
A Stand-Out Resume/Cover Letter

Tips:

- Secret: When creating your resume, use online job descriptions as a guide for formulating your responsibilities at previous jobs.
- List education, work history, skills, and awards/achievements. If you have a long list of skills but little experience then add your skills first.
- Omit jobs that only lasted a couple months or were more than ten years ago, especially if you were fired.
- If you want to include jobs that are unrelated to your other experience, put them under another heading such as “Additional Experience”.
- An objective is optional.
- Create job titles that will catch the employer’s eye.
- Use keywords strategically when describing your job duties.
- Spell check and proofread your resume.
- Your resume/cover letter can be longer than one page.
- Include your first and last name in your resume file. (E.g. *FirstNameLastName_Resume* or *FirstNameLastName_CoverLetter*.) If you feel that you have a name that may prevent you from getting a job, use initials on your documents, file names and email address. (i.e. K. Anne Smith)
- If you are in high school/college or a recent graduate, include coursework and activities. If your grade point average is/was higher than 3.5 then you may want to list that as well.
- Personalize the provided sample resume/cover letter documents to fit your background and experience.

Sample Resumes:

- <http://career-advice.monster.com/resumes-cover-letters/resume-samples/sample-resumes-by-industry/article.aspx>
- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/sampleresumes/a/sampleresume2.htm>

Sample Cover Emails/Letters:

- <http://career-advice.monster.com/resumes-cover-letters/cover-letter-samples/jobs.aspx>
- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/coverlettersamples/a/coverlettsample.htm>

Resume Keywords:

- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/coverlettertips/qt/action-keywords.htm>

Getting in the Door

Tips:

- Attend local networking events and job fairs.
- You should apply to a job even if you aren't fully qualified.
- If you are interested in working for a company that doesn't have a job posting, still submit your resume to inquire about future openings.
- If a communication method isn't specified in the job listing then you can mail, fax, eFax or email your resume. Consider distance and deadlines when mailing your documents.
- Be honest on your job applications. Spell check everything and use proper English.
- Send a cover letter with your resume.
- Use a professional email address.
- Do not include your birth date or Social Security Number on your resume or email address.
- Have a professional voicemail (no ringback tones). Use a phone number that will stay in service.
- Review the job description of the job you are applying to and customize your resume to fulfill the requirements.
- Email the job description to yourself (copy and paste) so that you can refer back to it before/after the interview.
- Call or email the company (the contact person on the job posting, Human Resources Department or a contact on their website) to confirm that your resume was received. Ask when they expect to contact qualified candidates to schedule interviews.
- In emails/letters, do not use "Hi" or "Hey". Use "Dear Mr./Ms." or "Dear Hiring Manager".
- Sign email/letters with "Best Regards" or "Sincerely".

Sample Inquiry Emails/Letters:

- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/businessletters/a/inquiry-letters.htm>

Job Search Websites:

- <http://www.indeed.com>
- <http://www.careerbuilder.com>
- <http://www.monster.com>
- <http://www.usajobs.com>
- <http://www.dbm.maryland.gov/jobseekers/Pages/JobSearch.aspx>
- <http://www.craigslist.com> (Be cautious for scams)

Acing Your Job Interview

Before the Interview:

- For a phone interview, go into a quiet room without animals, children or distractions. Have all information needed for the interview in front of you.
- Take at least 3 recent copies of cover letter, resume and references (at least 3 personal and 3 professional references). Notify your references before the interview if possible.
- Carry a leather portfolio for your resume/cover letter/references, pen and note paper.
- Have at least 3 questions prepared and memorized to ask the interviewer at the end of the interview. (*E.g. Is there opportunity for growth in this position? Can you describe a typical work day? What are my job responsibilities? Do you provide job training? What is the dress code? What are the hours for a work day? What expectations do you have for this position long-term? How will my performance be evaluated?*)
- Research the company. Know their mission statement/goals, type of organization and its function, products and services, locations, company size and when the company/organization was founded.
- Dress professionally.
- Men: Wear a long-sleeve, button down shirt and conservative tie. Hair should be clean and styled neatly.
- Women: Wear a dress blouse, no cleavage. Keep hair neat and clean. If possible, pull hair pulled back off of face.
- Secret: Wearing blue to an interview exudes trust and confidence.
- Minimal jewelry.
- Don't wear too much perfume/cologne.
- Don't wear bright nail polish. Minimal makeup.
- Cover tattoos and remove piercings.
- Arrive at least 10-15 minutes early. This gives you a chance to check your appearance and gather your thoughts. If unfamiliar with the area, do a test run the day before the interview.
- If you carry your phone, turn it off or put in on silent.
- No gum. Bring mints if necessary.

