



# Maximize

# Your

# Job Search

**Are you new to the job market?  
Looking for a career change?  
Recently unemployed?**

Regardless of your situation, this guide is for anyone making an employment transition. You will find proven, insider tips gathered from career transition professionals that will help you make every contact count, focus your efforts, market your skills and maximize your job search.

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[labor.idaho.gov](http://labor.idaho.gov)

# Getting Started

## First Things First – Attitude Assessment

A job loss or career change can affect every aspect of your life. Work is not something we do simply to earn a living. Often people allow their jobs to define them as individuals. For this reason, losing a job may impact your self-image and your lifestyle.

Unemployment affects everyone in your family. Talk to your family about how you are feeling or what you are doing and ask for their assistance in conserving financial resources. By working through this together, you can build your family's self-esteem, sense of competence and trust in yourselves as a family unit.

As you begin a new job search, take some time to think through your situation.

- » Are you employed but want a different job or one more suited to your skills and education?
- » Have you recently lost your job?
- » Are you re-entering the work force after an absence such as staying at home with children or nursing a family member?

Under any of these circumstances, this can be a tremendous opportunity to pursue a new career path. Being aware of your emotional reaction to this change is critically important to maintaining the kind of positive attitude you will need to successfully move forward.

## Reasons You Want to Find a New Job

- » Not challenged, bored
- » Underemployed
- » Need to leave a stressful environment that you cannot control
- » Need to make more money
- » Want more responsibility
- » Lost your job from downsizing, closure or any other number of reasons

## Reactions to Losing a Job

- » Anger
- » Lack of self-confidence and esteem
- » Anxiety
- » Grief
- » Embarrassment, shame
- » Sense of hopelessness

## Examine Your Recent Work History

Take some time to think through the past. Get an accurate grasp on other job experiences to help define where you are and where you want to be.

Things I did well at my previous jobs:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Things that I could have improved:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Where I can find help during this process:

1. [www.labor.idaho.gov](http://www.labor.idaho.gov)
- 2.
- 3.



## Finding Work Takes Effort

Looking for work can be a lot of work, especially if you haven't been in the job market for a while or you are changing careers. Today, job searching is rarely a one-time event. The U.S. Census Bureau found that workers in the United States stay with the same employer an average of 4.1 years. Learning the techniques of job searching is an invaluable and evolving lifetime skill.

## To Make the Job Search More Productive

- » Keep your skills current. Maintain an updated list of responsibilities and training you've had.
- » Update your résumé when you have gained new skills, abilities and accomplishments.
- » Get the training or experience you will need to move up in your field or to change careers.
- » Keep a list of awards, accomplishments and recognitions.

## Embrace the Change

Beginning a successful job search requires optimism, confidence and energy. In looking for a new job or career, it helps to first acknowledge the feelings that will shape your attitude. Get them out in the open. Just doing this much will likely reduce your tension. Putting it in writing can be a great way to address your feelings and help you move forward.

Ways my feelings affect me negatively:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Ways to handle my feelings positively:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What is my motivation?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**“The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one.”**

- Mark Twain



# Identifying Skills

## Skills are the Foundation

Employers want to know who you are, where you've been and what you have to offer. It can be difficult to identify your own skills that are gained through employment, community service, volunteerism and life experience. A skill isn't always something that requires years of formal education and experience to develop.

## Types of Skills

### Job Content Skills

Skills specific to a job or occupation. Some examples include:

- » An administrative assistant is skilled in typing, filing, correspondence and telephone protocol.
- » A salesperson's skills could include customer service, order processing and record keeping.
- » Accountants would be skilled in accounts payable/receivable, calculations and tax preparation.
- » A nurse is skilled in administering medications, taking and recording vital signs and monitoring patient needs.
- » Construction workers may have specialties or a variety of skills such as welding, framing, setting tile, roofing, carpentry, concrete work, electrical and plumbing.

