



READY
AIM
HiRED

The Go-to-Guide for Today's Job Hunter

Resumes & Cover Letters | The Interview | The Offer

LOOKING FOR A GREAT NEW JOB?



Looking for a great new job? Venturing out in today's market with yesterday's advice and tools can load the odds against you.

Ready, Aim, Hired! is a straight-up guide to finding and landing the right job, based on the insights and experience of CareerBuilder.com corporate clients and users.

- Find out what hiring companies want – and how to make it to the short list.
- Check out the latest search tools to expedite the job-search process and maximize your visibility to employers.
- Get advice on resumes, cover letters, interviews and follow-up techniques.
- Then learn how to determine whether a job offer is right for you.

The record shows that the job goes not necessarily to the perfect candidate, but to the person who knows the most about how to get hired. **So let's get busy...**

START WITH THE BASICS



Resumes and Cover Letters

It's impossible to overstate the importance of your resume and its partner, the cover letter. They can either be your ticket to an interview or become intimately acquainted with a lot of recycle bins. Any hiring manager will tell you: Most resumes and cover letters read like chloroform in print. Here's how to write resumes and cover letters that get read – and get results:

Resumes That Work

Your resume is your introduction to a prospective employer – advertising what you have to offer in terms of skills, experience and accomplishments. Its ultimate purpose, however, is to land you an interview. Follow these steps to a winning resume:

- 1 Lead with a career summary.** Kick off with a brief career summary or introductory statement that makes it clear what type of position you're seeking and why you're qualified for the job. This statement will serve as the foundation for the rest of the document – as well as a repository for keywords.
- 2 Intrigue the reader.** Don't just list the jobs you've held; illustrate how you achieved success with facts and figures. Resume-writing professionals recommend using the PARS formula: Describe a Problem, the Action you took, the Results and the Skills you applied.
- 3 Don't dwell on ancient history.** Prospective employers don't want to know about your sixth grade paper route. Allocate more space to your most recent and relevant jobs and considerably less to jobs from the distant past.

“Don't dwell on ancient history”



Don't Get Lost in Translation: The Key to Keywords

Keywords are specific words or phrases job seekers use to search for jobs and employers use to find the right candidates. When applying for a job online, remember, most companies use applicant tracking software, which scans for keywords relating to skills, training, degrees, job titles and experience. To make it through the screen, you need to present your qualifications as if the reader is comparing the words on the resume to a list of desired qualifications

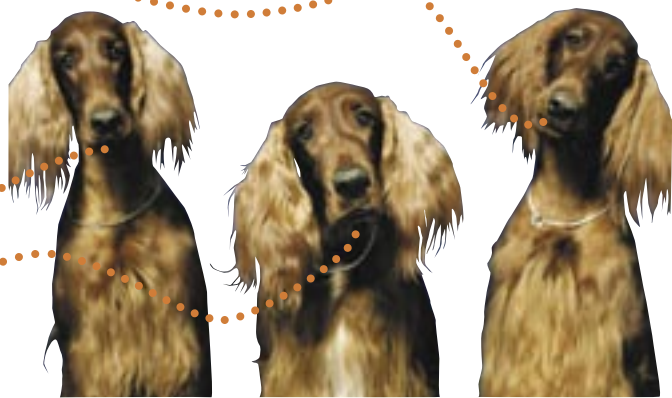
Say the Magic Words

Listed below are some of the more popular keywords making the rounds today. The words you should use depend on your industry, profession and the specific job you are applying for.