Common Questions:

- What were your responsibilities at your previous jobs? Be able to explain everything listed on your resume. If you have gaps between jobs on your resume or if you stayed at your jobs for short periods of time, be prepared to explain it. (*E.g. I worked as a contractor. I was pursuing my education. I was laid off due to the economy. I had an illness.*) Let the employer know that you are currently looking for a long-term position. Be able to explain your previous work experience in relation to the job requirements. If you do not have experience in a particular area, give a substitute qualification (*E.g. I don't have X experience, but I do have experience doing Y. I am a fast learner and will put in extra work to get up to speed and surpass that.*) This is a chance for you to sell yourself. Highlight your accomplishments.
- What are your strengths? Your strengths should illustrate why you are the best candidate for the position. (*E.g. I am a great problem solver. I require little direction. I exceed the company's sales goals. I have great customer service skills. I excel in stressful situations. I am a fast learner.*)

- What are your weaknesses? Your weaknesses should not deter the manager from hiring you. It should be an honest shortcoming which is not essential for the success of the job. Turn a negative into a positive. *(E.g. I am not as comfortable as you would like to be when conducting group presentations. Being organized wasn't my strongest point, but I implemented a time management system that helped my organization skills. I like to make sure that my work is perfect, so I tend to spend a little too much time checking it.)*
- Describe a challenge that you faced at a previous position and how did you overcome it? Discuss a specific issue and elaborate on how you contributed to the solution. *(E.g. At a previous position, we had an unexpected deadline so I was responsible for troubleshooting and resolving the issues in a short period of time. At a previous position, a co-worker called out of work, so I responsible for his/her duties in addition to my own, so I had to multi-task.)*
- Where do you see yourself 5 years from now? Here is where you can show your ambition and longevity. You can respond by saying that you hope to have a higher ranking position (use a specific title) or leading the team but not the interviewer's position.
- How would you be a benefit to the company? Why should we hire you? Let the interviewer know that you have the skills necessary to do the job, the ability to effectively meet challenges, and that you work well with other employees and with management. Give concrete examples. *(E.g. I had the highest sales at your previous job so you will help increase revenue. In my X years of experience as a sales manager, I developed strong motivational and team-building skills. I was twice awarded employee-of-the-year for innovative approaches.)*
- Why do you want to work here? The interviewer is looking for an answer that indicates that you've thought about where you want to work. Let the interviewer know that you are selective. *(E.g. After looking at your website, your company is an industry leader and has an impressive future. I've been looking for a place where my background, experience and skills can be put to use.)*
- Tell me about yourself? Your response should be job related. Briefly describe your previous experience, career goals, if you are in high school/college or a recent graduate then you can tell them about your coursework.
- What do you like to do during your free time? This is not a trick question, the interviewer is simply trying to get to know you better. *(E.g. I usually spend my time with my family and have movie nights. I enjoy reading books in my hammock. I walk my dog at the park. I spend the weekends playing sports with my friends. I work on antique cars. I like to paint. I go to the beach surf.)*
- What was the most difficult decision that you had to make? The interviewer is not really concerned about the actual decision, but how you approached the situation. Did you take the time to think it through or did you select the easiest option? Do not mention trivial issues. *(E.g. I had two tasks to with the same deadline so I had to decide which task to complete.)*
- Why are you leaving your job? Explain that your current employer gave you great opportunities but... Avoid discussing other people, but make it about self-improvement.
- What do you dislike about your previous job? Know the requirements of the position that you are interviewing for so that your response doesn't include the same issues, because the interviewer will wonder if you didn't like it at your last job then why would you be satisfied in that position. Don't talk negatively about your previous job, rather talk about yourself and what you're looking for. *(E.g. I am looking for a work environment with family values. I'm looking for a new challenge. I'm looking for a long-term position that has opportunity for growth. I feel my skillset can be better utilized elsewhere.)*