### Transferable Skills

Transferable skills can be applied to a variety of activities. They transfer from one activity to another. These are characteristics that can be strengthened to become a skill. Examples include:

- » In your last job, you managed retail sales people. Your management skills could transfer to managing call center customer service agents or managing outside sales representatives.
- » If you were a stay-at-home parent, you have skills in budgeting, cooking, child development, property management and problem-solving, to name a few. These are skills that can be useful in many types of occupations from day care to office management.

### Personal Skills

Day-to-day skills people use when relating to others.

- » Flexibility
- » Punctuality
- » Persistency
- » Creativity
- » Reliability

You are:

- » Hardworking
- » Resourceful
- » Diligent
- » Organized

**A skill is anything you can do right now!**



## List three to four skills relevant to the job you are seeking that represent each of the three types.

Job Specific Skills. These are the foundation of your qualifications.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Personal Skills. These add another layer of value to an employer.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Transferrable Skills. These demonstrate your potential.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Use these lists to create an effective résumé and develop your sales pitch for interviewing.

## Define Your Terms

You possess a distinct set of skills, values and characteristics, and your situation is unique. The following questions will help you define your options based on your situation. Although answering some of these questions may require a little research, they will also help you identify how and where to start focusing your job search efforts.

- » How much do I need to earn?
- » Can I wait for the “perfect” job, or do I need to take anything that is available?
- » What kind of work am I able to do?
- » What kind of work do I want to do?
- » What occupations require my skills?
- » What types of jobs are available in my area?
- » Is relocating an option?
- » Do I need training?
- » Do I have the time and access to resources to get training?

## Skills Always in Demand

- » Communication - Express your thoughts clearly and professionally.
- » Intelligence - Understand the work at hand and function as a productive employee.
- » Initiative - Identify and take ownership of work that needs to be done.
- » Self-confidence - Know yourself and your capabilities.
- » Energy level - Remain productive and engaged as long as it takes to get the job done.
- » Flexibility - Adapt and adjust to changing situations.
- » Conflict Resolution - Remain calm while handling stressful and tense situations.
- » Leadership - Guide and direct others.
- » Creativity - Envision new and inventive solutions.
- » Interpersonal skills - Bring out the best in others.

## Be prepared to provide concrete examples of how you have used your skills.

- » Identify the skill
- » Cite a situation where you used this skill and how.
- » Describe the circumstances. Provide details.
- » Reinforce the example with measurable data such as numbers, dollars, percentages, volume.
- » State your results. How did the employer or colleague benefit?



# Set Your Goals

Review the answers to your questions you answered in the “Identifying Skills” section and identify the best job or career options for you. Establish short and long-term goals that put you in pursuit of those jobs or careers.

A goal can be simple and short term such as posting your résumé online, or longer term and more significant such as completing an educational program. Regardless, identifying goals, writing them down, tracking progress and setting timelines for yourself are critical components to keeping up the momentum during your transition.

## Make the Most of Your Time

Landing that new job requires an organized, focused and consistent effort. To help manage your time:

### Stay Focused

- » There will be distractions. Many things may sound better than looking for work, but your job search must be your primary focus. The results you achieve will depend on the effort you invest.
- » Let your family and friends know that finding a job is your primary focus. This will help minimize distractions.
- » Challenges and frustrations in the job search process can make you lose your focus for a while so use each experience to polish your approach and improve your marketing campaign.

### Research

- » Research the job market and employers in your area through personal contacts, online resources, newspapers, publications, current and past employees. Make informed decisions about the direction of your job search based on facts rather than feelings.

### Plan Ahead

- » Create a specific schedule of what needs to be accomplished each day.
- » Remain flexible and modify your plans accordingly.

### Keep Track

- » Use day planners, calendars and online tools to keep records of your job search activities. Good records will help you capitalize on all opportunities. Your personal profile page on IdahoWorks provides great online tools for keeping track of your search.
- » Check your progress daily and ensure your goals are realistic.

### Take Care of Yourself

- » Build personal time into your schedule to rejuvenate.
- » Eat well, sleep well and be active to maintain your health.
- » Reward yourself for accomplishing goals.



