

Career Resource Center



New Hampshire Technical Institute
Learning Center
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Table of Contents

I. Resumes

- a. Portfolios
 - Contents and Attributes
 - Getting Started
- b. Writing Your Resume
 - Tips
 - Formats (Chronological, Functional, Combination)
 - Resume Review Checklist
- c. Resume Formats
 - Chronological
 - Functional
 - Combination
- d. Electronic Resumes

II. Cover Letters

- a. Job Search Letters
 - Information Interview Request Letters
 - Cover Letters
- b. Writing Cover Letters
- c. Thank you Letters
- d. Acceptance/Decline Letters
- e. Action Verbs and Descriptive Adjectives
- f. Checklist
- g. Cover Letter Formats

III. Interviewing

- a. Job Search Campaign
- b. Networking and the Information Interview
- c. The Successful Job Interview
- d. Traditional Interview Questions
 - Legal and Illegal Questions
- e. Appearance Checklist

PORTFOLIOS: an essential tool in Career Development and Exploration

Portfolios provide an opportunity for self-assessment and increasing self-awareness. They are a disciplined and organized way of “taking stock” of who you are, where you’ve been, what you can do, where you want to go, and how to get there: all the steps involved in career development and exploration. Building your portfolio will increase your confidence and enhance your job search by increasing your awareness of the competencies you possess.

The portfolio assists you in developing a focus for your employment search by helping you identify your accomplishments, skills and interests. As you describe specific experiences at work, home, school, and elsewhere, you demonstrate and provide evidence of transferable work skills which employers seek: situations you faced, how you dealt with them, and how you rate yourself.

There are eight essential skill areas to describe in your portfolio. They are Teamwork, Social Responsibility, Critical Thinking/Problem Solving, Technical/Scientific, Leadership, Creativity, Personal Management, and Communication. Read on for some guidelines and examples of the competencies within each of these skill areas. Then use the worksheet attached to begin your own portfolio. As you complete a college course, project at work, or accomplishment in an extracurricular activity, examine where it fits in your portfolio. Update your portfolio at least once each semester or as needed to keep it current.

Getting started:

First Step

Look at these four examples of how students were able to articulate their ability in four different skill areas before beginning the process of articulating your own ability in the areas of problem solving, personal management, communication and teamwork.

See some [examples...](#)

Second Step

Create your record where you will type in all your skills. You have to do this step **only once**.

After that, your personal page will be saved for future updates.

[Create my record now.](#)

Third Step

Here is a list of skills that you are recognizing, tracking, and learning to articulate in the Managing College Outcomes class. Once you are in your personal page if you double-click on any skill, you will be presented with a form, that you can use to articulate (through writing) your present ability/aptitude for a specific skill.

(Select the category headings below to see examples of off campus activities that relate to that category.)

PORTFOLIO CONTENTS AND ATTRIBUTES: CATEGORIES

Teamwork

- Initiate ideas within a team
- Cooperate and negotiate
- Recognize and respect others' strengths and weaknesses
- Complete assigned tasks for team

Social Responsibility

- Respect individual and cultural differences
- Demonstrate ethical behavior
- Demonstrate rules of etiquette
- Demonstrate responsible citizenship through one's actions
-

Critical Thinking/Problem Solving

- Identify problems
- Gather evidence through research
- Evaluate options
- Derive conclusions or recommendations

Technical/Scientific

- Effectively use computer software, hardware, Internet or Systems Management
- Possess competence in laboratory sciences

Leadership

- Set direction and goals
- Delegate and/or motivate others
- Assure goal completion

Creativity

- Possess or appreciate skills in art and literature
- Demonstrate social imagination
- Create opportunities for innovation

Communications

- Writing
- Listening
- Presentation
- Interpersonal

Personal Management

- Manage time
- Adapt to change
- Work independently
- Manage finances

PORTFOLIO ATTRIBUTES: EXAMPLES

Teamwork

- Participate in campus clubs, organizations
- Take an active role in group class projects, study groups, service clubs
- Volunteer for tasks in clubs and organizations; become an officer
- Take classes which explore other cultures, such as anthropology and sociology
- Participate in intramural and intercollegiate sports
- Experiment by taking different roles in group projects
- Opt for group projects (versus individual ones) when given a choice
- Run for office or volunteer in your college's student government

Social Responsibility

- Volunteer in a social service agency, church, or school
- Speak out against prejudice and discrimination
- Take classes in ethics, social problems, anthropology

Critical Thinking / Problem-Solving

- Start a small business
- Join clubs and organizations that tackle a project from the ground up
- Follow electoral politics: evaluate the candidates, and vote!
- Develop and express a strong 'position' in research papers
- Seek out people who think differently than you
- Take classes in philosophy, research methods, or literature
- Write a guest editorial or opinion piece in the school newspaper
- Inform yourself about issues, and attend public hearings or lectures

