

SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Seeking highly motivated professional with sales experience in the building and construction trades. Generous commission structure, make your own hours.

Requirements:

- AS or BA/BS degree preferred
- 0 to 1 year experience
- Customer focused
- Valid drivers license
- Good organizational, planning skills

Please forward letter of interest and résumé to:

Key words to include on your résumé for this sales position:

- Highly Motivated
- Professional
- Sales experience
- AS, BA, or BS
- Customer focused

Plain Text Résumé

Due to formatting concerns and viruses, many companies may be unable or unwilling to open a résumé that has been attached to an email. For the job seeker that wants to email their résumé, a plain text format can prove to be very helpful. To create a plain text résumé, simply open your existing résumé document with a word processing program, and save it as a text or ASCII file. ASCII is an acronym for American Standard Code for Information Interchange. It is a simple text format that does not use formatting specific to any particular application. Because of this,

documents saved as an ASCII (or text file) can be used across all platforms. This will eliminate formatting codes. You can use the computer's built-in text editor application, such as Notepad for Windows or Simpletext for Macintosh, to edit the résumé.

A plain text résumé, like the scannable résumé, will most likely be entered into the employer's database so you will need to make sure you follow the same guidelines for adding key words. You must also ensure that your résumé does not contain any characters or formatting not found on a standard keyboard. Boldface, italics, and underlining are unavailable, as are tabs, bullets, and multiple font sizes. If your résumé already contains these characters you can use other attention-getting devices such as; asterisks and plus signs to replace bullets, rows of dashes can separate sections, and all capital letters can emphasize headings.

There are many benefits of having a scannable or plain text résumé. Most importantly, employers that use this type of technology typically store scannable and plain text résumés for up to one year in their database of available applicants. A résumé that resides in a company's database has the potential to be discovered multiple times, during multiple searches, providing more opportunities for the job seeker.

Some employers may ask that you go to their web site and fill out a job application in lieu of or in addition to sending your résumé. Be aware that this job application can also be a résumé in disguise and should be filled out completely.

You decide which style résumé will work best for you. Take some time to look at the examples here then pick the one that will best present what you have to offer.

¹ "Nebraska Careers and Education 2002." Nebraska DOL and University of Minnesota Résumé Tutor. Reprinted with permission.

² Crosby Olivia. "Occupational Outlook Quarterly / Summer 1999." Federal Consumer Information Center. Accessed September 21, 2009. <www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/employ/resumes/resumes.htm>.



[Your Name Here]
 Street Address
 Hometown, NH 03004
 603-555-3215
 Email: [Your e-mail address]

KEY WORD SUMMARY
 BS Computer Science, 2000, C++, Visual Basic, Assembly, FORTRAN, HTML, CAD, Oracle, MS Office, IBM 630/670, Windows NT, UNIX, Programmer

EDUCATION
 Bachelor of Science, Computer Science, 2008
 Cybertech College, Tectown, NH
 Minor: Mathematics
 GPA: 3.8/4.0

Related Courses: Database Design, Compiler Design, Systems Architecture, Operating Systems, Data Structures, Systems Analysis

COMPUTER SKILLS
 Languages: C/C++, Visual Basic, Assembly, FORTRAN, HTML
 Software: CAD, Oracle, MS Office
 Systems: IBM 630/670, Windows NT, UNIX

EXPERIENCE
 Support Desk, Big Technical College, 2004-2008

- Maintained computer systems in computer lab
- Installed applications and performed troubleshooting
- Instructed students on applications and systems

Programmer (Intern), General Technical Company, 2002-2004

- Wrote instructional programs
- Corrected errors in pre-written programs using C++
- Altered existing programs to fit user needs

Data Entry Clerk, ABC Sales, Summer 2001

- Updated inventory and sales data

COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS
 Received A grades in technical writing classes

WILLING TO RELOCATE

The Résumé and The Employer
When preparing your résumé think about the employer's perspective:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Keep the information relevant to the job you seek. ➤ Use clear, concise language and proper spelling and punctuation. ➤ Use present tense for current jobs; past tense for past jobs. ➤ Emphasize achievements and skills. ➤ Avoid pronouns (such as "I was the person who..."). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use action verbs (such as "Wrote and edited the weekly newsletter"). ➤ Be 100% honest and accurate. ➤ Never exaggerate or misrepresent yourself. ➤ Ask others to review a draft copy and give you suggestions. ➤ Update résumé and tailor to the position you are currently seeking.
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Interviewing

Research, Rehearse, Relax

No matter how well qualified you are, there's nothing that can replace preparation. Once you have practiced asking and answering questions, the next step is to relax and remind yourself that: *There's no question you can't answer. You are well suited to the position. You would be an asset to the company.* Visualize yourself in the interview feeling confident. Get a good night's sleep beforehand, arrive a few minutes early, take a few deep breaths and seize the day.

Research Before the Interview

Do your homework before interviews by researching the interviewer, the company and the industry. There are a variety of ways to research:

- Library (books, periodicals, magazines, etc.)
- Literature from company's public relations department
- Annual reports
- Search the Internet

You should become familiar with the organization's products, structure, services, financial status, competitors, reputation and any recent major changes. In addition, try to discover information about the person you will meet (background, style, education, and their "hot button" issues).