**“The most important thing about a goal is having one”**

**-Geoffrey F. Abert, 1079-1142**

## Sample Schedule

<b>Monday</b>	8:30 am	Attend Job Search Workshop at the Idaho Department of Labor
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<b>Tuesday</b>	8:00 am	Compile necessary information to build resumes and cover letters (employer names/dates, education, experience/results, special awards, recognition, etc)
	10:30 am	Research employers of interest, compile employer info useful in resumes and interviews
	1:00 am	Prepare multiple resumes targeted towards specific employers/jobs/industries

<b>Wednesday</b>	8:00 am	Gather portfolio including copies of generic resume, note pad, pens and business cards to take to networking group
	10:00 am	Attend professional networking group at the Idaho Department of Labor
	1:00 pm	Write down names, potential job leads & follow-up notes from networking group
	2:00 pm	Follow up on potential leads generated from networking group/record contacts, names, numbers and additional follow-up dates

## Sample Job Search Record

Date	Business	Contact Person	Method	Address/Phone/E-mail	What	Results	Follow up Needed	When
Jan. 1	ABC Health Systems	Jane Smith	E-mail	jsmith@hs.org	Inquired about info interview	Referred to Steve Strong, HR Manager	Call Steve 555-5555 to schedule interview	JAN 4 - 3:30 PM (added reminder in cell phone)
Jan. 1	Inno-Tech Med Equip	David Jones	Met @ job fair	888-8888 david_jones@innovate.net	Discussed opening, was asked to go to IDOL and pick up an app.	Positive lead	1. Send David email ("nice to meet, thank you for info"). 2. Pick up app at Department of Labor	JAN 3 - anytime

Maximizing Your Job Search

# The Hidden Job Market and Networking

The Shortest Distance Between You and Your Next Career



## Where To Look?

Only about 20 percent of all jobs are ever advertised, meaning 80 percent are filled by companies who never advertised those positions. They are filled by referral, the “who do you know” method of recruitment. So while keeping an eye on newspaper advertisements and Internet job search sites is important, the percentages are in your favor if you investigate the hidden job market.

## Who is Your Network and Why Should You?

Your network is any group of individuals you have some connection with. Your job seeking network is all of your friends, relatives and acquaintances, who know you are looking for work.

You use your network in many ways. Have you ever hired someone to do repairs in your home? Care for your child? Fix your car? If so, you understand the importance of hiring someone who has been referred to you by someone you know and trust - someone in your network. The same philosophy applies to hiring employees in a business.

- » Hiring an applicant the employer has no previous experience with poses significant risks to any business.
- » Employees can make or break a business.
- » Advertising, recruiting, hiring and training are some of the most costly and time-consuming things done in business. Hiring referred applicants can greatly reduce the time and costs, which helps the employer’s bottom line.

## The Long Term

Even when you are employed, maintaining and expanding your network is important to your future. It can be easier while you are employed. You never know when a better opportunity will present itself or when you might again need that network should circumstances change.

## How to Network

Focus your networking efforts on as many people as possible who work in or have some tie to the types of work you are interested in doing. This will yield more suitable opportunities. See the next page for ideas on how to expand your network.

## Sources of Advertised Jobs

- » Idaho Department of Labor
- » Online Job Search Sites
- » Social Networking Sites
- » Newspaper Classified Ads
- » Staffing Agencies

# My Personal Network

## Start With Us

Idaho Department of Labor offices throughout the state coordinate a variety of hiring events, workshops and networking opportunities. Find these events on our statewide calendar at [labor.idaho.gov](http://labor.idaho.gov) or contact your local office.

## Sign Up

Join volunteer organizations, community service centers, volunteer to serve on a board or council or work with non-profit organizations that may have some connection to the type of work you are interested in. The benefits are many. Besides helping people or groups, you are also meeting new people. If you are unemployed, it also will keep you busy.

## Informational Interviews

This is one of the most valuable ways to gain exposure to prospective employers and begin developing a relationship.