- Have you ever worked with someone that you didn't like? If yes, explain that you have worked with a difficult person previously, however you managed to overlook your differences and eventually worked well together. If not, explain that you are tolerant of different personalities.
- Describe your leadership style. This shows your decision making skills. Explain that you are willing to make unpopular decisions or act when others are unwilling. You manage your time well to meet deadlines, and help motivate others. Be able to give an example a leadership role and the steps that you took when overseeing the project. *(E.g. I lead and organized a team project or presentation. I trained my co-workers on a new process or instrument. I delegated tasks to junior employees.)*
- How many jobs have you applied to? Do you have any job offers? Usually, this question is an indicator that the employer views you positively, and would like to know about the competition. In other cases, the employer may want to determine how seriously you are search for a job or if you are getting any response to your resume. Avoid stating that this is the only one you are considering. Also do not disclose any company names.
- Why did you leave your previous jobs? Your response *(E.g. I am looking for a job closer to home. I moved to a different area. I am focusing on my career. I recently received certification and want to utilize my education background and technical skills. I am looking for a new challenge. I am changing career paths. The company was downsizing.)*
- What is your hourly/salary requirement? You can first ask about the pay range for similar positions in the company. If the employer does not provide a range then respond by saying that it's negotiable. Typically, this will allow you to negotiate your salary once you are hired, because at that point you know that the company wants you as an employee. However, some companies will require you to give an hourly/salary requirement so do your research on what the average pay is for your position in your geographic region. You can also them that you are flexible with your range.

During the Interview:

- Be confident, enthusiastic, relaxed and professional.
- Don't sound like you're reciting your responses. Pause for a few seconds to formulate your response.
- When the employer greets you, stand up, introduce yourself and offer a firm handshake and a friendly smile. (Secret: Do not wear lotion on your hands to prevent sweaty palms.)
- Always have positive responses.
- Formulate your answers in a logical, orderly manner.
- Limit the use of the words/phrases "Um...Uh...Yeah...Uh-huh...Well...Like...I dunno"
- Don't use one word responses. Elaborate. Give examples of previous experience, if possible.
- Sit slightly forward in your chair. This shows that you are attentive and interested.
- Make eye contact.
- Don't look at the floor, ceiling or around the room when thinking or speaking.
- If there is more than one person interviewing you, try to remember their names so that you can thank them individually in your thank you letter/email.
- Don't discuss your personal life unless asked.
- In your answers, make sure that you use "I" but still show that you are capable of working with a team.
- Do not bash your previous employer.

- Don't ask about benefits, vacation, overtime, or telecommuting. You'll have the opportunity to do this after you are offered the job.
- Pay attention to what the interviewer says so that you can respond properly, and be able to reference certain information in your thank you email/letter.
- When asked whether you have experience performing a particular task, if you do not then give an example of something similar that you have done. You can also respond that you are a fast learner.
- Always emphasize your strengths. (*E.g. I am a fast learner. I am great at multi-tasking. I require little supervision. I am detail oriented. I don't mind working extra hours. I am extremely hardworking. I am very knowledgeable of my field. I aim to exceed expectations. I work well with others and independently. My employers know that I am dependable.*)
- You can ask questions during the interview without interrupting the interviewer, but save a few questions for the end.

