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The Tri-County Career and Employability Resources staff created this manual to assist students and alumni with each step in the job search process. We have included tips on how to find jobs, create resumes and cover letters, succeed in interviews, and accept offers. In addition, the staff offers the following in-person and digital services:

**In-person:**
- Major and career exploration
- Resume critiques
- Cover letter critiques
- Mock interviews

**Online:**
- CollegeCentral.com/tctc - TCTC
- database for job postings
- Big Interview™
- Digital handouts on career topics

We know that finding a job is a tough and often long process. However, there are many opportunities if you organize your search well and are willing to put time and effort into finding a job. We are here to help!

**The Career & Employability Resources Staff**
Ruby Hicks Hall, Suite 180
Organizing Your Job Search

Having a successful job search starts with simple first steps

1. Maintain a Positive Attitude
Job seeking requires you to market yourself to potential employers through your skills and abilities. A positive attitude is essential in order to successfully “sell yourself” to employers. It builds and demonstrates confidence in your ability to work. In addition, a positive attitude will motivate you to persist with the job search until you have landed your desired position.

2. Manage Your Time
Now is the best time to start your job search. One of the most important things to understand is that finding a job can be a full-time job - if you’re willing to spend up to 40 hours a week in your job search, you’ll eventually find the job you want and need.

3. Identify Sources of Job Leads
Many job seekers mistakenly think that good job opportunities just come along. Instead, you must seek out jobs. The more assertive you are, the more opportunities you will find.

4. Clean Up Your Social Media
Many employers will check your social media to get more information and insight as to who you are. Delete any photos or posts that could be seen as questionable or objectionable.

Where Do I Find a Job?

| TCTC’s online job board: collegecentral.com/tctc | Job listing websites such as indeed.com, monster.com and scworks.org |
| Employment ads in newspapers, trade journals, and bulletin boards | Check out companies’ human resources websites |
| SC Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW) offices | Professional organizations in your field (small membership fee) |
| Temporary agencies or private employment agencies (fees likely) | Ask instructors, friends, and relatives for contacts or a personal referral |

“To be successful, you have to keep moving. No one ever stumbles onto anything while sitting.”
- Anonymous

Do your research:
- Read the job description carefully.
- Look for Keywords- words that are repeated throughout in association with a particular job title. (Nouns that reflect skills and may include technical jargon)
- Use similar words in your cover letter, resume, and the interview itself.
Assistant Store Manager responsibilities include:

- Hiring, oversee training, and retention of a top team of Sales Associates.
- Promoting **superior customer service** by ensuring associates are greeting and assisting customers and always taking that extra step.
- Responding to customer inquiries and complaints in a **professional and timely** manner.
- Monitoring associate sales activities and productivity.
- Acknowledging and **communicating** performance to associates;
- Motivates and trains associates to achieve full potential and **sales goals**.
- Performing operational duties that **drive sales** through product knowledge, store cleanliness, and other related duties.
- Ensuring that the credit department is collecting accounts.
- Maintaining **inventory levels** per guidelines.
- Effectively managing warehouse/delivery employees.
- Actively sharing **strategic ideas** that support the company **vision and growth plans**.

**Preferred**

**Enthusiastic:** Shows intense and eager enjoyment and interest

**Team Player:** Works well as a member of a group

**Dedicated:** Devoted to a task or purpose with loyalty or integrity

**Preferred**

**Growth Opportunities:** Inspired to perform well by the chance to take on more responsibility

**Goal Completion:** Inspired to perform well by the completion of tasks

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**Tips for an Effective Job Search**

- Make a job search to-do list every day
- Identify companies you would like to work for and regularly check their employment website
- Keep a spreadsheet of employers you contact, including dates and names of individuals
- Keep resumes and business cards with you at all times - you never know when a lead will come up!
- Network. Tell everyone you know that you are looking for a job
- Read pamphlets and articles on how to get a job
- Call employers to find out the best times to apply
- Apply for jobs early in the day - it shows good work ethic
- If applying in person, plan to apply at several companies in the same area to save time and money
The Application Process

In this section, we will provide advice on each part of the job application. There are two main ways to complete a job application: in-person at job sites or online directly from a company’s website. **Always follow an employer’s instructions.** If a job posting says to apply online, do not turn in materials in-person. If it says to apply in-person, do not email materials.

Try to complete your job application in one sitting. If completed online, utilize the “save” feature if you need to take a break or return to the application at a later time.

What goes into a job application?

- **Personal Information**
  - Name
  - Home address
  - Email address
  - Phone number
  - Social Security Number and Driver’s License Number

- **Resume**
- **Cover Letter**
- **References**

**Personal Information**

**What personal information should I include?**

**Name:** Be sure to use your full legal first and last name.
**Home address:** List your legal address.
**Email address:** Make sure to have a professional email address such as jane.doe@gmail.com.
**Phone number:** List the best number that you can be reached at during the day.
**Social Security Number and Driver’s License Number**

**Education**

**What education information do I need?**

**Names and dates:** List names of schools and dates you attended (including high school).
**Degree and major:** Be sure you know the official degree type!
**Relevant coursework:** List classes directly related to the job description.
**Additional education:** Consider all additional certifications, trainings, and education.