### How to do Informational Interviews?

- » Identify companies of interest.
- » Identify who you want to see – the owner, a manager. Call, e-mail or make a personal visit to that person, explaining you are doing personal research for a career transition and would like to know who might be able to meet briefly for an informational interview about the business or industry.
- » Schedule the interview.
- » Develop a list of open-ended questions that encourage as much conversation as possible.
- » Follow up with a thank you note.

### Why?

- » You'll gain first-hand knowledge about a business, giving you a competitive edge for your résumé and cover letter and the potential interview.
- » You establish a rapport and the prospective employer begins to gain a basic understanding of you as a potential employee.
- » You expand your network and increase opportunity.

### Sample Informational Interview Questions

- » What are the organization's goals?
- » Which skills are most important to the organization?
- » What type of education or experience is required?
- » What are the most important personal characteristics for success in the field?
- » What type of positions does the business offer? What do you like most about your position?
- » What are the challenges you experience?

## Have Fun

Participate in community and social activities that interest you, and get to know the people who share in those activities. If you're short on cash, check your local newspaper for free events.

## Keep Talking

Tell as many people as possible you are looking for work. Discuss your interests and skills. Develop a 30-second speech for these conversations and remember the broad and instant reach of e-mail for getting the word out.

## Network On-line

Social networking sites such as Linked-In and Facebook have become a desirable method for professional networking and connecting applicants and employers.

### 30-Second Speech

The 30-Second Speech is a tool that will help you best verbalize your skills for those important, face-to-face connections during networking activities as well as job interviews.

- » Write it down to organize your thoughts, identify the types of work you are seeking and the key skills to emphasize
- » Develop a professional, courteous, personal introduction.
- » Practice out loud. You will gain confidence the more you hear yourself speak.
- » Appeal to others by expressing yourself in a positive and enthusiastic manner.

### On-Line Networking Tips

- » Research. Some sites will be better equipped than others to deliver the best results for you. Learn how each site differs and which are most used by employers.
- » Keep personal information personal.
- » Be persistent. Developing an online presence takes consistency over time.
- » It's only one of several different methods that make up a successful job search.
- » There is still no substitute for face-to-face interaction or the personal referral.

# Applications

Most employers from a retail store to large corporations require an application although sometimes that occurs just before the interview. The application is an opportunity to make a good impression. The following are some general guidelines for completing applications.

## Curbside Appeal

Fill out the application neatly with no errors in grammar or spelling. Print clearly, avoid abbreviations, use black ink and answer every question. Print N/A if the question does not apply to you.

## Follow Directions

Read the entire application before you complete it. Pay close attention to what is being asked and how you are expected to respond.

## Be Upbeat

Present a positive, honest picture of yourself. Avoid any negative information. Look for ways to show you are the right person for the job. Think of what you would look for in an employee if you were an employer.

## Honesty is Best

The information you provide may become part of your permanent employment record. False information can become the basis for dismissal. Provide only the information the employer is seeking or is necessary to sell your qualifications.

## Meet the Need

Applications have limited space. Use it to showcase your most relevant skills, experience and accomplishments. This will increase your chances of landing an interview. Show them you meet their needs.

## Be Position Specific

Identify the position you want. Responses like "open" or "any" imply desperation or lack of focus.

## Desired Salary

The time to negotiate salary is when the job is offered. If an application asks about salary requirements, give a range or respond with "negotiable."

## Reasons for Leaving

Try to make your reasons for separating from previous employment positive or neutral. Choose your words carefully when responding to this question. Using words like "quit" or "fired" may affect the employer's decision. Here are some examples you might use:

- » Reorganization or merger
- » Returned to school
- » Contract ended
- » Lack of work
- » Not enough hours
- » Promotional opportunity
- » New job
- » Raised a family
- » Career change
- » Work was seasonal
- » Better opportunity
- » Relocated
- » Seeking growth

## Questionable Questions

Questions on applications should be relevant to your ability to do the job. Questions about age, gender, disability, health, marital status, children, race, arrests or convictions may be difficult to answer or seem irrelevant. Use your best judgment. If the question does not bother you, answer it. If you have concerns about a question, try to get clarification.