Technical/Scientific

- Take computer courses that build skills in word processing, databases, and spreadsheets
- Learn about and become a skilled user of email and the Internet
- Volunteer for a non-profit that needs your computer skills
- Become a computer tutor or volunteer in a college computer lab
- Develop your own home page on the World Wide Web
- Develop a 'computer-friendly' or scannable resume, and submit it to an employer

Leadership

- Volunteer to lead a group project
- Run for office in your college's student government
- Seek jobs that offer supervisory or management duties
- Be the spokesperson for a group or cause
- Take advantage of leadership training opportunities
- Organize a community service project and get others involved in the project
- Take initiative in class and at work
- Be a peer mentor, tutor, or residence hall advisor
- Become a Big Brother or Big Sister

Creativity

- Take a drawing or music class
- Write a poem, short story, or song lyrics
- Design a computer game
- Keep an idea book
- Deviate from recipes, and invent new ones!
- Express your ideas in a new medium
- Suggest new processes and procedures
- Develop and maintain a portfolio of your creative work
- Design your dream house
- Design brochures or other promotional materials; develop an advertising campaign

Personal Management

- Learn personal manners and business etiquette
- Take classes/workshops on time management, study skills, or assertiveness
- Learn new skills and update existing ones--stay current
- Practice punctuality; establish timelines for meeting goals, and achieve them!
- Balance your checkbook and pay off credit card bills monthly
- Learn to budget; acquire skills in money management software such as *Quicken*
- Take summer jobs, campus jobs, internships to develop/demonstrate work ethic

Communications

- Take speech and writing classes
- Volunteer to be the spokesperson for a group presentation
- Be the Recorder or Secretary of a club or committee
- Keep a journal; write for the school newspaper, poetry magazine, yearbook
- Learn how to write a resume, job cover letters, or scholarship applications
- Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper
- Speak up in class; ask questions, especially when you don't understand something!
- Take jobs as a receptionist, customer service person, help desk, or crisis hotline volunteer
- Develop a relationship with someone from a different background or culture

WRITING YOUR RESUME

Resume Purpose

Your resume is one part of your overall job search strategy. The purpose of your resume is not to get you a job. The purpose of your resume is to motivate an employer to interview. You can do this by summarizing and highlighting your experience and background relevant to the position in which you are interested, and describing and marketing your relevant competencies and accomplishments.

What to Include on your Resume

Your resume must be brief and to the point. In most cases, one full page will be enough room for you to say all that you need to say. To use that single page most effectively, carefully consider the information you put on your resume. Provide enough information for the employer to understand your abilities and qualifications for the position without overdoing it. Focus your resume on the position.

What and how information is listed will depend on the focus you choose to give your resume. Typically, resumes will include some or all of the following sections:

1. Personal information

Include your name, address and telephone (permanent and/or temporary), and e-mail address. When including your e-mail address, remember that employers may use it to contact you professionally; avoid using nicknames or unprofessional automatic responses. The same is true of telephone answering machine messages; do not give an employer any easy excuses to eliminate you as a candidate!

MY NAME

1 Park Avenue, Hollywood, CA 93645
(608) 333-3333 myname@email.nhti

MY NAME

N. H. Technical Institute, Strout 852
31 College Drive
Concord, NH 03301
(603) 271-9021

1 Park Avenue
Hollywood, CA 93645
(608) 333-3333
myname@email.nhti

2. Objective

Introducing your resume with an objective is optional. Beware of being too narrow or too general. If you wish to include an objective, use it to communicate to an employer the type of position/industry/organization you want to work in, the skills you have and want to use, and your long term and/or short term professional goals.

Objective: A marketing internship with responsibilities in quantitative/qualitative research analysis, business pitch development, and presentation preparation.

3. Education

List your educational experience in reverse chronological order. Include information about your degree, major or concentration, and graduation year. You may also include coursework relevant to the position, honors, research or special projects, and your GPA (if above 3.0). High school can be included, but does not have to be. If you do include high school, list only those accomplishments which identify competencies and skills not already demonstrated in your college experience.

EDUCATION

NH Technical Institute, Concord, NH

May, 1999

Associate in Science, Business Administration major, Marketing specialization

- GPA 3.4
- Relevant coursework: Principles of Marketing, Marketing Research
- Senior project: Conducted regional market research for ski ticket sales using Ticketron; developed marketing plan to present to SKI 93 senior management

Merrimack Valley High School, Penacook, NH

May, 1996

President, Future Business Leaders of NH

- Recruited club members; planned, organized and promoted club activities; taught club members to use PowerPoint presentation software

4. Experience

Begin by listing the organization, your title, city and state of employment, dates of employment, and a description of your work. Employers want to see your accomplishments, progression of your experience, transferable skills, and results. Describe your activities, not the employer or assigned project or duties. Use active verbs to describe your work experience and activities. (See list attached to this handout.) They will help employers understand your skills and what you have to offer. Consider the differences between the following descriptions of an internship with a local radio station.

Description #1 Story research, database maintenance, listener relations
Learned technical aspects of program production
Production office assistant

Description #2 Researched stories through interviews with experts for on-air reports
Responded to listener questions and concerns about broadcasts
Learned about tape editing, satellite feeds, and writing copy
Maintained database and performed office administration

The first description is passive and vague, leaving the employer with little information about what the student actually did. The second description gives the employer a clearer understanding of the student's skills and accomplishments. Be sure that your resume highlights your skills.