**Work Experience**

**What work information should I include?**

**Names and dates:** Give a continuous record, in reverse chronological record, of all work experience including name and address of company/agency and dates of employment.
**Job title:** List specific job title and the dates of employment.
**Job description:** Be able to describe, in detail, the work that you did.
**Contact information:** Know the names and contact information of your previous supervisor(s).
**Reason for leaving:** Be able to explain the reason for leaving previous employment opportunities. If you have held many previous jobs, list the most recent and/or most relevant experiences.
Resume and Cover Letter

A resume and cover letter should highlight the skills and experiences you have that make you a great candidate for that position. Later on in this guide, we will go more in-depth on the content. If an employer has a section on the application to upload a resume or cover letter, even if it’s optional, be sure to include yours. If there is only one upload option, attach your cover letter to your resume.

Always be truthful in a cover letter, a resume, and in all parts of your application - employers may call previous schools and work places to verify details.

References

Who should be a reference? It is a good idea to have at least three individuals who know you in either an educational or professional capacity, such as an instructor or a supervisor. DO NOT put a personal reference unless the person works for the company.

When should I ask for the reference? Before you start your job search, you should ask potential references if you can list them. Some companies automatically send a reference form when you submit your application!

How do I ask for a reference? Always ask a potential reference if you can 1) list them as a reference and 2) if they would be able to give you a good reference. It is courteous to keep them updated on positions that you are applying and interviewing for so they know when and who may contact them. It is also courteous to send them a copy of your resume so they can easily refer to your accomplishments when providing a reference.

What information should I include for a reference?

- Full name
- Position Title
- Professional Relationship to you
- Physical mailing address
- Phone number
- Email address

Application Submission

Prior to submitting an application, make sure you have answered ALL questions. Do not leave blank spaces. Many employers will ask demographics such as race, disability, and veteran status. You can always choose not to disclose that information, but be sure to select the “prefer not to answer” option.

Double-check uploaded documents to make sure that you uploaded the correct one(s). Reread all personal information, education history, and work experience for spelling errors. When everything has been proofread, either submit electronically or deliver materials in-person.

For online submissions, many employers send a confirmation email. Save this email! Also, check to see if there is a specified time in which the company will keep your application on file.
How to Build a Resume

What is a resume? Think of a resume as your introduction to a potential employer - it is your advertisement, your brochure, your flyer. It is a one- or two-page handout that displays your education, experience, and skills.

What goes on it? Your resume should include your name, contact information, a work objective, your education, your work or volunteer experience, your skills, and any honors or awards you have received.

How long should it be? For entry-level positions after graduation, resumes should be one, 8.5 x 11” page. After you have been working for awhile and gained more experience and have more accomplishments, two pages are fine.

Is there a proper format? Yes, and no. You can choose to format your resume how you would like, but we have included some common standards below.

Types of Resume Formats

Reverse Chronological
Lists most recent education and jobs first, and gives employment dates and duties for each job.

Combination
Combines chronological and functional (skills-based) by classifying positions in chronological order while still focusing on skill development.

So which should I choose? If you are looking for advancement in a field in which you have related experience, a chronological option is your best bet. If you have little or no job experience, a functional resume could be a good fit for you. A combination resume works best if you want to emphasize your skills and accomplishments rather than your job duties; this works particularly well if you work in freelance, consulting, or tempory work.

Tips on Resume Format

• Margins should be between 1/2” and 1”
• Font size should range from 10-12 point font
• Choose a readable font
• Use bold, underline, and italics wisely - they can help differentiate between subject areas (Education, Work Experience, etc.), between job and company titles, and more
• References should be included on a separate page
• Include header and page number on additional pages
• Print your resume on standard size, high quality paper

Tips on Resume Content

• Do not include salary or wages
• Do not include any personal information
• Organize the information under helpful and accurate headings
• Identify accomplishments from work experience
• Use action verbs to start your bullet points
• Be specific - use numbers and details when describing experience
• Proofread carefully and have others check for spelling and grammar errors

75% of hiring managers prefer a chronological resume
# Components of a Resume

| Header | • Should include name, physical address, telephone number, and a professional email address  
|        | • If applying on an internet site, you may leave off your street name. If applying locally, include full address  
|        | • Consider centering and styling it differently  
|        | • Name should be in larger font (18-24pt) than rest of header and resume |
| Summary | • Is a one to two sentence professional introduction  
|         | • Should describe your level of experience and your key skills  
|         | • Should capture keywords identified from job description |
| Education | • List most recent education first  
|          | • Include school name, location, degree, and date that degree was/will be earned  
|          | • List your GPA if it is a 3.0 or above  
|          | • List relevant coursework for each job  
|          | • High school is not necessary to list unless you feel that it enhances your application |
| Work Experience | • List all jobs for the past ten years, with most recent first  
| or Relevant Experience | • Include name of company, location, job title, and dates held  
| or simply-Experience | • Create bullet points for each position describing your job responsibilites and accomplishments  
|                     | • Begin each bullet with a strong action verb: See page 8 for examples of action verbs  
|                     | • You can list volunteer or unpaid experiences if they are relevant and/or if you have very little work experience |
| Skills | • List any important tools, devices, programs, procedures, licenses, and systems that you can operate or perform  
|        | • This section helps when employers use automated resume screening processes to search for skills |
| Other section ideas: | • You can create additional sections to highlight other activities or accomplishments |
| Honors/Awards | • List any awards that you have received in school, in the workplace, or in the community |
| Activities | • Include any school or community activities |
| Volunteer Experience | | |
| References | • If a company does not ask for references in their job application, you should include them on your resume  
|            | • List references on a seperate page  
|            | • Use the same heading format as you did for education, experience, etc. |
What action verbs can I use to describe my experience?