## Tips for Completing an Application

- » Whenever possible, take the application home and get more than one copy in case you make a mistake. At home, you can fill it out where you are comfortable and able to take your time. Some companies put their applications online, and you can print off what you need, when you need it.
- » Never leave a blank space. Print “N/A” or a dash.
- » Use correction fluid for fixing minor errors or print out another application and start over.
- » Write out responses using a separate sheet of paper before completing the application. An alternative is to obtain a second application.
- » Double check grammar, spelling and content. When possible, have someone proofread it.
- » Prepare a personal data sheet – your cheat sheet. Use it as a reference sheet when completing applications, writing résumés and interviewing. Collect data that might be requested such as dates you started and ended jobs, managers’ names, business addresses and telephone numbers.

**APPLY NOW**



## Online Tips

Many companies require job seekers to apply online at their company website. The online application process can be intimidating at first but will become easier with each application. Here are some tips to keep in mind when completing an online application.

- » Read all instructions thoroughly before you begin.
- » Whenever possible, print the application out and create a rough draft of your application before you enter the data onto the company website.
- » Have all of your work history, employment dates and contact information available before you begin.
- » Proofread everything thoroughly before you submit your application.

## Scannable Résumés

### What is a scannable résumé?

A scannable résumé can be viewed by a computer using document imaging technology called optical character recognition. This makes it possible for employers to scan résumés for key words quickly and store them in a résumé database. Many employers request scannable résumés with online applications. The two most important elements of a scannable résumé are formatting and keywords.

### Formatting

- » Use a common, plain font such as Times New Roman.
- » Use spacing breaks to indicate a section heading rather than using bolded fonts or bullets.
- » Left justify everything and use line spacing to indicate breaks.
- » Use as many nouns as possible.

### Keywords

When employers typically scan for key words, they are usually looking for nouns that describe your skill and attributes as well as any special training or education that might be required. Use words describing skills specific to the industry.

Some examples include:

- » Ethics
- » Teamwork
- » Marketing
- » Leadership skills
- » Finance
- » Java
- » Flash
- » Forklift certification
- » CPR certification



Maximizing Your Job Search

# Do I Really Need a Résumé?

Absolutely! A well written résumé will help give you a competitive edge and is your first shot at selling yourself to an employer. The main reason to have a compelling résumé is to persuade the employer to invite you to an interview. It is a marketing tool about you, not a listing of all the jobs you have ever had.

## Tips and Suggestions

### Keep It Short

### Write Your Own Résumé

It's okay to seek assistance but be sure that your résumé is written in a way that accurately represents you and how you normally communicate.

### Be Thorough

Take time to identify all of your skills, knowledge and abilities. It will be well worth the effort.

### Meet the Need

If you are submitting a résumé for a specific job listing, review the requirements and identify your skills, knowledge and accomplishments that correspond with the employer's needs. By making this comparison, you can demonstrate that you are a great candidate for the position.

### Speak Their Language

Pay close attention to the wording in the job description and use the same words when they reflect your skills and abilities. For example, if the employer is asking for someone with customer service and problem solving skills, your response could be something like "10 years excellent customer service experience while providing mutually beneficial solutions for both clients and employer."

### Make It Relevant

The employer wants to know why you are the best candidate for this position, so write your résumé in a way to make it relevant to the job you are applying for.

### Be Results Oriented

Describe each accomplishment in simple, powerful action statements, emphasizing how it benefited the employer. Use active voice. Results speak louder than a list of responsibilities.



## Proofread

This may be the most important part of writing a résumé. Ask someone else to proofread it as well. It may take only one spelling, grammar or punctuation error for an employer to set your résumé aside. Put your best foot forward and create a perfect résumé.

