



For the Job Seeker

Tips for Job Seekers

Whether you are seeking a job with a staffing firm or a Fortune 500 company, the process is pretty much the same. Start by crafting a compelling resume. This will help you identify your marketable skills. Then, before you apply for a job, make sure that your skills match what the company is looking for. If so, prepare an effective cover letter and send it to the prospective employer along with your resume. If you get an interview, get ready for it well before you go. There may be more than one. For example, your first interview may be with a staffing firm and your second one with its client.

Craft a Compelling Resume

Unless you have more than 10 years of experience, your resume should be no longer than one page. Use a simple layout.

1. **Know what you want.** Compose a clearly stated job objective. State what you want to do, for whom, where, and at what level of responsibility.
2. **Stand out from the crowd.** Instead of just listing your job skills, describe the benefits and results of your performance. For each permanent job or staffing assignment, develop a list of major accomplishments, placing the most emphasis on your recent achievements. What problems or challenges have you faced? What actions did you take to overcome them? How did your actions benefit the company? Keep in mind that most companies value workers who enhance profits and save time and money.
3. **Sell yourself.** You only have one shot to make a great impression. Your resume is a word picture of yourself. Showcase your strengths and one or two outstanding skills or abilities. List your education, training, and any relevant awards.
4. **Never list the reasons for termination or leaving a job on the resume.** The reader can find negative connotations for even the best reason. You're far better off explaining employment lapses in person.
5. **Make sure the resume and the cover letter are error-free.** Proofread, and have others proofread them, too. Make your resume understandable by avoiding jargon and using plain English.

Prepare an Effective Cover Letter

A cover letter allows you to personalize your resume. Its main purpose is to emphasize your strengths and assets in a way that will interest employers in interviewing you.

1. **To attract the reader's attention, the cover letter must look good and be easy to read.** Pay particular attention to spelling, grammar, punctuation, spacing, paragraph length, and margins. Address it to a particular person by name, making sure that the spelling and title of the individual are correct. A good cover letter is not too long, so try to limit yours to a single page.
2. **The first paragraph should arouse the reader's interest.** State some particular knowledge you have of the reader's business, or comment on a "timely" issue relating to the company's operation.

American Staffing Association

3. **The body of the cover letter should explain what you can do for the company.** Put yourself in the employer's position as you write. Present facts that will be interesting and that accurately describe your assets and qualifications. Your prospective employer will be interested in your ability to make or save money, conserve time, and effectively assume and delegate responsibility. Do not stress weaknesses, such as lack of experience.
4. **The last paragraph should request action.** Ask for an interview, and state specific times and dates when you will call to arrange an interview (allow at least three business days from the day you send the letter). In all circumstances be courteous, but be direct.
5. **The letter should end with the formal salutation "Sincerely."** Below the salutation, type your name and then add your signature.

Sending Your Resume and Cover Letter Via E-Mail

As a 21st-century jobseeker, it's important to have an electronic cover letter and resume to send at the click of a mouse. Here are some steps for converting your cover letter and resume from Word or WordPerfect documents into electronic ones:

1. **Remove all formatting, including lines, boxes, bold, italics, and underlining.** Change the font to Courier, size 12. Convert your page margins to 1 inch on the left and 3 inches on the right. When you save the cover letter or resume, choose "Save As" and change the type to "Text only with Line Breaks." A warning box may come up informing you that you might lose some formatting. Click "OK" or "Yes."
2. **Launch Notepad (PC) or SimpleText (Mac) to reformat and clean up your resume.** Move all centered items to the left margin, and make sure all text is flush left. As you scroll through your document, remove all Tabs, replace all bullets with asterisks (*), and change bolded words to all caps. Increase white space by hitting Return twice between sections.
3. **Make sure your cover letter and resume are e-friendly.** Do not send them as attachments, but, rather, pasted in the body of the e-mail. Practice sending them via e-mail to yourself as well as a friend who uses a different Internet service provider—to ensure the documents are clean and professional-looking. Once you've made any required adjustments, your cover letter and resume are ready for a prospective employer's inspection.
4. **Words matter.** Always include keywords in your resume. Recruiters use keywords to search for resumes. So choose some of the basic, important keywords in your field and pepper them throughout your resume. For example: Web designer, account manager, communications specialist, to name some.

Deliver a Knock-Out Interview

Your carefully prepared cover letter and resume paid off. You've landed an interview. Get ready—in advance—to make a good impression:

1. **Confirm the interview appointment.** Do this one day before your interview. Know the date, time, and location of the interview. Try to find out how long you'll be there. And make sure you have your contact's phone numbers in case you have to call.
2. **Clear your calendar.** If possible, keep your schedule free of any other commitments. The interview might run over or you could be asked to stay longer. Explaining that you have to be somewhere else could create an awkward situation.

American Staffing Association

3. **Say their names correctly.** If you know the names of interviewers in advance, confirm the pronunciation and spelling.
4. **Be on time.** Don't arrive more than 10 minutes early and, most important, don't be late. Arriving late not only labels you as rude, it also makes you seem unreliable. If unforeseen circumstances arise and you must be late, do everything you can to call ahead of time.
5. **Dress to impress.** How embarrassing to come to an interview and discover you're underdressed. If possible, find out in advance what attire works. If you're still not sure, wear a suit. There's no such thing as overkill when dressing for an interview.
6. **Let them know you've arrived.** Walk up to the receptionist, smile, shake hands, introduce yourself, and state that you have an appointment. Offer your resume or business card and wait.
7. **Shut off the cell phone.** Unless there's a bona fide crisis, turn off your cell phone or pager.
8. **Use your mouth for talking only.** Unless the interview is scheduled with a meal, nothing should be in your mouth but words. Drinking, eating, smoking, and chewing gum don't work during an interview.
9. **Prepare a short information statement.** Be ready to answer the dreaded question, "Tell me about yourself and your background." Your statement should include some information on the types of companies and industries you have worked for, your strengths, your transferable skills, and some of your personal traits. Practice saying this statement until it feels natural.
10. **Be prepared to talk about your successes and experiences.** The employer will want to find out about your past experience—successes and failures, your work ethic, and your track record. Be able to amplify every item on your resume.
11. **Be nice.** Everyone you meet during your interview—from the receptionist to the interviewer—should be treated with respect and courtesy. The receptionist might not be conducting the interview, but his or her opinion of you might be solicited.
12. **Follow up.** Send a thank you letter within a day of the interview. Provide any documents that might have been requested, such as references, an employment application, or samples of your work. A few days later, call to express your continued interest and to see if you could offer more information.