<table>
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<th>Achieved</th>
<th>Defined</th>
<th>Implemented</th>
<th>Presented</th>
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<td>Delegated</td>
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<td>Invented</td>
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<td>Maintained</td>
<td>Served</td>
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<td>Clarified</td>
<td>Executed</td>
<td>Managed</td>
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<td>Collaborated</td>
<td>Expanded</td>
<td>Marketed</td>
<td>Sold</td>
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<td>Compiled</td>
<td>Explained</td>
<td>Maximized</td>
<td>Solved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicated</td>
<td>Facilitated</td>
<td>Modified</td>
<td>Strengthened</td>
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<td>Completed</td>
<td>Focused</td>
<td>Monitored</td>
<td>Stimulated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conducted</td>
<td>Founded</td>
<td>Motivated</td>
<td>Supervised</td>
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<td>Constructed</td>
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<td>Negotiated</td>
<td>Taught</td>
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<td>Obtained</td>
<td>Trained</td>
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<td>Handled</td>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Translated</td>
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<td>Copied</td>
<td>Helped</td>
<td>Originated</td>
<td>Updated</td>
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<td>Corrected</td>
<td>Hired</td>
<td>Persuaded</td>
<td>Utilized</td>
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<tr>
<td>Created</td>
<td>Identified</td>
<td>Prepared</td>
<td>Verified</td>
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</tbody>
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Does my resume need to be perfect?

Yes! A resume is arguably the most important document in the job search process. Employers will make their first impression of you based on your resume, so you should spend a lot of time perfecting it to give the right impression.

Any mistakes on your resume will imply that you may make mistakes on the job as well.

PROOFREAD! The Career and Employability Resources staff is always happy to review resumes via email or appointment.
ELIZA WEST  
606 Money Lane  
Anderson, SC 29621  
(864)-221-1212  
Eliza.west@yahoo.com

Skills and Abilities
- Proficient in Microsoft Office: Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Experience using Intuit QuickBooks
- Good time management and organizational skills
- Effective problem-solving abilities
- Able to develop positive working relationships
- Prioritization and multi-tasking abilities
- Highly detail oriented
- Effective communication skills

Education
Tri-County Technical College, Pendleton, SC  
Associate in Applied Science  
Major in Accounting  
Expected Graduation Date: May 2020  
GPA: 3.8

Related Coursework:
- Cost Accounting
- Federal Income Tax
- Payroll Accounting
- Integrated Accounting Software
- Accounting Applications
- Microcomputer Applications

Work Experience
Bi-Lo Groceries, Pendleton, SC  
Bookkeeper  
January 2019 - Present

- Reconcile all cash drawers and prepare daily bank deposits
- Debit, credit, and total accounts on computer spreadsheets and databases, using QuickBooks accounting software
- Calculate and prepare checks for utilities, taxes, and other payments
- Calculate, prepare, and issue bills, invoices, account statements, and other financial statements
- Prepare purchase orders and expense reports
- Maintain inventory records

Tri-County Technical College, Easley, SC  
Computer Lab Technician  
August 2018 – December 2019

- Maintain and monitor the college’s open computer lab
- Assist students with technical computer problems
- Navigate computer applications such as Microsoft Office, formatting documents, and printing

Dollar Tree, Easley, SC  
Head Cashier/Sales Associate  
November 2016 - March 2018

- Processed sales transactions while operating assigned cash register
- Maintained a pleasant, friendly, and cooperative attitude with customers, coworkers, and supervisors

Honors and Awards
- South Carolina Life Scholarship Recipient
- Tri-County Technical College Foundation Scholarship for Accounting
Michelle Winters
1283 Market Street, Anderson, SC 29621  864-221-6531  mwinter@tctc.edu

Summary
Compassionate patient focused Registered Nurse with more than three years of patient care experience

Core Qualifications
- Licensed RN in South Carolina
- Basic Life Support for healthcare providers
- Pediatric Advanced Life Support
- Strong clinical judgment
- Bilingual (Spanish)
- Accurate and efficient at documentation
- Excellent work ethic