## Formatting

- » Keep it to one page if at all possible. If you have to include a second page be sure it is at least a third of a page. If it is less, consider adding more content or rethink the first page content.
- » Make your résumé easy to read. Use conservative and easy to read fonts like Times New Roman, Arial or Calista.
- » Use 11 or 12 point font size.
- » Make your top, bottom, left and right margins 1 inch.
- » Avoid paragraphs. Use bulleted statements.
- » White space is important. White space is the "open space" between paragraphs and words. The more white space, the easier it is to read.
- » Emphasize category headings using boldface type, larger font, all caps or a combination.

## Content That Matters

An effective résumé generally contains five distinct components – heading, objective, highlights of qualifications, relevant experience and work history. Additional information that may be helpful includes education, training and volunteer or community activities.

### Heading

- » Keep it simple but informative. Include your name, address, phone number and a professional e-mail address if you have one. This is usually centered on the page.

### Objective

- » Be specific, concise and let the résumé support your objective.
- » Write it to reflect the employer's perspective, not your own.
- » Example: Objective - To manage people, interface with customers and work with highly technical software or hardware applications.
- » A second option would be to give a more detailed explanation of your qualifications for the job.
- » Example: Objective - Acquire an entry level position in the hospitality industry where a background in advertising and public relations would be needed.

### Highlights of Qualifications

- » Grab their attention. This may be the most important section in the résumé so it should be strong and convincing. Most employers will spend 15 to 20 seconds scanning your résumé. If they do not see a connection to the job description, they might not read any further.
- » Emphasize in a few brief statements the skills and experience you have that match what the employer has asked for in the job description. Use a strong, active voice.
- » Ask yourself the question, "Is every item in the highlights section relevant to my target job?"
- » Example: Over 10 years experience as an organizational training consultant. Energetic self-starter with excellent analytical, organizational and creative skills.

### Relevant Experience

- » The rest of the story. This is where you have the opportunity to elaborate on the information you provided in the Highlights section.
- » Let the employer know what you have produced, what happened as a result of your efforts, or what you are especially gifted or experienced at doing.
- » Use past tense action verbs when describing your accomplishments.
- » When possible use quantifiers to make your accomplishments stand out.
- » Example: Increased total sales in 2009 by 20 percent for a total profit of \$85,000 more than in 2008.

### Work History

- » Who, what, when and where.
- » List jobs in reverse chronological order. Include dates, job titles, company name and location.
- » Example: December 2007- Present    Data Entry Clerk    XYZ Company    Boise ID.

### References

- » Create a reference sheet and have it available when appropriate. Some employers will ask for references when applying and some will ask for them later.
- » Always ask references if you can use their names and numbers and tell them what you are applying for so they will be prepared if they are called.

**"When you're prepared, you're more confident. When you have a strategy, you're more comfortable."**

**-Fred Couples**

**James Donaldson**  
10 Emerson Drive Norfolk, ID 33333  
(101) 555-1234  
E-mail: jdonaldson@xxxx.com

**OBJECTIVE** To increase your organization's bottom line through productivity, teamwork, efficiency and excellence in service.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS**

- Excellent teacher and trainer; patient and effective when working with a wide range of personalities.
- Successful in identifying and solving computer-related problems.
- Project oriented, sticking to a task until completed.
- Successful in learning and comprehending new systems and methods.

**RELEVANT EXPERIENCE**

**Bookkeeping**

- Reconciled loan payment records between servicing company and 150 lending institutions.
- Reconciled cash records to computer records for over 200 accounts on a monthly basis.
- Prepared monthly payroll, paid bills and processed tuition payments for private preschool.

**Teaching / Supervising**

- Trained nine people in investor accounting, most of whom had no previous experience.
- Wrote an Investor Reports Instruction Manual, minimizing training time for new employees.
- Maintained cordial working relations while explaining and clarifying others' errors.
- Interviewed and hired four staff members.

**Computer Usage**

- Worked with computer analyst in developing computerized specialty reports.
- Assisted in implementing new program on PC for accounts payable.
- Input monthly account records on a PC and generated trial balance.