EXPERIENCE

Sales Associate **The Gap**, Concord, NH. 5/98-8/98, 5/99-8/99
Provide customer assistance, sell merchandise, inventory and replenish stock

Big Sister **Concord Boys and Girls Club**, Concord, NH 8/97-5/99
Recruit and train volunteers; raise funds with other campus organizations to finance group activities, provide support and friendship to 4th grade student 3 hours each week

EXPERIENCE

The Gap, Concord, NH. 5/98-8/98, 5/99-8/99
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Big Sister Recruit and train volunteers; raise funds with other campus organizations to finance group activities, provide support and friendship to 4th grade student 3 hours each week

5. Activities

Include community service or college and professional activities in your resume. These can highlight your skills, abilities, and potential in different environments. You can give employers more evidence of your leadership potential, ability to be a team player, initiative, motivation, and well-roundedness. Lead with your strengths. You may describe your activities if you wish to clarify the level of your involvement, but be concise.

6. Skills, Honors, and Other

Optional sections can list specific skills you have developed, honors or awards you received, interests you have, or other important information. Anything listed here should enhance your candidacy and be relevant to the position.

TIPS ON WRITING YOUR RESUME

- Begin by writing down the key elements of your resume: personal information, education, experience and activities. Worry about content at first, not format.
- Describe your achievements, skills gained, and responsibilities. Use action verbs to begin your descriptions. Give the reader concrete examples and quantitative information. Use the past tense to describe work and activities you are not currently doing and use present tense to describe those you are currently doing.
- Be concise in your wording. Use the minimum number of words possible. Eliminate non-essential phrases such as “responsibilities included...”
- **Tailor your resume to a particular position or field.** Understand the position for which you are applying. Develop a master copy of your resume and create different versions of your resume so that they are appropriate to the positions for which you are applying.
- Major categories that present your strongest selling points should appear first. Information should be included in descending order of importance.
- Include only information relevant to your obtaining an interview for a particular position or field. If in doubt about whether to include something on your resume, ask yourself, “Does it enhance my candidacy for the position?” and “Does it support my goal?” You should have a reason for including each item on your resume.
- Aim for overall visual balance on the page. This helps create a positive first impression for the reader. Make your resume easy on the reader’s eye.
- Limit your resume to one page.

Complete each of the sections in the following resume preparation worksheet:

Personal Information: Provides the employer with the information necessary to contact you.

- Name
- Permanent address
- On-campus address if appropriate
- Phone numbers
- Email

Education: Describe your educational background and your academic standing.

- College name
- College city and state
- Degree
- Major
- Date of graduation
- Relevant courses
- GPA
- Optional: high school information

Experience: Describe your skills, qualification, and accomplishments, both paid and unpaid.

- Title
- Organization
- City and state
- Dates worked
- Description of work, skills used, and accomplishments

Optional: These can be grouped together as one category or listed as separate categories. Select only those that are most relevant for the position for which you are applying.

- Activities/Community service
- Leadership
- Honors/awards

RESUME FORMATS

The three basic formats for resumes are chronological, functional and combination.

Chronological:

- Information is listed in reverse chronological order beginning with current information.
- Format stresses the progression of where and how you developed your skills and education and stresses your most recent experience listed.
- This format is most effective for people with a steady work history, and those seeking work in traditional or conservative fields.
- This format is least effective for people with spotty work history, and those who have changed positions frequently.

Functional:

- Information is categorized by function or areas of expertise.
- Format stresses skills and abilities, regardless of where and how they were developed.
- This format is most effective for career changers and people with diverse, unrelated experiences.
- This format is least effective for people with a lack of relevant work experience or whose accomplishments are unclear.

Combination:

- Information is listed by function and in reverse chronological order, blending the other two formats.
- Format stresses both skills and abilities and where they were developed.
- This format is most effective for emphasizing skills not used recently and for candidates with frequent temporary employment.
- This format is least effective for people with a lack of relevant work experience or whose accomplishments are unclear.

For most college students, a chronological or combination resume works well. Analyze your experiences and goals to help you choose which format best highlights your strengths and abilities.

The Learning Center has a notebook containing several examples of resumes from students who have graduated from NHTI. These are intended to spark ideas in you about how to create your own resume, and to illustrate how different formats can be used effectively. They are not for you to copy, but to give you some ideas! Your resume should be original and reflective of your experience and skills.

Use the **Resume Review Checklist** to decide for yourself how well these students have marketed themselves, their skills and experiences. Then write your own resume, perhaps using the worksheet to get started. The Checklist can help you critique your resume. If you get stuck, contact the Placement Office, the Learning Center, or your Department Head for assistance.