After the Interview:

- Before leaving, shake the interviewer's hand again firmly.
- Thank them for the interview and ask when they expect to have a decision.
- Ask for a business card and put it in your leather portfolio. This will give you the information that you need to send a thank you email and follow-up with them.
- Send a thank you email within 2 days. This will catch their attention, and allow you to resell yourself and reiterate your strengths.

Sample interview questions:

- <http://career-advice.monster.com/job-interview/interview-questions/100-potential-interview-questions/article.aspx>
- <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2013/01/11/how-to-ace-the-50-most-common-interview-questions/>

Interview Do's and Don'ts:

- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviews/fl/job-interview-dos-donts.htm>
- <http://www.forbes.com/sites/erikaandersen/2014/06/03/please-dont-do-these-9-things-in-an-interview/>

Salary websites:

- <http://www.glassdoor.com>
- <http://www.salary.com>

Securing the Position

Tips:

- Send a thank you email/letter to catch the attention of the employer and resell yourself. You can ask additional questions, and reiterate experience.
- Check your mail, junk email and voicemails daily.
- If you haven't received a decision after the date indicated or longer than 1-2 weeks, follow-up with a phone call or email/letter.
- Don't respond to emails late at night or too early in the morning.

Sample Thank you Emails/Letters:

- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/samplethankyou.htm>
- <http://career-advice.monster.com/job-interview/following-up/sample-interview-thank-you-letter/article.aspx>

Accepting the Job

Tips:

- Once offered the position, don't accept it until after you negotiate your pay, vacation and benefits.
- Before negotiating your pay and benefits, define your walkaway point. The minimum that you will accept.
- Most hiring managers will normally start with an offer lower than what they are willing to pay.
- When negotiating your pay, consider what you made in your last few jobs, the results of your online salary research, and your strengths. Given that information, determine the target salary you would like to make. Use this information when speaking to the employer. *(E.g. I am extremely excited to work with your company and appreciate the offer of \$X, but I was expecting it to receive at least \$Y based on my experience, drive and performance. Are you willing to accept this offer?)*
- If you have a vacation planned or need time off, inform your supervisor or the hiring manager after you are offered the position.
- Give your current employer at least 2 weeks' notice and a resignation letter. Physically take it to your supervisor.

Sample Pay Negotiation questions:

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/salaryinformation/a/salarynegotiat.htm>

<http://career-advice.monster.com/salary-benefits/negotiation-tips/10-salary-negotiation-questions/article.aspx>

Sample Benefits questions:

- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/employeebenefits/a/employeebenefit.htm>

Sample Resignation Letters:

- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/sampleresignationletters/a/resignsamples.htm>
- <http://career-advice.monster.com/in-the-office/leaving-a-job/sample-resignation-letter/article.aspx>

Handling Rejection

Tips:

- Don't be discouraged if you do not get an offer on your first, second, or even tenth job interview. The job search process can take a long time, but if you practice your skills and prepare for each interview, you will soon succeed.
- Be sure to send the employer a rejection thank you email/letter. In the letter, you should inquire about why another candidate was chosen over you. You may get some helpful information that will improve your chances of getting hired the next time around.
- If you have difficulty getting a job due to lack of experience, consider internships, volunteering or even higher education to gain more experience.
- Save the contact information for the company in case you re-apply for a position in the future.

Sample Rejection Thank you Emails/Letters

- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/rejection/a/ask-why-not-hired.htm>
- <http://internships.about.com/od/thankyounotes/a/Sample-Thank-You-Note-After-Being-Rejected-For-An-Internship-Or-Job.htm>

Maintaining Your Job

Tips:

- Exceed expectations.
- Arrive early or stay late on some days.
- Learn additional skills on your own time.
- Be on time every day.
- Don't request off until after 90 days.
- Observe the work habits of your successful co-workers.
- Anticipate problems and formulate a solution before they arise.
- Be self-motivated.
- Don't complain to or gossip with your co-workers.
- Know your company's goals and be a contributor towards them.
- Have a positive attitude.

Additional Job tips:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Keep-Your-Job>

http://www.twc.state.tx.us/news/efte/ten_commandments_of_keeping_your_job.html