Strategic planning	Product positioning
Performance and productivity	Investor and board relations
Improvement	Oral and written communications
Organizational design	Problem-solving
Infrastructure development	Decision-making
New media	MBA
Internet	Project management
E-commerce	Customer retention
Change management	Business development
Team-building	Corporate vision
Leadership	Long-range planning
Competitive market	Cost reduction

- 4 **Play to your audience.** One size does not fit all. Take the time to research the company and position and show how your qualifications can contribute to the organization.
- 5 **Who let the blogs out?!** A resume is not the place for getting personal. Never include information about your age, race, marital status, vital statistics, religion or political affiliations. Include your interests or hobbies only if they're relevant to the job.
- 6 **Lose the bling.** Complicated formatting and unusual fonts can turn into electronic gobbledygook. Stick to classic typefaces – Arial, Times New Roman, or Verdana – that are easily read by electronic scanners, e-mail systems and human eyes.
- 7 **This isn't the State of the Union address.** Write in sound bites, presenting your information in clear, concise language. And, unless you're the president, limit your resume to one or two pages.
- 8 **Keep it real.** Background checks are more thorough than ever. Don't misrepresent your past – it can come back to haunt you.
- 9 **Be a stickler.** From the would-be administrative assistant who claimed to be a "rabid typist" to the executive who boasted that he was "instrumental in ruining the entire operation," misspellings communicate that you are lazy or just not the sharpest knife in the drawer.

Who let the
blogs out?!



The Cover Letter: Don't Let Your Resume Leave Home Without It

A resume without a cover letter is like Mary-Kate without Ashley: not quite complete – or nearly as compelling. Cover letters are one of the most under-utilized components of the job-hunting ritual, with today's job seekers seldom giving them the time and attention they deserve.

To make sure your cover letter gives 'em some flava:

- 1 Take names.** Directing your resume to "To Whom it May Concern," is like talkin' to the hand. Take the time to call and learn the name of the hiring manager or recruiter.
- 2 Cut to the chase.** Say why you're writing in the first paragraph, then move immediately to your qualifications. If you were referred to the company by an employee, be sure to mention this in the first line.
- 3 Say what's in it for them.** Keep the requirements of the job in mind and address them specifically. Remember: "It's not what the company can do for you; it's what you can do for the company."

- 4 Work it!** Back up your qualifications with specific examples that speak to your skills and accomplishments.
- 5 Connect the dots.** If your resume shows gaps in your employment or raises other red flags, let your cover letter come to the rescue by explaining any interruptions.
- 6 Never serve spam.** Customize each cover letter for its targeted audience. Hiring managers can spot a mass-mailing a mile away. Often, they'll send it straight to the recycle bin.

☞ Make sure your cover letter gives 'em some flava ☞



The Cover Letter: Don't Let Your Resume Leave Home Without It (continued)

- 7 Take the initiative.** Wrap up your cover letter with a promise to contact the company, such as: "I will call you next week to schedule a convenient time for us to meet." Then follow through!
- 8 Keep it brief.** Think four to five paragraphs.
- 9 Tell them where they can find you.** Under your signature, skip a few lines and include your contact information. That way, if your cover letter and resume get separated, the company can still get hold of you.

Wrap up your cover letter with a promise to contact the company



LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

The Search

An online job search can be a veritable treasure trove of leads and connections to get you an interview at warp speed. Here's how to surf for jobs easily and effectively.



Searching With CareerBuilder.com

When you log onto CareerBuilder.com, you'll have instant access to tens of thousands of employers and listings. And you can apply in real time.

Look sharp. Do a **Quick Search** by entering a keyword (company or job title), location and job type and pull up specialized results. Or, try an **Advanced Search** that lets you enter multiple cities, job types, required education and more.

Look in your inbox. Sign up for job alerts, which automatically e-mail to you new job postings that match your searches on a designated day.

Look the other way. Narrow or expand your search results by miles, job category and salary ranges. Filter your results by excluding certain criteria. Sort job postings by date – see what's new today, this week and this month.

Look again ... and again and again. Like the results you see? Take advantage of saved searches that remember your job criteria every time you come back to My CareerBuilder. You can also track how often your resume has appeared in employers' searches.



Look sharp

Go Full On: Using Your Resume Online

Posting your resume on CareerBuilder.com is free and takes just minutes when you use the site's salaried or skilled and hourly resume building tools.

Save yourself. You can create a free MyCareerBuilder account and upload up to five versions of your resume and cover letter. This allows you to appeal to different employers and apply to jobs with just a few clicks of the mouse.