RESUME REVIEW CHECKLIST

- ❑ Resume is one page (for recent graduates). Resume is printed on high quality paper in white, off-white, or gray.
- ❑ Letter quality is 10-14 point standard font, laser printed or type set.
- ❑ Text is balanced on page, with important information and key categories arranged across the top and down the left side. Sections, paragraphs, lines and words are evenly spaced. Information is arranged so that there is slightly more space between sections than within sections.
- ❑ Name is at top. Contact information is arranged with current address on left and permanent address on right. Email address is included.
- ❑ Format is logical and consistent, whether chronological, functional or combination.
- ❑ Heading and subheadings are arranged consistently throughout. Job title, organization name, location and pertinent dates are included for each position.
- ❑ Main points are highlighted using bullets, CAPS, **bold**, **BOLD CAPS**, and *italics*.
- ❑ Relevant main points are emphasized. Your accomplishments, rather than the work environment, are described. Identify skills, communicate strengths, and emphasize results.
- ❑ Descriptive statements begin with strong action verbs. Include concrete examples and numbers whenever possible. Demonstrate your uniqueness. Avoid unnecessary phrases such as “duties included” or “responsible for.”
- ❑ Resume ends with additional strengths, e.g. computer proficiency, skills summary, volunteer experience, foreign language fluency, special interests and activities.
- ❑ Spelling and punctuation are correct. Grammatical tense and voice are consistent. Writing style is clear and concise.

ELECTRONIC RESUMES

Electronic resumes allow you to add the power of the Internet to your comprehensive job search. They do not replace traditional job search techniques such as internships, recruiting, and networking, which rely on hard copy resumes and cover letters. Still, the Internet offers you greater exposure to employers than ever before, as more and more employers are searching for strong candidates electronically. This trend is likely to continue to grow.

1. E-mail Resumes

Write your resume in your e-mail account, send a copy to yourself, and save it for employers who ask for your resume via e-mail. Due to the smaller formatting of e-mail documents, think carefully about which information is essential to include and which can be eliminated. Use standard fonts and clean, simple formatting.

2. Scannable Resumes

Resumes can be scanned into databases by employers who then conduct keyword searches to identify qualified applicants for positions within their organizations. Resumes that are to be scanned must display simple, uncluttered formatting and standard fonts. Look for appropriate keywords by researching job descriptions and information about organizations in which you are interested; use specific language in your resume and include keywords pertaining to job requirements whenever possible.

3. E-form Resumes

More and more employers have online applications at their web sites. You can copy and paste information from your resume directly into their electronic forms, or “e-forms.” As with scannable resumes, e-form resumes are entered directly into employers’ databases and searched for keywords. There are also commercial resume clearinghouses, such as MonsterTrak, where you can post your resume for free. Employers pay a fee to these clearinghouses to search for resumes of qualified candidates.

4. Web/HTML Resumes

Create a web resume in hypertext markup language (html). Employers can view your resume by pointing their browsers to your web address. An example of a place to get started on an online resume is Geocities, at www.geocities.com.

For more information on electronic resumes, check out some of the up-to-date publications and web sites in the library or the Learning Center.

WRITING JOB SEARCH LETTERS

There are many types of correspondence you may have with employers during your job search: cover letters, thank you notes, offer acceptance and decline letters, and informational interview letters. Letters to employers are valuable and necessary marketing tools. Put thought and effort into all job search letters, as they communicate a great deal about you as a person and a potential employee.

Informational Interview Request Letters

Conducting information interviews is an excellent way to research career fields and inquire about potential job leads. When you write a letter requesting an information interview, make it clear that your purpose is to get information and advice, not to get a job. In the letter, introduce yourself and why you are writing. Indicate that you will follow up with a phone call to arrange a meeting time or telephone interview. Do not enclose a resume; you are NOT asking for a job. If suggested by your contact, you can bring a resume to an in-person meeting or mail one later for advice and comments.

Follow these guidelines in writing an information interview request letter:

- Introduce yourself and your purpose
- Explain how you got the contact's name
- Describe your background and interest in the contact's career field or organization
- Let the contact know how they can help you
- Inform them of when you intend to call
- Be brief and professional

Cover Letters

A cover letter should accompany each resume you distribute, except in rare circumstances. The purpose of your cover letter is to introduce your resume and highlight aspects of your experience and skills that are most relevant to the position you are seeking. Your cover letter will be much more effective if tailored to a particular employer and position. Research each employer and position. Use the results of your research to personalize your letter and draw direct connections between your qualifications and the job requirements.

Your letter should answer these four questions for the reader:

- Why you are
- Why the employer would be interested in you
- Why you are interested in the organization and/or job
- What your next step will be

Answer these questions in the three main sections of a cover letter: introduction, body, and closing.

Introduction

Introduce who you are and why you are writing to the employer. Answer the reader's question, "Why am I reading this letter?" Name the position or field you are interested in, how you learned of the opening or organization, and, if appropriate, who referred you. In a sentence or two, at most, explain what skills make you the best candidate for the position.

Body of letter (2-3 paragraphs)

In one or two concise paragraphs, match your background to the needs and interests of the employer. Summarize your qualifications and give specific examples, without repeating your resume. Focus on your transferable skills, strengths, accomplishments, and results. Your research on the organization will be important in this section, because it will help you specifically link your skills and experiences to each position and employer.