Prep for the Interview

To fully prepare for any interview you should identify some things:

- Transferable skills
- Key accomplishments
- Management style
- Unique selling or promotional features
- Personal and professional strengths

One of the best ways to prepare for interviewing is by writing out your answers to key interview questions then practicing them. Career counselors and outplacement specialists alike, remind transitioning executives and professionals of the necessity to look and act the part of a self-confident and successful person even if one does not particularly feel it.

With a friend or co-worker, organize and review your answers to both tough and basic questions.

In preparing your answers to these questions, think of yourself as a candidate in a political campaign. A skillful candidate is focused on the message he or she wants to communicate.

Rather than being led by the interviewer's questions, candidates stay in control with responses that articulate what they want the listener to remember. Ask yourself, "What is my goal in the interview?"

The most important question is "Why should we hire you?" Answering this will require research and preparation. You must first identify and understand the needs of the company and the problems that the ideal candidate must be prepared to solve. Information sources include networking contacts, search firms, vendors, the press, the Internet, news outlets. Be prepared to convince the interviewer that you are uniquely qualified to make a contribution.

The more you practice your answers, the more your confidence will grow. Rehearse until you can easily answer questions with clarity, spontaneity and crispness.

Everyone can use interview practice. You might be surprised to know that even the most extroverted, self-confident, verbal, "sales-person type" needs help in thinking through, organizing the answers to and rehearsing the interview questions.

The Interview - Relax and Project Self-confidence

Relax – you are ready and confident. Arrive about 10-15 minutes ahead of time so that you can make sure that your appearance is intact.

- Act like a consultant not an applicant. Think of yourself in problem solving mode, in partnership with your interviewer.
- Engage in a dialogue, don't put yourself in a question/answer mode. Let silence occur.
- Present your value, and always protect your dignity and self worth. Be engaging and enthusiastic.¹

Somewhere near the end of the interview you will have the opportunity to ask questions of the interviewer. You will typically be asked "Do you have any questions for me?" Be ready for this question, having questions to ask of the interviewer will show that you are not only prepared but that you are truly interested in the company and position being offered.

This opportunity will also provide you the ability to see if this is a position that you would be interested in taking, should an offer be extended. Remember, it's just as important that you make sure the company is good

Interviewing Do's & Don'ts

Do's

Dress for success. Choose a form of dress that is appropriate for the type of position or industry you are applying. Conservative dress is usually best.

Plan to arrive ten minutes early. Use this time for a quick review of the company and position.

Research the company's history, goals and current activity.

If given a job application be sure to fill it out completely and accurately as this is often a résumé in disguise.

Bring extra copies of your résumé.

Maintain a professional business like decorum at all times.

Use body language that projects openness, confidence and interest in the position.

Prepare a list of questions to ask during the interview. Ask intelligent questions that show interest in the company and the position.

Give a firm handshake.

Make good eye contact with the interviewer and show enthusiasm for the position.

Turn off cell phone.

Wait until a chair is offered before sitting.

Write a letter thanking all of the people involved in the interview.

Don'ts

Chew gum during the interview.

Arrive late.

Tell jokes or discuss personal issues or problems.

Discuss anything negative about your former employer or coworkers.

Appear desperate or act as though you would take any job being offered.

Answer cell phone or take personal calls.

Forget to ask questions. Interviewers expect that you will ask some questions during the interview.

Answer all questions with only a "yes" or "no." Give thoughtful responses to question being asked.

Answer a question with another question.

Smoke during the interview, even if the interviewer offers. Also, avoid smoking before the interview so that you do not smell of smoke.

Be soft spoken or submissive.

Use foul or offensive language.

Ask about salary, vacation time, bonuses or other benefits. Try to delay this conversation until the company has extended an offer.

Forget to follow up.

fit for you and not that you are simply a good fit for the company.

Consider using some of these questions on your next interview.

1. Why is this position available?
2. Is this a new position? How long has this position existed?
3. How many people have held this position in the last two years?
4. Who would be my supervisor? To whom would I report?
5. What do you like about working for this company?
6. What are the current plans for expansion or cutbacks?
7. What projects and assignments will I be working on?
8. What happened to the person that held this position before? Was he promoted or fired?
9. What are the current problems facing the company (or my department)?
10. What do you consider to be the company's strengths and weaknesses?

11. Describe the work environment.
12. What attracted you (the interviewer) to this organization?
13. What are the most challenging aspects of the position?
14. Describe the opportunities for training and professional development. What is the company's promotional policy?²

Always leave the interview with knowledge of the next step and with a sense of how your candidacy will be evaluated. Ask:

- How would you like to proceed?
- Have I provided you with the information you need?
- Where are you in the process?
- What will happen next?
- When should I follow up?

² "Good Questions to Ask the Interviewer." Resumagic.com. Accessed September 28, 2009. <www.resumagic.com/interviews_questionstoask.html>.

¹ Monaco, Don. The Strickland Group. <<http://content.monster.ie/jobinfo/interview/rrr/>>