Go public or stay private. Want employers to find you? The **Be Visible** option makes your resume searchable in the V.I.P. database and gives you the most exposure to the broadest employer audience possible. Don't want your boss to find out you're looking? Choose **Be Anonymous**, which lets you post to the public resume database without your contact information being displayed; or click on **Be Choosy**, which lets you post your resume so you can easily apply for jobs, but does not allow employers to access it.

Back it up. When applying to a job directly by e-mail, paste a text version of your resume into the body of the e-mail with your cover letter as well as attach it. This ensures the hiring manager will receive a readable, uncorrupted version of your resume even if your computers' operating systems aren't compatible.



Get more exposure

Cool Tools

Sometimes we all could use a little extra help. If you'd like to jump-start or super-charge your search, check out these tools available on CareerBuilder.com:

Make your resume as brilliant as you are. *Stellar Resume* will team you with a board-certified writer, who specializes in resumes for your field and experience level. Following a personal interview, you'll receive a resume draft within days.

Get it in the right hands. *Resume Direct* gets your resume directly in the hands of the right recruiters. You can choose from hundreds of job categories nationwide – letting you target your resume to your desired field and location.

Get more exposure. When you get a *Resume Upgrade*, employers who search CareerBuilder.com's database of more than 11 million resumes will find your personal profile toward the top of their list.

Going solo? Whether you're freelancing between jobs or committed to going it alone, *Sologig* enables members to create personal profiles of their skills that are searchable by thousands of companies in need of outsourced expertise. You'll also have access to a database of thousands of assignment postings.

Get the fax! CareerBuilder.com's *FaxResume* service lets you fax your resume right from your home computer to employers! You'll avoid getting lost in e-mail clutter and save time and trips to the copy store.

Check your back. Did you know the #1 reason a qualified candidate doesn't get the job offer is due to a poor reference check? Check your own background report with *SureCheck* and be sure! You'll stand out from other candidates and let employers know you're already screened.

Forget-Me-Nots

Finally, it pays to keep in mind these finer points:

What's your sign? PartyAnimal@hotmail.com and JLo4ever@aol.com are not professional e-mail addresses. Try JackJohnson2005@mail.com instead.

They'll hear you before they see you. Do you want your rendition of "867-5309 (Jenny Jenny)" to be your future boss' first impression of you? Your voicemail message should be all business.

Get the lead out. Act quickly. Most jobs are filled within 30 days. Check for new listings daily and apply ASAP to get in on the action.

Push your luck. The description says five years experience when you only have three? Apply anyway, you never know.

Drop names. Don't name your resume "MyResume.doc." Make it easy for the recruiter to identify you by using your name in the title: "CarrieBradshawResume.doc."

Push your luck



HOW TO PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT



The Interview

The interview is the highest-stakes round of the job hunting game. You've made it this far; now you have two objectives: to convince the employer you're the best candidate and to get the information you need to decide if this is the right job and company for you. Here's how to play your cards right and get noticed (in a good way).

Will You Ace It – or Get Flushed?

What's the biggest mistake you ever made during a job interview? Show up late? Insult the interviewer? How about eat a snack?

CareerBuilder.com asked hiring managers across the country to share the most memorable blunders that caused them to pass on a particular candidate. Have a laugh. Then learn from their examples:

"The candidate knew nothing about the job being offered, not even the correct title."

DON'T come in clueless. A sure-fire way to lose a job opportunity is offering up a blank stare when the interviewer asks you what you know about the position or the company.

DO make yourself an instant expert. Research the position, company, competitors and industry; look at the company's Web site and familiarize yourself with its products, press releases, financial statements, work culture and senior management.

"He said there were some days he just couldn't give 100 percent."

DON'T sell yourself short. Ix-nay any alk-tay (or talk) that could be interpreted as a lack of commitment or ability to put your skills into action.

DO highlight accomplishments and quantify results, when possible, to show the dedication and value you can bring to the table.

"The candidate told me the only reason he was here was because his mom was making him get a job."

DON'T get cocky. Candidates who act disinterested or too cool or arrogant are a turn-off.

DO show you're excited about the opportunity. One of the best ways to demonstrate enthusiasm is to come in with ideas you can execute on in the new role.