Education
Associate Degree in Applied Science
Major: Nursing
Tri-County Technical College, Pendleton, SC  August 2020
GPA: 3.9/4.0
- President’s List – four semesters
- Dean’s List – seven semesters
- Merit Scholar Award Recipient
- 112 hours in each of the following rotations: Labor and Delivery/Postpartum, Emergency, Adult Medical/Surgical Nursing, Psychiatry, Community Health Nursing, Geriatrics

Clinical Experience
Med/Surgical Unit, Emergency, Pediatric and Obstetrics

Patrick B. Harris, Anderson, SC  August 2019 – December 2019
Adult Psychiatric

Cottingham House, Anderson, SC  May 2019 – August 2019
Hospice, Palliative Care

- Performed basic physical assessments of patients
- Accurately and efficiently documented patient histories
- Ensured efficacy of treatments through monitoring of treatment regimens
- Consulted and coordinated with health care team members to assess, plan, implement and evaluate patient care plans
- Provided patient/family education on topics including nutrition, care needs, and pain management

Work Experience
Marchbanks Assisted Living and Memory Care, Anderson, SC  February 2018 – Present
CNA
- Assist nurses with pre- operative and post-operative care
- Provide patient care by supplying and emptying bed pans, applying dressings and supervising exercise routines
- Perform glucose checks

Community Involvement
- AnMed Health Blood Drive volunteer, 2018-2020
- March of Dimes Walk participant and fundraiser, 2017-2020
SAMPLE CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESUME

Tim T. Student
171 Moultrie Street, Clemson, SC 29409
864.953.0000
tstudent@tctc.edu

SUMMARY: Community focused Criminal Justice student with experience in police procedures and operations.

EDUCATION: Tri-County Technical College, Pendleton, SC
Associate Degree in Applied Science
Major: Criminal Justice Technology GPA: 3.8
Expected Graduation Date: May 2020
Relevant Courses:
- Police Patrol and Administration
- Correctional Systems
- Criminal Law I and II
- Criminal Evidence
- Juvenile Delinquency
- Police Community Relations

SKILLS:
- Fluent in Spanish
- Fingerprinting and interviewing skills
- Proficient in Microsoft Office Suite
- Work well with diverse populations and in pressure situations
- Effective in both written and oral communications
- Efficient multi-tasker; accurate in documentation

EXPERIENCE:

Pendleton Police Department, Pendleton, SC
Student Internship January 2019 - April 2019
- Interacted with police officers and supervisors
- Rode along during patrols
- Participated in community relations activities
- Observed intake procedures and assisted with documentation

Target of Anderson, Anderson, SC
Loss Prevention Specialist August 2018 - Present
- Circulate among visitors, patrons, and employees to preserve order and protect property
- Patrol premises to prevent and detect signs of intrusion and ensure security of doors, windows, and gates
- Write reports of daily activities and irregularities
- Monitor shoppers and employees to guard against theft and loss of property

Allegro Inc., Anderson, SC
Translator May 2017 - August 2018
- Translated manuals from English to Spanish and vice versa
- Conducted presentations in Spanish to work crews at their job sites
- Translated applications for employees

ACTIVITIES:
- Criminal Justice Association - Tri-County Technical College President 2018-2019
- Habitat for Humanity Volunteer and Coordinator
- Voter Registration Volunteer and Election Volunteer
John Doe Smith  
7900 Highway 76  
Pendleton, SC 29670  
(864) 555-5555  
jdsmith@tctc.edu

Summary
Multi-skilled Mechatronics graduate with experience in performing diagnostic, maintenance, and repair of electrical and electronic systems and controls.

Skills and Abilities
- Excellent communication and organizational skills
- Successful interpersonal skills; able to develop positive working relationships
- Strong mechanical and electrical aptitude and troubleshooting ability
- Attention to safety and quality; effective problem solving skills
- OSHA 10 Certified

Education
Tri-County Technical College, Pendleton, SC  
Associate Degree in Applied Science  
**Major in Mechatronics Technology**
Graduation Date: December 2020  
GPA: 3.46
Relevant Courses:
- Reliability Centered Maintenance
- Programmable Logic Controllers
- Robotics and Automated Controls
- Quality Assurance

Career and Technology Center, Williamston, SC  
Certificate in Electricity/Electronics – Project Lead the Way

Related Experience
Electrolux, Anderson, SC  
**Student Co-op**  
September 2018 – Present
- Perform preventative maintenance
- Read blueprints and schematics to accurately assemble and repair machines
- Troubleshoot and maintain production equipment under supervision
- Record test data and uses electronic maintenance system to document work orders

Other Experience
Harper Farms, Williamston, SC  
**Weekend Laborer**  
May 2018 – Present
- Inspect, maintain, and repair equipment, machinery, buildings, pens, yards, and fences
- Operate and tend equipment, such as tractors, combines, and irrigation equipment
- Attach farm implements such as plows, discs, sprayers, or harvesters to tractors, using bolts and hand tools

Western Auto, Belton, SC  
**Sales Associate**  
March 2106-May 2018
- Provided excellent customer service
- Maintained inventory and stocked shelves