Closing

In this brief paragraph, make a summary statement and refer the reader to your enclosed resume, then state what the next step is. End actively, with a promise to contact the employer within a specific period of time, usually one to two weeks. Confirm how the employer may reach you, via phone or e-mail. Thank the reader for their time and consideration. Remember to proofread and then sign your letter.

Tips on Writing Cover Letters

- Address your letter to a person, not a title. Check employer materials, home page, industry directories, or other sources for contact name and title. If necessary, call the organization directly to ask for the name, correct spelling and title of the appropriate person, and their phone number for follow up.
- Indicate why you are focused on the industry or position, emphasize what you offer the employer, and supplement and support your resume.
- Give concrete examples of your relevant skills, accomplishments, and successes.
- Use your own words. Your letter should highlight your individual strengths and communication skills. View available sample letters as examples of how such letters might be written, not necessarily how they should be written.
- Use direct, positive language with active, not passive, statements. Avoid flowery or overly formal wording.
- Follow proper business format. Center your letter on the page. Use the same paper and font style as on your resume.
- Your resume and cover letter may be folded for mailing. Use business envelopes that match your resume/cover letter.

Thank You Letters

Send a thank you letter immediately after every job interview or information interview (whether by phone or in person). Use the letter to confirm your interest in the position and organization. You can, if appropriate, clarify answers you gave in the interview or highlight a useful piece of information you received or gave them.

Tips on Writing Thank You Letters

- If you were interviewed by more than one person, send a thank you letter to the key hiring decision-maker and to the person who coordinated the interview process. Personalize each letter, since the recipients are likely to discuss your candidacy together.
- In your letter to the coordinator of the interview, mention the position for which you interviewed.
- Your letter may be typed or handwritten. If handwritten, be sure your handwriting is legible. Use plain, light-colored stationery.
- Keep your letter brief. Three short paragraphs are usually sufficient.

Acceptance/Decline Letters

At some point in your job search, you will find it necessary to accept and/or decline job offers. First respond to the offer by telephone, and then follow up with a letter. Be sure to confirm your decision in writing to prevent confusion and misunderstandings.

When writing a letter accepting an offer, include the following:

- Details of the position including salary, any bonuses, benefits, job title, start date and location, and
- A short message about your enthusiasm for the position and appreciation for the opportunity.

When writing a letter declining an offer, include the following:

- A statement of appreciation for the offer,
- A brief reason for declining the offer, and
- A statement that allows the possibility of some future contact, if appropriate.

Sample Letters

The Learning Center has samples of cover letters from students in various degree-granting programs. Please remember that these examples are intended to spark ideas in you about how to create your own letters. They are not for you to copy. Your own work should be original and reflective of your experience and skills.

COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

The purpose of your cover letter is to introduce your resume and intrigue an employer to read your resume. Your cover letter must be well written and concise. Attend a workshop on cover letter writing, or consult our web page to learn more about writing job search documents. Many employers will spend only about 30 seconds looking over a cover letter before deciding whether or not to continue evaluating an applicant. Does your cover letter pass the 30 second test? Be a strict critic; is it good, does it need editing, or does it need rewriting?

G = good; E = edit; R = rewrite

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| G | E | R | Letter is one page (for recent graduates), three or four brief paragraphs. |
| G | E | R | Letter is printed on high quality bond paper in white, off-white, or gray. |
| G | E | R | Print quality is 10-14 point standard font , laser printed or type set. |
| G | E | R | Text is balanced on page, using standard business letter format. |
| G | E | R | Current address and date appear in the standard address block at top of page; recipient's address appears at top of page. |

First paragraph

G E R

Answers question, "Why am I reading this letter?"

Makes note of any connection between you and the reader, e.g.

"John Doe referred me to you..."

"Professor Jane Smith of NH Technical Institute suggested I contact you regarding..."

"I recently read a *Business Week* article about XYZ Corporation's expansion and am writing to....."

In the case of a personal referral, send that person a "CC" of your cover letter. Indicate this at the bottom of your letter, after "Enclosure."

Body of letter (2-3 paragraphs)

G E R

Market yourself by briefly describing your strongest qualifications for the position. Highlight a particularly relevant experience. Make sure your recent degree is noted here if not in the first paragraph. As in the resume, focus on transferable skills, accomplishments, results and strengths. Be positive about your abilities and their relevance to the position. Summarize your qualifications but do not simply restate your resume.

End actively

G E R



Specify what active step you will take next. Avoid the passive, “I will wait to hear from you.” Instead, state that you will call to check on the status of your application, to discuss the position further, to arrange a meeting, or to do whatever seems appropriate for the particular situation. You may wish to indicate how to be reached in the last paragraph, e.g. “I may be reached at 123-345-5678 between 9 am and 5 pm or by facsimile transmission at 234-456-6789.” Be politely persistent.