“She said her last employer was too demanding and had poor leadership – so she called in sick a lot.”

DON'T talk about fight club. Avoid saying anything negative about past work situations. You'll most likely be labeled a whiner or difficult to work with.

DO say you are thankful for the opportunity you were given at your previous employer, but are looking for a position more aligned with your career goals.

“One candidate showed up in a mini skirt. Another one came in with ripped jeans and no shirt.”

DON'T dress for the disco. You have one chance to make a good first impression and sequined pumps or a heavy metal T-shirt is not the way to go.

DO err on the conservative. Even if the company has a business casual environment, you don't want to appear casual about the opportunity. The safe bet is a business suit, or depending on the gig, a pair of khakis and a button-down shirt.

“The candidate actually answered her cell phone.”

DON'T get caught in the e-leash. Cell phones and pagers are major pet peeves of hiring managers.

DO turn off all electronic devices or leave them at home altogether. If your pager or cell phone accidentally goes off, apologize and turn it off quickly. If you have a possible emergency situation, make sure to alert the interviewer ahead of time.

“The applicant asked if we drug-tested and whether we gave advance notice.”

DON'T get caught with your pants on fire. Lying or acting suspiciously gives the impression that you are dishonest and is often cause for immediate dismissal of an application.

DO keep it real. Honesty is always the best policy when it comes to your work experience, skill set, accomplishments, resume gaps and so on.

The Usual Suspects ...

Almost every interview has them: the standard lines employers never grow tired of. Here's a quick list of the most commonly asked interview questions and tips for fielding them.

Tell me about yourself.

Skip your hobbies or favorite color and focus on only those career highlights that are most pertinent to the job.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Simple answer: In an increasingly critical role within my field, hopefully working for this company if you give me the opportunity.

Why did you leave your last job?

“I felt like I was working with a bunch of monkeys” isn't the way to go here. Rather, say, “It was a great learning experience; however I'm looking for new challenges in order to grow.”

What is your greatest strength and weakness?

Your strength should be something specifically related to the position. As for your weakness, avoid hanging yourself by choosing a skill that's not important to the job. For example, say: “I'd like to be more proficient in: Spanish ... Excel ... public speaking, etc.”

How would your last boss describe you?

Accountable, self-motivated, creative, resourceful, prolific, team player, easy-going, dedicated, critical thinker, goal-oriented, graceful under pressure – take your pick.

What would you say is your greatest professional accomplishment?

A nice way to put an extra toot in your horn is to lead up to the greatest accomplishment with one or two other examples. Tangible measurements tend to resonate more than anecdotal, so talk up your numbers!

Why do you want to work for this company?

Saying, “Because it's the best thing since sliced bread,” probably won't cut it. Make sure to reference the company's competitive standing, growth potential, new developments and because you feel the experience will prove mutually beneficial.

What to Ask the Interviewer

Remember, this is a two-way conversation. You are interviewing the company as much as the company is interviewing you. Hiring managers expect good candidates to ask good questions. Here are some smart ones to pose:

- How would you describe your management style?
- How would you describe your work culture?
- What type of employee excels here?
- What immediate concerns do you want addressed in this position?
- How often do you provide feedback?
- What type of career development and advancement opportunities do you provide?
- How would my work performance be evaluated?
- How long have you been with the company?
- Are there any cutbacks planned?

“I felt like I was working with a bunch of monkeys”



STAY ON THE BALL

Following Up

Just because the interview is over, it doesn't mean your work here is done. Here's how to follow up and stay in the running.

Always Send a Thank You Letter (or Two, or Three)

A timely thank you letter shows a prospective employer you're on the ball and excited about the position. Sending it within 24 hours of the interview will help keep you and your good qualities fresh in the interviewer's mind. (Besides, it's easier to write a compelling letter while you can still remember the details of the interview.)

If it's a particularly long search process, stay in touch – and top-of-mind – by sending a second letter while the company is seeing other applicants. If you've been turned down for the job, send a third letter, thanking them for the opportunity and letting them know you're still interested should other positions open up.