Honors and Awards
- Dean’s List, Tri-County Technical College
- South Carolina Life Scholarship Recipient
- Habitat for Humanity Volunteer
John Doe Smith  
7900 Highway 76  
Pendleton, SC 29670  
(864) 555-5555  
jdsmith@tctc.edu  

References  
Mr. Ronald Talley  
Instructor, Industrial Electronics Technology  
Tri-County Technical College  
7900 Highway 76  
Pendleton, SC 29670  
(864) 646-1326  

Mr. Steve Wells  
General Manager  
Western Auto  
21 North Main Street  
Belton, SC 29627  
(864) 338-4444  

Mr. Gary Burgess  
Electrical Engineer  
Duke Energy  
222 Highway 11  
Seneca, SC 29677  
(864) 123-4567
How to Write a Cover Letter

What is a cover letter?
A cover letter is your written sales pitch to an employer. It explains your interest in the position and describes why you would be a good candidate.

What is the purpose?
• Indicate your interest in position
• Highlight the education, skills, and experience that qualify you
• Provide a more in-depth introduction than your resume

Back to Basics: Formatting a Letter
Let’s go back to English class. Just like other formal letters, a cover letter should have a header, a greeting and a signature. It should also have an introductory, body, and closing paragraph. Sometimes, more than one body paragraph may make sense to explain your qualifications. Just make sure to keep it to one page or less. Let’s look more closely at the different components.

Header
Underneath your personal header (use the same one as your resume), right-justify and include the contact information of the letter recipient.

Introduction
You should identify the position For which you are applying. Tell how you learned of the position and why you are interested in applying.

Body (1-2 paragraphs)
Explain why and how you are qualified for the position. Talk about the education and work experience you have and relate it back to the skills and responsibilities required for the job you are applying for using the keywords identified in the job posting.

Conclusion
Reaffirm your interest in the position and thank the readers for their consideration. Include your contact information and indicate your interest in interviewing for the position. If you print the letter, sign your name in blue or black ink. For online submissions, simply type your name.

Tips to Make Your Cover Letter Stand Out

1. Send one! Sometimes cover letters are optional or not requested, and it shows you are serious about the job and willing to put in the effort.

2. Address your cover letter to a specific person. If a hiring manager or contact person is not indicated on the job description, call the company to ask who the hiring manager is for that position.

3. Brainstorm the skills or experiences that make you a strong candidate for the position and write about those. Employers already got an overview from your resume - give them an in-depth look at what you specifically bring to the table. Use the keywords identified in the job posting.

4. Send your cover letter (and resume) as a PDF. There’s nothing more annoying than not being able to open a document!

#1 Rule of Cover Letter Writing - Write a customized letter for each position!
July 21, 2020

Ms. Elaine Smith
Personnel Manager
Accounting Firm USA
1234 Greenback Road
Somewhere, SC 29622

Dear Ms. Smith:

I learned from Jane Doe that your company is planning to hire an accounting assistant, and I am submitting the enclosed resume for your consideration.

In May, I will graduate from Tri-County Technical College with an Associate Degree in Accounting. While pursuing my degree, I have also worked part-time as an accounts receivable clerk with Publix. I believe my success in Tri-County’s well-respected accounting program and the valuable work experience I have gained at Publix will help me contribute to your firm.

The enclosed resume will give further details regarding my education and other qualifications. I plan to contact you by phone within the next week to answer any questions and to arrange for an interview. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Anna Wannajob

enclosure
May 24, 2020

Mr. John Spangler  
Human Resources Manager  
XYZ Corporation  
1234 Candyland Avenue  
Westminster, SC 29693

Dear Mr. Spangler:

I am writing to express my interest in the Maintenance Technician position listed on XYZ’s website. As you can see from my enclosed resume, I have many skills that would make me an excellent candidate for this position.

I have two years of practical, hands-on experience working in maintenance and repair at a local farming business. I operate equipment and identify and repair any technical issues. I hold high safety and maintenance standards and have excellent attention to detail. In addition, I am earning my degree in Industrial Electronics Technology at Tri-County Technical College and believe my formal education enhances my skills and experience. I know that XYZ is a top producer of quality flow metering devices, and I know that I could produce top quality work for your company.

I look forward to the possibility of joining XYZ as a maintenance technician. Please feel free to contact me by phone (864-123-4567) or email (jdsmith@tctc.edu) to answer any questions and possibly arrange an interview. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Smith

John Smith  
Enclosure
Interviewing

So, you have submitted your resume and cover letter with your job application. Next, you may hear from the company requesting a phone call/interview or an on-site interview. Here are some tips on how to prepare for and nail an interview.

**Phase One: Preparing for an Interview**
- Find out with whom you will be interviewing (including names and titles)
- Find out how long the interview will last so you can schedule it appropriately
- Learn as much as you can about the company through its website, an internet search, and through personal connections
- Learn the job description
- Identify what experience, skills, and training you have that qualify you for the job
- Prepare questions to ask the employer
- When you get an email or phone call, ask for a phone number to reach the interviewer in case you need to cancel, reschedule, or ask additional questions.

