

Writing a job application

Resume Writing

A resume is a one or two page summary of your education, skills, accomplishments, and experience.

A resume will continually change and evolve as you learn new skills, change jobs and gain further experience

If you send a resume to someone, it acts as a selling tool and summary of everything you are good at or have done.

Some Resume Tips

- Review your resume before each job adding new skills and positions held.
- A resume must be easy to read, clear and concise.
- Write using active words (accomplished, created, developed or improved).
- Separate headings using bold or capital text and keep the layout legible, consistent and easy to follow. Select 1 or 2 typeface (Times Roman or Arial).
- Use bullet points or short statements to present your work responsibilities and achievements.
- Summarise your most important skills in a list - 'Intermediate computer skills using Microsoft Office and regular user of Internet and email'.
- Put your work history and education qualifications in reverse order- that is starting with the most recent.
- Keep it targeted - Target your resume to the job. Have several different resumes if you have interest in applying for jobs in different industries.
- Check for errors, correct grammar and get feedback -Show your resume to someone you trust and ask for some feedback on presentation and content.
- Referees - Provide names and contact details of at least two people who are prepared to speak on your behalf - a previous supervisor or someone who knows you well to act as a character reference and can verify your experience. Remember to seek permission first before listing referee names on your resume.
- **Never** lie or exaggerate your experience or qualifications as you might get caught out in an interview.
- **Always** use good quality paper and never send poor reproductions.
- Always send an up to-date and current resume when applying for a position.

Letters of Application

A cover letter is often the first contact an employer has with you and usually accompanies your resume. It is often used to decide if you have the necessary skills and experience to do the job.

It should be written in a way that is positive, confident and containing the information needed by the employer to make a decision.

There are two types of letters of application

- Those you write when applying for an advertised position.
- Canvassing letters - written when you are making an enquiry about possible jobs in an organisation, for which your skills are suitable.

Letters of application should include:

- Your address and the date.
- Name and address of the organisation to which you are applying.
- Addressed to the person to whom you intend the letter to be received by e.g. Dear Mr. Jones (if you don't know begin your letter with Dear Sir/Madam).
- Name of the job and where you saw the job advertised (in a canvassing letter, state that you are enquiring about a job opportunity).
- In the main part of the letter add something about your past experience and why you are applying. State why you would be good at the job. Point out qualifications, abilities and skills. Add an example of where you gained the skills and how you applied them.
- Make a reference to your attachments - resume and any other copies of required documentation.
- Finish the letter with a positive statement that shows you are enthusiastic and keen. Add a concluding sentence referring to your availability for an interview, telephone number of where you can be contacted.
- Signing off - if your letter is addressed to a person by name your letter should end 'Yours sincerely'. If your letter starts with Dear Sir/Madam end it with 'Yours faithfully'.
- Finish with a signature and your name printed below.

Important features of the application letter

- Be approximately **1 page in length** - typed on good quality plain A4 sized paper.
- Format the overall appearance.
- Keep the language formal and take care with grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Interview preparation

Preparing for the interview

Always prepare yourself before attending an interview.

Preparation enhances your chances of performing well.

General Tips

- Find out as much as you possibly can about the organisation. Review the organisations website, promotional brochures or if they have been in the news lately.
- Reread the job advertisement and underline key words. Look for key skills or qualities they are seeking so you can match them to your experience and own qualities.
- Know the exact time, address and location of the interview - You do not want to arrive late or just in time. Plan the journey so that you arrive at the interview at least ten minutes early.
- Be prepared for any type of interview situation (formal, informal or panel) and length of time the interview may take, so you can set aside the right amount of time. (If you don't know its okay to call and ask).
- Spend 30 minutes reviewing your written application, resume and relevance to the job description. Refresh your memory regarding details of your past work history and employers. (If new to the workforce – refer to any volunteering experience, positions of responsibility at school or casual jobs held).
- Anticipate any questions you might be asked. Practice answering difficult ones with other people – friends or family members.
- Prepare a list of strengths and achievements relevant to the job to talk about at the interview. Pay attention to how you will describe your most important achievements.
- Be aware of your weaknesses and identify one or two that you are working on (weaknesses are opportunities that can become strengths).
- Identify specific work related examples you can use to demonstrate your ability to do the job.
- Prepare some questions YOU will ask at the interview to take to the interview. For example - 'what induction and training programs does your organisation offer'?
- Pay attention to grooming and all areas of dress. Plan what you are going to wear that is appropriate and smart. First impressions are everything!