Enclosures

G E R

Indicate that your resume is enclosed, along with transcripts, writing samples, references or other documents which may have been requested. These are often not requested until later in the application process. Add “Enclosure” or “Enc.” at the end of the letter, after the signature block.

COVER LETTER BLUNDERS TO AVOID!!

Unrelated Career Goals

Comparisons and Cliches

Tipographical Errors...oops...Typographical Errors

Form Letters

Inappropriate Stationery

Amusing Anecdotes

Erroneous Company Information

Desperation

Personal Photos

Confessed Shortcomings

Misrepresentation

Demanding Statements

Missing Resume

Irrelevant Personal Information

Incorrect Choice of Pronouns

Tone Trouble

Omitted Signature

Messy Corrections

Gimmicks



BUILD A SUCCESSFUL JOB SEARCH CAMPAIGN

Clarify Your Focus

- Determine the direction your search will take.
- Analyze your interests, values and skills in order to determine which careers incorporate them. Meet with a career counselor and use Choices/CT.
- Identify what skills you have and are marketing, and what skills you want to develop through your courses, internships and work experience.
- Research the careers and industries in which you are interested. (Your Department Head is an excellent source of information about opportunities within each major.).

Network & Conduct Information Interviews

- Remember: every person you meet is a potential source of information.
- Establish contacts that can provide advice/information on their careers, industries and/or organizations. Call them and ask for an “information interview.” You’ll find most people are more than willing to talk about their work and career field. Be respectful of their time and prepare in advance for the interview.
- Ask your Department Head for names of recent graduates in your major or field of interest. Call these people for information interviews. These interviews are not intended to get you a job, but they can provide you with information to assist you in making career decisions and help you strategize your job search.

Obtain leads on companies from as many sources as possible

- On-campus sources for jobs include the Job Binder in the Placement Office; Job Bulletin Board in Little Hall; and web sites such as Jobtrak, The Riley Guide, America’s Job Bank, JobWeb, and Career Magazine (see “Using the Internet for Career Development”).

Apply Directly to Relevant Employers

- Obtain the name, title and telephone number of the person most likely to do the hiring - i.e. the manager of a department or president of a small company.
 - Learn all that you can about the company (product/service, performance, hiring policies, etc.) before you write your cover letter and resume. Be sure to clearly articulate what type of work you are seeking and what you can offer the employer.

Look for Small Businesses

- Small companies are where most new jobs are being created. 9 out of 10 jobs will be in companies who have carved out a market niche, added economic value where their competitors haven't, are regionally competitive, and **rarely advertise on campus.**
- Look for firms where the rate of growth and profitability is 40% or more and that have long term market prospects.
- Read publication such as *NH Business Journal*, *Business NH*, and statewide and regional newspapers such as *The Union Leader* and *The Boston Globe*. Read the financial pages of newspapers and mutual fund literature to learn about NH companies in your field of interest which are growing quickly and are financially strong.

Take an internship following graduation

- This is a great way to get additional work experience in order to strengthen your credentials and as well as broaden your network of additional contacts in your field.

Join a Professional Association

- Join a professional discussion group on the Internet.
- Attend professional conferences and network with members. Bring several copies of your resume and samples of relevant work.
- Join a professional association. Members of professional associations can give you information on trends in a profession and may be able to give you leads on job openings. In fact, some associations have employment referral services.
- Read trade and professional publications in your field

Consider Temporary Work

- Your exposure to various work responsibilities, work environments and career professionals can assist you in defining your interests/career choices, and give you exposure that could lead to full-time employment.

Organize Your Job Search

Do something for your job search everyday

- Make sure your resume is relevant and strategically written.
- Create a strong, targeted cover letter to the person directly in charge of hiring.
- Explain what you can offer the employer. Highlight and illustrate your skills.
- Send out only as many inquiry letters as you can follow-up on within a week
- Follow up with a telephone call and ask for a meeting to discuss the position of interest
- Keep track of your contacts. Develop a system to remind yourself of follow-up calls.

NETWORKING & THE INFORMATION INTERVIEW

Networking simply means talking to people about their work. Remember: every person you meet, including professors, social acquaintances, and businesspeople, is a potential source of information. Information interviews can be conducted with people in fields of interest to you who will discuss their profession, career paths and possibilities. Here are some suggestions for discussion topics for an information interview.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND:

- When you were in college, what did you think your career was going to be?
- What was your undergraduate major field of study?

PREPARATION:

- What credentials, educational degrees, licenses, etc. are required for entry into this field?
- What kinds of prior experience are absolutely essential?
- How did you prepare yourself for this work?

PRESENT JOB:

- Describe how you occupy your time during a typical work week.
- What skills or talents are most essential for effectiveness in this job?
- What are the toughest problems you must deal with?
- What do you find most rewarding about the work itself, apart from external motivators, such as salary, fringe benefits, travel, etc.?
- What would drive you away from this kind of work?

PRIOR EXPERIENCE:

- Which of your past work experiences affect what you do now?
- If the work you do was suddenly eliminated, what different kinds of work do you feel that you could do?
- How rapidly is this career field growing? What about future prospects?