Timely thank you letter



The 411 on Thank You Notes

It all sounds so simple...until you sit down to write one. Before you get started, take a look at these common questions job seekers have about thank you letters:

Q. Who should get one?

A: Every person you interviewed with should receive a thank you note as well as the person who set up the interview or the person who referred you if applicable.

Q. Is it okay to send a "thank you" e-mail?

A: To make the best impression, send a thank you letter the old fashioned way: through the mail. However if the company's time frame for making a decision is short, it's acceptable to e-mail.

Q. Should the letter be handwritten or typed?

A: It's preferable to send a formal letter that has been typed and printed on professional stationery.

Q. What should I say?

A: Your letter should be about three paragraphs long: First, thank the person for taking the time to meet with you and let him or her know you enjoyed learning more about the company and the position.

Use the second paragraph to sell yourself again. Reiterate key qualities that would be of value to the company, and point out experience you have that is relevant to the open position. You can also add information you neglected to mention during your interview.

In your final paragraph, tell the recipient again that you're interested in the job and would be happy to come in for a follow-up interview or answer additional questions.

So, Wassup? Checking on the Status of a Position

Waiting to hear back from a potential employer can be torture. How did the interview go? Did they get your follow-up letter? It's past the date they'd promised to get back to you – have they made a decision?

Following up shows your initiative, interest and sense of responsibility – qualities employers love! Try these effective ways to check on the status of the decision and find out where you stand:

Get an up-front understanding. At the end of the interview, ask about the hiring process, time frame for the decision and when you should follow up.

Exterminate the ants in your pants. The hiring process generally takes longer than employers expect. If an interviewer says you'll have an answer in two weeks – and four have passed – it's perfectly acceptable to check in to see if the timeline has changed and to reiterate your interest and qualifications.

Don't blow the bigger, better deal. If you have a job offer in hand, it's okay to let another organization you haven't heard from yet know. But beware of sounding cocky and using an offer from one company as a ploy to gain an offer from another. It could backfire and put you out of the running.

Take a hint. If you've heard nothing despite your best efforts, it's probably time to move on.

Exterminate the ants
in your pants



THEY REALLY LIKE YOU

The Offer

They like you! They really like you!
But before you blurt out, "I'll take it!" – grab ahold of yourself.

Sizing Up an Offer

Caviar vs. ramen noodles. While money isn't everything, be sure your weekly paycheck will afford you a comfortable living. Understand how you will be paid, and don't forget to consider any quarterly or yearly bonuses that may help sweeten the deal.

Road rage. The proximity of your new office can make a big difference in your work/life balance. Spending hours each day crammed into a bus or stopped in traffic can get old fast.

Got dental? As a rule of thumb, benefits are worth 25 to 30 percent of your salary. Does your employer offer dental or vision coverage? What would your monthly contribution and deductible be? Also, see if your employer offers a flexible spending account for your healthcare costs.

Taking some time off. Note how many vacation and sick days you are entitled to each year. And look to see if you're allowed any additional unpaid time off.

Think long-term. Check to see if the employer matches your 401(k) contributions. Companies typically match your contribution at 50 cents on the dollar for up to 6 percent of your salary. Some companies also offer tuition reimbursement if you advance your education.

Weigh the extra perks. Don't forget the extras like fitness club memberships, corporate discounts or a company credit card or car.

☞ **Weigh the extra perks** ☞



☞ **Get it in writing** ☞

Casual everyday. Consider the company culture. Think about the employer's mission, typical work days and overall atmosphere. If you prefer suits to jeans, you might not fit in well at a super-casual company.

9-to-5 grind. Do you know exactly what type of work you'll be doing day-to-day? Also take note of how many hours you'll be expected to work each week – and whether you get overtime pay if you put in more than 40.

Managing your manager. Will your new boss be there for guidance, or will he/she be a slave driver? Be sure your work style and your boss's management style can co-exist peacefully.

Movin' on up. Does this job offer career advancement opportunities? A company that offers training seminars and frequently promotes from within could set you on the fast track.

Get it in writing. For your own protection, make sure you get the offer in writing before you quit your current job or inform other potential employers.

Now get started on that job search!