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<tr>
<th>Special Tips for a Phone Interview</th>
<th>Special Tips for an In-Person Interview</th>
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<td>Clarify if you are calling them or if they are calling you</td>
<td>Clarify when and where you are meeting the interviewer(s)</td>
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<td>Have a pen, paper, calendar, and all job materials in front of you</td>
<td>Understand directions and parking ahead of time</td>
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<td>Dress nicely to help you feel professional</td>
<td>Have a professional outfit and padfolio ready prior to the day of the interview</td>
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<td>Make sure you are in a quiet place</td>
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**Common Interview Questions**

**Introductory**
Tell me about yourself.
Why are you interested in this job/company?
What made you choose your major?
What are your strengths and your weaknesses?
Where you ever fired from a job? Did you ever quit a job?
What motivates you to do a good job?

**Skills**
Do you prefer working alone or on a team?
Describe how you work with others.
What is your biggest accomplishment?
What would be the most difficult part of this job for you?
What can you bring to the company?
What do you think are the most important qualities for this job?

**Situational**
Tell me about a time that you made a mistake and how you resolved it.
Tell me about a time you had a difficult customer or coworker.
Tell me about a time you had conflict at work.
Tell me about your greatest accomplishment.

**Closing**
What qualities make you the best candidate?
What can you contribute to our company?
Where do you see yourself in five years?
Why should we hire you?
What questions do you have for me?
## Interview Preparation Worksheet

While interviews may seem scary and unknown, you can actually do a lot of prep work ahead of time. Interviews are a way to sell your skills, experiences, and personality to an employer. Use this worksheet to help brainstorm your selling points ahead of time.

**Tell Me about Yourself.** You can expect to get this question so prepare your elevator pitch!

- **Education:**
- **Work Experience:**
- **Why you are interviewing for this position:**

### Five Skills from Job Description

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### Five Qualifications I Have

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### Five Experiences I Learned From

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### Five Skills/Strengths I Have

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**Why are you the best candidate for this position?**

- **Reason 1:**
- **Reason 2:**
- **Reason 3:**

### Questions I Have for the Interviewer

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**Finally, one of the best ways to prepare for interviewing is to practice!**

Schedule a mock interview with the Career and Employability Resources office or utilize Big Interview™, an online platform found at [www.tctc.biginterview.com](http://www.tctc.biginterview.com) to get feedback on your interviewing skills.
Phase Two: Effective Interviewing Skills

The Stages of an Interview

1. Arriving
   - Arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the interview - it’s better to wait in your car than to be rushed
   - Bring in a padfolio, pen, and any notes
   - Turn cell phone off or leave it in the car
   - Double-check appearance and use the bathroom, if needed
   - Check-in with the receptionist

2. Greeting
   - When the interviewer(s) enter the room, stand up and shake their hand while introducing yourself
   - Be polite and introduce yourself to anyone else you encounter
   - Make direct eye contact

3. Verbal Abilities
   - Don’t use filler words like “um,” “like,” or “you know” - these are particularly obvious during a phone interview!
   - Ask the interviewer to repeat the question if you didn’t understand the first time
   - Be comfortable pausing to think of an answer
   - Answer questions completely - most answers should last 1-2 minutes

4. Closing
   - Have 3-5 questions prepared to ask about the company and the job position
   - When you have no more questions about the job, you can ask about the timeline for hiring
   - When the interview ends, stand up, smile, and shake their hand again
   - Reaffirm your interest in the position and thank them for their time

The Panel Interview
Sometimes, you will interview with multiple company employees at the same time. Use all the same strategies as a regular interview, but try to shake hands and make eye contact with everyone on the panel. Also, write down everyone’s name so you can remember it later!

Behavioral Questions
Also called situational questions, these often start with the phrase “tell me about a time when” or “give me an example.” Employers ask these to see how candidates have performed in past situations so they understand how they might handle similar situations in the future.

We recommend using the STAR method:

- **Situation** - describe in detail the situation
- **Task** - explain what you needed to accomplish
- **Action** - what actions did you take
- **Results** - what happened as a result of the action you took

Questions for the Employer
Have several questions prepared ahead of time about the company or the job responsibilities. Here are some great ideas for questions to ask:

- What are the company’s goals for the next year?
- For the next ten years?
- What have previous employees in this position done successfully?
- What will my average work day/week look like?
- Who will I be working with in this position?
- What kind of supervision would I have?
- What advancement opportunities are available with this company?
Body Language

Voice
- Keep a friendly and enthusiastic tone
- Speak clearly and at an appropriate volume
- Avoid chewing gum, drinking, sneezing, and coughing

Posture
- Stand and shake the interviewer(s) hand
- Sit upright - slouching or hunching shows a lack of confidence and interest
- Relax and lean in toward your interviewer
- Keep hands still - resting them in your lap or on the table are good options
- Avoid fidgeting, touching your face, etc.
- Keep legs still as well - jiggling shows nervousness

Eye Contact
- Maintain direct eye contact while the interviewer is talking
- But, it’s not a staring contest! Blink, nod, and move your head naturally
- Looking down may show insecurity

Dressing for the Interview
Humans make initial judgments based on our appearance. For interviews, dress for success is an applicable phrase!