LIFE STYLE:

- What obligations does your work place upon you, outside of the ordinary work week? Do you enjoy these obligations?
- How much flexibility do you have in terms of dress, work hours, vacation schedule, place of residence, etc.?

ADVICE TO ME:

- How well suited is your background for this type of work?
- What educational preparation do you feel would be best?
- What kinds of experiences, paid employment or otherwise, would you most strongly recommend?
- If you had it to do all over again, what might you do differently?

HIRING DECISIONS:

- If you were hiring someone to work with you today, which of the following factors would be most important in your hiring decision and why:
 - Educational credentials;
 - Past work experiences;
 - Personality, personal attributes;
 - Specific skills, talents;
 - Applicant's knowledge of your organization, your department, your job
- Other? _____

REFERRAL TO OTHERS:

- Based on our conversation today, what other people do you believe I should talk to?
- Can you name a few of these people who might be willing to see me? May I have permission to use your name when I call or contact them?

SUPPLY:

- How do people find out about jobs in your field? Are they advertised in the newspapers (which ones?), by word-of-mouth (who spreads the word?), by the Personnel Office?
- Is turnover high? How does one move from position to position? Do people normally move to another agency (company, division), or do they move up in the agency (company, division)?
- What kinds of job-related values are sought in this type of work (security, high income, fringe benefits, vacation time)? What form do these considerations take at your place of work (e.g. what type of pension plan)?

DEMAND:

- What types of employers hire people in your line of work? Where are they located? What types of industries are they in?
- How much do wages or salaries vary in your work by employer, region, or industry?
- Do many people in your line of work accept positions abroad? Where? Why do they move? Are these positions (abroad) short-term or long-term?
- Are people in your line of work very mobile? Do they change jobs frequently?
- What are the most important forms of compensation in your work (e.g. bonuses, commissions, pensions, security, insurance)?

THE SUCCESSFUL JOB INTERVIEW

A job interview is your opportunity to sell yourself as the best candidate for a position. It represents the culmination of many efforts on your part: clarifying your goals and interests, building a portfolio of skills and experiences, researching and identifying job opportunities, and creating a compelling resume and cover letter that gets your foot in the employer's door. The following guidelines will help you prepare for a job interview that can lead to an offer from an employer of your choice.

General guidelines for interviews

- A firm handshake, enthusiastic voice and friendly smile help make a positive first impression
- Be yourself; the employer wants to see the real you
- Expand on your resume; help the employer assess your qualifications for the job
- Sell your knowledge, skills and experience; demonstrate the fit between you and the employer
- Remember: the employer is also being interviewed by you. You are both engaged in a conversation to answer this question: is this the right job and organization for you?

Preparing for the interview

- Research the employer and company, its mission and values. Use the company's own literature, search periodical indices for articles about the company and industry, and contact alumni career advisors who work for the company or in the same industry.
- Research the job and the specific skills and background experiences required.
- Research yourself: do you have the attributes and interests required to do this job? Be prepared to give concrete examples to demonstrate your skills and your understanding of how those skills are necessary for the job.

Before the interview

- Decide what you are going to wear to the interview and arrange for dry cleaning if necessary – dress one step above what you would wear for work. See *Appearance Checklist*.
- If possible, schedule the interview for the time of day when you are at your best.
- Prepare additional clean copies of your resume to take to the interview.
- Review questions interviewers typically ask. See attached *Interview Questions*.
- Review your skills and interests and why the employer should select you.
- Practice, practice, practice the words and examples you will use to prove that you are the best candidate for the position.

Interview stages

Stage I: Introduction

This stage is used to build rapport and demonstrate your self-motivation. It's natural that you might be a bit nervous; use this stage to relax and prepare for the next stage.

Stage II: Discussion

The form of this stage will vary depending on the type of organization with which you are interviewing. The three most common types of interviews are **Traditional Interview**, **Behavioral Interview**, and **Case Interview**. Most interviews will include traditional questions. For samples of traditional questions, see *Interview Questions*.

Stage III: Closing

- Ask any questions still outstanding in your mind, about the organization or the specific job.
- If you have relevant experiences or skills you haven't yet discussed, bring them up now.
- Prepare a closing summary that highlights the reasons you are the best candidate.
- Confirm next steps and employer's timetable for hiring or additional interviews
- A firm handshake and friendly tone will close the interview on a positive note

After the interview

- Write a thank you letter immediately. The letter may be typed, or it may be handwritten if your penmanship is neat and the letter is brief.
- Address the letter to the primary interviewer; if others were present, be sure to get their names and include them in your letter.

In a **Behavioral Interview**, the interviewer poses questions to learn how you have behaved, and predict how you might behave, under particular circumstances. These questions explore some of the following areas: gauging your interest and motivation; evaluating your decision making strategies; evaluating your work experience; assessing your ability to manage time and plan; evaluating your leadership abilities or potential; assessing your risk taking and problem solving skills; and determining your self awareness. Prepare and practice answers that demonstrate not only your skills and abilities, but also your understanding of how these skills and abilities will enable you to perform the necessary job functions. Prepare and practice answers that integrate information gained from your research on the employer and the position into your responses to employer questions and into the questions you pose.

TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Describe your short and long-range goals and objectives and how you are preparing to achieve them.
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- What do you really want to do in life?
- What are your long range career goals?
- How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
- What do you expect to be earning in five years?
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- Which is more important to you, the money or the job?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- How has your college experience prepared you for a career?
- Why should I hire you? Why do you want this position?
- What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in an organization like ours?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?
- Describe your ideal supervisor. What qualities should that person possess?
- Tell me about a time you worked in a group where there was conflict. What did you do?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- If you were hiring someone for this position, what qualities would you look for?
- What led you to choose your major?
- What college classes did you like best? Why? Least? Why?
- If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently? Why?
- Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
- What have you learned from participation in your extra-curricular activities?
- Do you have plans for additional schooling?
- Describe how you work under pressure.
- Which of your past jobs have interested you most? Why?
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- Why did you decide to seek a position with us?
- What do you know about our organization?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
- Give me an example of a time you showed initiative.
- What is a major problem you have encountered and how have you dealt with it?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- What questions do you have for me?

Legal and Illegal Questions

Federal, state and local laws require that employers' questions, whether on an application, during an interview, or during a test, must be directly related to the job for which you are applying. **The employer is only allowed to ask questions that determine whether or not you can perform the functions of the job.**

If you are asked an illegal question, you have three options;

- Answer the question, realizing that you are giving information you are not required to disclose. Consider that you might give an answer that is “wrong” in the employer’s eyes.
- Refuse to answer the question, and risk being perceived as uncooperative or confrontational – hardly positive attributes from an employer’s perspective.
- Examine the intent behind the question, and respond with information that applies to the performance of the particular job in question.

Inquiry Area	Illegal Questions	Legal Questions
National Origin/Citizenship	Are you a US citizen? Where were you/your parents born? What is your native language?	Are you authorized to work in the United States? What languages do you read, speak or write fluently?
Age	How old are you? When did you graduate from college?	Are you over the age of 18? 21?
Marital/Family Status	What’s your marital status? Whom do you live with? Do you plan to have a family? When? How many kids do you have? What are your childcare arrangements?	Would you be able and willing to relocate if necessary? Would you be able and willing to travel as needed by the job? (This is OK as long as it is asked of all applicants.)
Affiliations	What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?	List any professional or trade organizations you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.
Disabilities	Do you have any disabilities? Please give dates of any recent or past illnesses or operations. When was your last physical exam? When did you lose your eyesight? How?	Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related function? As part of the hiring process, after a job offer has been made, you will required to undergo a medical exam, the results of which will be kept confidential.
Arrest Record	Have you ever been arrested?	Have you ever been convicted of _____? (must be reasonably related to the performance of the job in question.

Appearance Checklist for Interviews

The initial impression that you create from your appearance in an interview can have considerable impact on the interviewer/s overall evaluation of your suitability for a position. Dress and grooming play major roles in creating what is called your “halo effect.” In other words, if you stand out in this area, you may stand out in others. While you need not project the image of a fashion plate, it is important to convey that you are aware of what is happening around you and care to be part of it. Dress professionally to project a professional image. A general rule is to dress one step up from what you would wear to work in this industry.

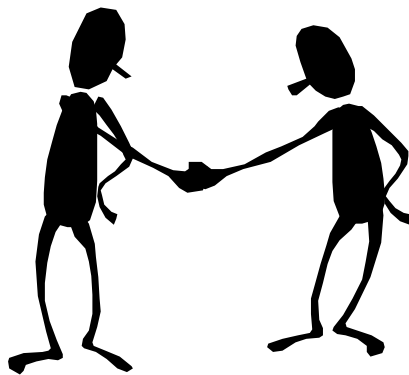
WOMEN

- Suit or tailored dress of moderate color
- Taupe, gray or vanilla stockings
- Flats or pumps
- Light makeup – none on collar line
- Clean hair – and under control
- Deodorant
- Clean nails – no chipped polish
- Attaché case or handbag – not both
- Limited and simple jewelry
- No chewing gum or smoking
- Fresh breath

MEN

- Suit or sports jacket and slack Beige,
- Over the calf socks
- Polished shoes
- Fresh shave
- Neat hair, no hat
- Deodorant
- Clean nails
- Attaché case
- No sagging coat lining
- No chewing gum or smoking
- Fresh breath

Statistics confirm that applicants who look professional are hired faster, get better jobs and may even start off with better salaries. Remember that posture is part of your appearance. Stand tall, sit relaxed, be attentive and speak up. The candidate who enters the room, look directly at the interviewer and participates right away, gives a very different impression from the person who sits, hands folded, in a corner waiting to be spoken to.



While some of these tips may seem to be common sense, silly or funny, candidates tend to forget them often enough to make employers remind career counselors to advise students on the dress protocols of a professional interview.

A Successful Job Search = Time Commitment, Organization + Strategy