**WORK HISTORY**

2006-Present	Treasurer/Bookkeeper Little Tikes Preschool, Cole, VA
2001-2006	Account Reconciliation Donzall & Associates, Monton, CA
1998-2001	Financial Specialist United States Air Force

**EDUCATION** Bachelor of Arts in Accounting & Business  
Norwest College, Santa Rosa, VA

# Captivating Cover Letters



## Do I Really Need a Cover Letter?

Yes. While not all employers request a cover letter, it is a good idea to include one with your résumé for several reasons. A cover letter is an additional opportunity to market your skills and abilities to the employer. It is an opportunity to present a complete picture of yourself and your attention to detail. It also allows you the opportunity to address unique situations that are difficult to include in your résumé such as relocation, gaps in work history, criminal records and career changes.

- » Make it compelling, personal and brief. Use active verbs.
- » Keep it specifically related to the position.
- » Be positive! Be positive! Be positive!
- » Avoid references to salary or benefits.
- » If it is not an online letter, use 8 1/2" x 11" paper – identical in color and font style to your résumé paper.
- » Include contact information as shown on your résumé.
- » Proofread it and ask another person to proofread it, too.
- » Remember to sign it!

## Cover Letter Basics

Cover letters are typically two to four paragraphs in length.

### Salutation

Use the employer's name and title if known. Do not use a first name only. Use the entire name or last name such as "Dear Mr. Wilson." Otherwise address the letter as "Dear Hiring Manager."

### First Paragraph

Your first sentence should tell how you learned of the possible opening. Use the remainder of the paragraph to express interest in a specific position or a particular kind of job and state that you have enclosed a résumé.

### Second and Third Paragraphs

Your cover letter needs to fit the needs of the organization and job of interest. Direct attention to your qualifications and company knowledge. Remember, the purpose of your cover letter is to convince the employer to read your résumé. The letter needs to be concise and professional.

### Fourth Paragraph

Request an interview and express your interest in meeting with them at their earliest convenience. End the letter by thanking the person for his or her consideration.

### Closing and Signature

May use Sincerely, Cordially, Respectfully.

**You only have seconds to convince the employer to invite you to an interview.**

Maximizing Your Job Search

# Gearing Up for the Interview

Stockphoto®

**A successful interview requires you to think like the employer.**

## Before the Interview

**Research the Company** If it has a website, study it. Read company literature, talk to people familiar with the company and observe workplace dress, attitudes and company culture.

**Navigate** Find out where the company is located and how to get there. Use Google Maps or Mapquest and print out the directions. Allow extra traveling time in case you are delayed beyond your control. Go alone.

**Write Down Important Information** Write down the date of your appointment as well as the name, address and phone number of the company. If you know the name of the person you will be interviewing with, write that down as well. Keep the information with you.

**Take a Copy of Your Portfolio** Your portfolio includes a résumé, certificates, letters of recommendation, references, samples of your work.

### Bring a Pen and Notebook

**Dress for Success** Double check your appearance. Make sure your hands, nails and hair are clean and your perfume or aftershave isn't too strong. Your clothes should be clean, pressed and appropriate for the interview.

**"One Step Above"** The rule is to wear "one step above" what others in the company are wearing. Neutral colors such as black, brown, grey or navy are best. Appropriate shoes are important.

**Be Punctual** Arrive alone and 10 to 15 minutes early. Cordially let the receptionist know who you are and who you wish to see.

## During the Interview

Be Yourself. You got the interview because of your skills.

Present yourself in a friendly, straightforward and confident manner.

When introduced to the interviewer, shake hands if it seems appropriate, smile and remain standing until you are asked to be seated.

Make yourself comfortable and retain your poise.

Place your purse or other personal items on the floor next to your chair.

Be diplomatic. Don't argue or tell the employer your troubles.

Refrain from jokes or gossip, use proper grammar and avoid slang such as "okay" and "yeah."

Maintain eye contact and be aware of body language.

Be a good listener. Be enthusiastic.