Practice interview questions

Tell me about your previous experience?

The interview is your opportunity to sell **yourself**, skills and experience. Generally the employer does not want to know your life history in every detail. Talk about your work experience, achievements and ambitions.

What is it about this job that attracted you to apply?

Answer by telling them about your skills, abilities and how they match to the job. Be enthusiastic so they can visualise you actually doing the job.

For example - 'This job offers me the opportunity to apply my skills and learn new ones. I am excited about working for this organisation and really want this job'.

What are your long-term aims/goals?

Think about the job you are applying for. Are your aims/goals relevant for this position?

For example – 'In five years time I would like to hold a higher position of responsibility, managing my own team and using my experience gained, training others to meet the organisation goals'.

What do you know about our business?

This is where you can apply the research done in advance.

What will you bring to the business?

Highlight your strengths, skills and qualities relevant to the job and give examples of where you have used them. This is your chance to shine.

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

This is a commonly asked question. Highlight your greatest strengths that match the position. For example - 'I am a highly organised person who is able to work without a lot of supervision to get the job done' 'If I was to identify one weakness it would be that I tend to be very particular about the way things are done that can annoy some people ... I am working on being more considerate of the other way of doing things'.

What do you think are most important qualities to have for this job?

Match up your qualities to everyday tasks and the job you have applied for – think about your organisational ability, friendly personality, team skills, ability to work on your own or ability to manage tasks in a time frame.

The Interview

Interviews

Interviews are best approached with a view to win the job. Being prepared ahead of time will help you feel more confident and relaxed about the interview process and what to expect.

Through the interaction that takes place the interviewer will be searching out your strengths and weaknesses, evaluating your skills, experience, qualifications, personal qualities, motivations and attitude to do the job.

During the interview the employer will evaluate your performance not just your answers. Your style and behaviour is important.

Behaviours that can produce a positive response in an interview include

- Ability to express thoughts clearly
- Career planning and objectives
- Making eye contact
- Preparation and knowledge of the organisation
- Enthusiasm for the job and the organisation
- Confidence
- Positive 'can do' attitude
- Thought out questions about the job and organisation

General Tips

Plan to arrive ahead of time. Late arrival for a job interview is never excusable.

Greet the interviewer/s with a smile, making eye contact and a firm handshake.

Wait to be offered a chair before sitting. Sit upright, be attentive and look interested at all times. Be a good listener as well as a talker.

Follow the interviewers lead. Often the interviewer will describe the job, duties and responsibilities early in the interview. This is an opportunity for you to relate your background and skills to the position while listening

Get your good points across early in a factual and sincere manner. It is you alone who can sell your skills to an interviewer. Make them realise they want YOU.

Always conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job. Do not let the opportunity go by even if you feel it is not going well.

Things you should never do

- Never answer questions with a simple Yes or No. Always use explanations wherever possible.
- Tell lies or make false statements. Always answer truthfully, frankly and to the point.
- Never speak badly of your previous employer or organisation. It may reflect badly on you.
- 'Over answer' questions or get off track when answering.
- Try not to let any discouragement show. If you think the interview is not going well and you feel your chance is lost, don't let this show. Keep calm.
- Never enquire about wages or holidays at the first interview unless this is raised by the interviewer.

Closing the Interview

If you are genuinely interested in the position let the interviewer know.

Thank the interviewer for their time and consideration of you. You have done all you can if you have answered three questions uppermost in the interviewers mind.

- 1) Why you are interested in the job?
- 2) What you can offer? and
- 3) Can you do the job?

Being offered the job

Employers often want someone to start as soon as possible. At the interview you may be asked 'when are you available to start'.

Make sure you given some consideration to this before hand about a possible start date.

If you are offered the job at the interview or shortly afterward, it is best not to make the employer wait too long for an answer or for you to commence. If you are bound by an obligation to give notice from a current job, let the employer know and what period of time is required before you are free.

It often good practice if offered the job to have read and agreed on the employment conditions before signing.