As a general rule, dress one level nicer than you would need to dress for an actual work day at that company. You can also call ahead to see if you need specific work gear for a tour or interview.

The Likeability Factor
Employers will interview many qualified and highly skilled candidates for a position. So how do they make a decision on the best candidate to hire?

An interviewer’s impression of you goes a long way. Being enthusiastic, courteous, friendly, and confident makes a huge difference in whether or not you land a job. Your likeability is perhaps more important than the actual answers to your questions.

Employers want a candidate who gets along well with others and will be a positive influence in the workplace. So go in with a friendly attitude, and don’t forget to smile!

Women
- Wear a suit or a dress for an office job
- A conservative blouse and slacks are fine for non-office jobs
- Wear low-heeled, close-toed shoes
- Keep makeup and jewelry simple
- Nail polish should be in a neutral color or not there at all

Men
- Wear a suit or sport coat for office jobs
- Slacks or khakis and a collared shirt are fine for non-office jobs
- Wear dark socks, dress shoes, and a belt
- Have tidy facial hair (or go clean-shaven)

Hygiene Tips for Men and Women
- Shower before the interview
- Wear anti-perspirant, but avoid wearing strong perfumes or colognes
- Make sure your nails are clean(trimmed
- Attire should be neat, wrinkle-free, and should fit you well
Phase Three: Interview Follow-Up

At this point, you have concluded either your phone or in-person interview. Let’s look at some of the next steps to ensure you make a positive impression on an employer.

The Thank You Note
You’ve already thanked the employer at the end of your interview. So what’s the point of thanking them again? The thank you note (or email) is designed to demonstrate your thoughtfulness, professionalism, and interest in the position.

What Should I Include?
The note should thank them for the time spent interviewing you and for considering you in the process. It should briefly highlight your qualifications for the job and reaffirm your interest in the position. It should conclude with a professional salutation, such as sincerely. And, of course, your name!

Thank You Options
1. Bringing thank you notes with you to the interview. After the interview concludes, go to a quiet place to write. Hand the notes to the receptionist or another individual who can make sure they make it back to all of your interviewers.

2. Mailing notes. Type or print a thank you note on high quality paper and mail it as soon as possible after your interview.

3. Email a thank you. If you have illegible handwriting or can’t write a handwritten note, email is a perfectly acceptable way to follow-up. Send the email shortly after your interview.

Phase Four (optional): Testing

Some jobs may require you to take a test as part of the interview process. Here are some types of tests that you may come across:

- **Aptitude** - predict your ability to learn and perform job tasks
- **Practical** - test a specific skill or ability
- **Literacy** - measure reading and math levels
- **Personality** - evaluate mental and emotional makeup (used often in law enforcement)
- **Honesty/Integrity** - evaluate the trustworthiness of an applicant
- **Physical ability** - measure strength and stamina for jobs requiring physical performance
- **Medical** - determine general physical fitness
- **Drug** - tests for presence of illegal drugs

How Can I Prepare for Tests? For most of these tests, you can’t study for them. They are intended to measure your natural abilities or characteristics. You can prepare for practical, literacy, or physical tests by practicing exercises similar to what you will be tested on.

Even if you can’t study for a test, there are some general test-taking strategies, such as:
- Verify what materials you should or can bring (such as pencil, ID, water, etc.)
- Call ahead if you require test-taking accommodations
- Get good sleep and eat breakfast
- Arrive early to the test site
- Keep track of time during the test
- Find out if guessing is penalized. If not, guess even if you don’t know the answer
- Get help in interpreting your scores
The Interviewer’s Checklist

While there is no magic formula that will get you a job, many employers will use a checklist or evaluation form when interviewing candidates. A bad hiring decision is costly for an employer, so they want to make sure they are choosing the best (and safest) candidate. Let’s look at what positive and negative characteristics an interviewer may use to evaluate candidates.

Positive Factors
- Familiarity with company/evidence of research
- Ability to communicate well orally (staying on subject, articulating thoughts, etc.)
- Ability to use proper grammar and professional language
- Asking relevant and thoughtful questions
- Appearing confident and friendly during interview

Negative Factors
- Talking too much or too little
- Inability to fully answer questions
- Bringing up compensation and benefits
- Fidgeting or appearing uncomfortable
- Speaking in unprofessional language (ex. “yeah” vs “yes”)
- Using contradictory statements
- Lacking courtesy or manners
- Being critical of past employers

Common Employer Ratings, on a scale of 1-10

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appearance</th>
<th>Conversation</th>
<th>Demeanor (manners, attitude)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental Alertness (quick reaction time)</td>
<td>Poise and Confidence</td>
<td>Aggressiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judgment (appropriateness)</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Voice (tone, volume)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Work Potential</td>
<td>Education</td>
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</table>

Common Shortcomings of Job Applicants

We’ve covered a wide range of skills that help you have a successful interview. Now, let’s look at some commonly reported reasons employers DON’T hire a candidate. It is difficult to be critical of ourselves, but try your best to identify and improve any of these issues that you may have.