## Employers Want To Know

**You are resourceful.** You don't need constant supervision, and you work well independently.

**You maintain a positive attitude.** You work well with others.

**You are a loyal team member.** You take pride in the company.

**You always maintain a professional demeanor.** You take pride in your appearance and behavior.

**You are easy going.** You're not arrogant, rude, pushy or moody.

**You are a quick learner.** You won't need a lot of time to become productive.

**You are a hard worker.** You always give 100 percent

**You are dependable.** You don't constantly call in sick or miss work.

## Sell Yourself

Almost every interview begins with "So, tell me about yourself." What they want to know is what kind of person you are, will you fit in and are you dependable, motivated and eager to learn. Keep any personal information about yourself to a minimum if you discuss it at all.

## Demonstrate Your Ability

Show that you can help their business by using examples from past experiences, stating results and quantifying when you can. For example; did you increase sales, cut costs, improve quality, reduce production time or save money? Tell the story.

## Be Positive

You got the interview because you possess the skills necessary to do the job. However, the number one reason people get hired is because of their attitude. Your attitude is revealed by the way you dress, your eye contact, body language, voice and choice of words.

## Close the Deal

When the interview is coming to a close, let the employer know that you want the job. For example: "Mr. Smith, after speaking with you, I am very interested in this position, and I am confident that I would be an asset to your company. What is the next step in the process?"

## Don't Allow Tough Questions to Become a Road Block

### What have you been doing between jobs?

Tell them about the constructive things you have been doing such as schooling, volunteer work or temporary work.

### Why should we hire you instead of someone else?

Explain the qualities you have that would make you an asset to the company.

### Do you have any questions?

This is only difficult if you haven't prepared! Do your homework and learn something about the company before the interview.

### Sample questions include:

- » What are the key tasks for this position?
- » What is the company's position within the industry?
- » Is there anything I can do or study to get a head start on learning this job?
- » Why do people like working here?

Make sure you get the information you need to decide if you want the job. Even in a buyers' market, the employer is selling the job to you as well.

**The time to discuss salary is when you are offered the job, not during the interview.**



# Thank You Notes

## Who Really Sends a Thank You Note?

Those who are serious about finding a job. Thank you notes are seldom used but are a great way to get a competitive edge.

Thank you notes reveal your sincerity, attention to details, manners, thoughtfulness towards the company and your desire to work for them.

## Finish Strong!

- » You may consider sending your thank you note by e-mail but handwritten is more personal.
- » Send a thank you letter or note no later than 24 hours after the interview.
- » Be brief and to the point.
- » Address the note to the name and title of person who interviewed you.
- » List the date of your interview.
- » Include the job title.
- » Thank them for their time.
- » Restate your interest in the position and the company.



# The Job Offer

Everything is negotiable, and that includes salary. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when considering a job offer. The local economic conditions will play a big role in how you choose to negotiate.

## Take Some Time

It is acceptable to ask for time to consider an offer but don't take more than a day or two and be specific about the length of time you would like to have to consider the offer.

## Know the Numbers

Research the salary range for the position you are applying for to determine if the offer is reasonable. One place to look for comparable salaries in different cities in Idaho is on Idaho Labor's labor market information website at <http://lmi.idaho.gov/WagesIncome/WagesbyOccupation/OccupationalEmployment/WageSurvey2010.aspx>.

## Discuss Value

Talk about money in terms of the value of your particular skill set in the marketplace and what you have to offer in terms of expertise and experience.

## Be Positive

If a job offer is unacceptable to you, remain positive and state clearly why the offer is unacceptable and what you would need to have modified in order to accept the offer.

## Negotiating the Terms

The process of hiring someone is expensive. The employer may be prepared to negotiate so you should be too. Consider the following points when choosing to negotiate.

### Ask For the Offer in Writing

If you choose to negotiate, ask for the start date, salary, job details and benefits in writing.

### Back It Up

Be prepared to remind the employer of your skills and expertise and the added value you will bring to their organization.

### Be Open-Minded

Remain open during the negotiation process. If salary negotiation is limited, perhaps there is room to negotiate a benefit package that would better suit your needs.

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