- Poor attitude
- Lack of interest or knowledge
- Poor grooming habits
- Inability to communicate well verbally and in writing
- Lack of specific technical skills
- Lack of reading skills
- Lack of enthusiasm
- No purpose or career goals
- Over-emphasis on money
- Poor scholastic attendance or performance
- Lack of tact and maturity
- Lacking social skills and understanding
- Poor eye contact
- Limp handshake
- Mistakes in resume, cover letter, or application
- Lack of knowledge or experience in field
- No interest in company
- Objection to travel or relocation
- Being late
- Not responding adequately to questions
- Lack of transportation
Post-Interview Steps

What Happens Next?
After you have interviewed and sent a thank you note, the waiting game begins. Occasionally, employers may share their hiring timeline with you in the interview. If not, this part of the hiring process can be very frustrating. If it has been over a week since you interviewed, you may call the hiring manager and ask when you can expect to hear whether or not you have received an offer. Be prepared for waiting - it can often take weeks for employers to extend a job offer.

Handling Rejection: Two Kinds

Rejection from YOU
Interviewing goes both ways, and you may decide at any point in the job application process that a particular position isn’t right for you. You are under no obligation to accept a job that you’ve applied or interviewed for. If you’re not comfortable with the job - whether that be the job responsibilities, the pay, or insecurities about the company - then it’s okay to reject an offer or to withdraw from the interview process.

Rejection from the Employer
At any point in the job application process, you may receive an email or a phone call from an employer telling you that you are no longer being considered for a position. If you receive a rejection, it likely means the employer hired someone who was a better fit for the company or who had the skills or personality that they were looking for. Rejection is okay - other jobs are out there that will be a better fit for you.

Negotiating an Offer
The job search process can be long and frustrating. But if you’re persistent and you stayed positive despite rejection, you’ll eventually get a job offer. Now, the ball is in your court. You have the power to accept or reject the offer, and - if you’re savvy and willing to take some risks - you can influence the conditions under which you agree to go to work.

Tips for Negotiation
- Thank the employer for the offer and tell them you are interested in the position
- Ask them to repeat or email you the specific compensation and benefits
- Highlight your experience and skills and explain that you have a lot to offer
- Ask for the benefit that you would like to negotiate. Only ask for slightly more than was offered - you don’t want to be unreasonable!
- Employers may not have any flexibility with salary or benefits, so decide ahead of time whether you would accept the job if none of your negotiations can be met

What Can I Try to Negotiate?
- Salary (most easily/commonly negotiated)
- Leave or vacation time
- Continuing education, such as trainings or college courses
- Start date
- Relocation or moving expenses

Other Important Benefits
While typically not negotiable, make sure these benefits meet your needs before accepting a position.
- Retirement plans and 401ks
- Health insurance
- Ability to add dependents
Starting a Job

Now that you have landed a job, it is critically important that you make a good impression in the first few days and weeks of your new job. Some companies even have a probationary period for the first several months (or even the first year), so be sure you are aware of your new company’s policy.

In addition, you are now building your professional reputation within your field. Here are some tips on how to build a positive reputation and have good relations with your boss and coworkers.

1. Good Attendance
   For the first several weeks, arrive at work early or on time and don’t miss any days. Nothing can affect your reputation more than being late or leaving work early. People will assume you are lazy, not dedicated to working, or unreliable.

2. Be Humble and Ready to Learn
   Come in with an open mind. No one likes a new employee who acts like a know-it-all. Learn as much as you can during the first few months. Don’t be afraid to ask questions or ask for help if you don’t know how to do something yet.

3. Take Notes and Organize Yourself
   You learn a LOT of information in a short period of time. To help you remember, take notes at employee orientation or other times when a coworker or boss teaches you something new. Find a way to organize and retain this new info.

4. Avoid Company Politics and Gossip
   Another good way to make a bad impression or ruin your reputation is to engage in rumors and gossip. Steer clear of individuals who gossip and do not get pulled in to negativity. Keep your nose clean, particularly at the beginning.

5. Separate Work and Personal Life
   To make a good impression, do not complete personal business during company time. Be respectful and focus on your work. If you’re bored, ask what you can be doing to help rather than checking your phone or browsing online.

6. Build Relationships with Coworkers
   Be friendly and get to know everyone at your workplace. Avoid uncomfortable topics, like politics or personal relationships. Having good workplace connections is critical to having a happy and productive work environment.

If your job doesn’t live up to expectations…that’s okay. Stick with it for at least six months - it could get better! Whether you’re satisfied with your new job or not, it’s always important to be thinking about the future. Keep your skills and resume up-to-date and engage in as many training opportunities as possible. If you make the most of your first job, you’ll probably be able to advance into more satisfying and higher-paying jobs.

In Conclusion

Getting a job requires a lot of effort and energy. At times, it can be discouraging if you aren’t hearing back from employers. This guide can help make you successful in ALL parts of the job search. You have already put in an enormous amount of effort into your education, so you owe it to yourself to turn that education into landing a fulfilling job!

Good luck with your job search, and please come see us if we can help with any step of the process!

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