

JOB HUNTING

STRATEGIES AND MATERIALS

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1. PLANNING THE JOB SEARCH

Prior to the middle of the 20th century, most people met their social and esteem needs through their relations in the local community – and so expected their jobs to provide only a sufficient – and a sufficiently secure – source of income. As we increasingly define ourselves by ‘what we do’ and look to our jobs to meet many of our social and esteem needs, it has become much more important to ensure that the kind of work we do, the kind of organisation for which we do it – and with whom – will help us meet our needs for meaning, purpose, achievement and fulfilment.

DO A THOROUGH SELF-INVENTORY

Answer these questions as honestly as you can. Your chances of finding a job in which you feel fulfilled – and will therefore enjoy – depend on identifying the kind of work appropriate for you.

- What do you want out of a job? What needs do you realistically expect your work to meet? (Most jobs won't fulfil all your needs, so identify those that are the most important to you.)
- What sort of work would you prefer to do? IMAGINE your ‘ideal day at the office’; how would you have spent that day? (creating/inventing/designing, solving problems, analysing data, managing people, selling, communicating, organising, negotiating, serving the community)
- What sort of industry would you like most to be involved in? (advertising & branding, sales, politics, education, high technology, hospitality/tourism, social or environmental charity etc.)
- What did you: i) like most ii) *dislike most* about previous jobs/courses? (Be specific)
- What sort(s) of things are you best at doing? (This is usually a clue to what you enjoy most, for the simple reason that these are the skills or abilities in which we are most readily inclined to invest time and energy – and which, in turn, usually lead to higher levels of achievement.)
- What are your strengths? (technical skills, computer skills, good with details, organisational skills, ability to plan, administration skills, ability to work with and/or motivate others etc.)
- What are your greatest weaknesses? (accepting supervision, working in a team, working varied hours, juggling tasks, working with numbers, staying focussed on details) **and be honest!**
(There are two very important reasons to identify your weaknesses: i) so that you can avoid jobs that involve tasks or activities that make you unhappy and ii) because the things we enjoy *least* are often obstacles to our ability to successfully pursue the kind of work we will find fulfilling. Recognising these helps us to identify learning challenges that we must find a way to overcome.)
- What kind of organisation do you want to work for? (a large or small firm, in which industrial sector? Would you prefer to work in the private, non-profit, or government/public sector)
- Do you have any geographical preferences? (to work in a foreign country, in a large city, in a small town, near mountains, near the sea, in a warm climate etc.)

PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE PROCESS

- Understand what employers look for in those they hire (those who can solve problems)
- Talk to people who have recently been successful in finding a job and find out what they did
- Make up a portfolio of your best work in a professional-looking loose-leaf notebook or binder
- Make a list of prospective employers and the sort(s) of problems they may have, and think about how you can contribute to their success
- Find out who has the authority to hire you. (Don't waste time pursuing the wrong person)

2. WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT

Ranked in order of importance	%
1. Willingness to learn	93
2. Commitment	88
3. Dependability/reliability	88
4. Self-motivation	88
5. Team work	87
6. Communication skills (oral)	87
7. Co-operation	86
8. Communication skills (written)	86
9. Drive/energy	84
10. Self-management	84
11. Desire to achieve/motivation	84
12. Problem-solving ability	84

Source: [Employer Satisfaction: Summary](#).

By Lee Harvey and Diana Green, QHE Project, University of Central England. Quoted from Prospects Directory 2000.

Every post requires a combination of three things for which your application must provide **evidence**:

- i. the relevant academic qualifications
- ii. the relevant professional experience
- iii. of a positive and enthusiastic attitude towards your assigned responsibilities

When a company decides to hire a new employee, they commit themselves to an expensive, risky and time-consuming process. This includes: writing the job description, sorting through the applications received, deciding on a shortlist, interviewing applicants, making a final selection, and then training the successful candidate. For most jobs in a mid-sized employment market, companies will receive upwards of 750 applications for every advertised post. *(Do the maths: It takes someone three minutes to open and briefly scan each CV and letter of application for the key criteria to make an initial decision about each candidate. This means that someone will spend 37.5 hours – an entire week – doing nothing else.)*

You must therefore ensure that your candidacy is not ruled out in these crucial two minutes.

Employers do not undertake this lengthy and expensive process except *to solve a problem* (either to fill a vacancy in their capabilities or to be able to take advantage of an opportunity). Employers realise that most positions have a six-month learning curve. You may have a degree from a relevant undergraduate programme and even have previous experience, but they know that it will take up to six months to train you to be able to do the job the way the company wants it done – meaning that, for the first six months, the company will be giving you more than they get in return, and that it is only after this probationary (training) period that they will begin to recoup their investment.

If the employee leaves after less than two years, the company will have to go through the process all over again. Employers therefore try to minimise the chance of hiring someone who they suspect will not stay long enough for their investment to pay off. Your chance of being hired is therefore dependent on your ability to convince the employer from the outset that you are the best candidate to solve their ‘problem’.

I will discuss how to do this in the next section.

3. HOW TO DESCRIBE PREVIOUS JOBS ON YOUR CV

And on your
LinkedIn page

When applying for a job, it is vital to remember that agencies, companies & organisations hire people only when they have 'a problem' (for example, a job that isn't being done, or an opportunity that would not otherwise be realised). To stand out from the (possibly hundreds of) other applicants, you must be able to demonstrate (not just claim) that you can – and will – solve their 'problem'.

The two key considerations for employers in the recruitment process are:

1. *Can you* do the job?
This refers to your knowledge, skills and abilities.
2. *Will you* do the job?
This refers to your attitude towards your responsibilities.

Proving that you can do the job

Evaluating your knowledge, skills and abilities is (relatively) simple and straightforward – but the basis on which they will evaluate your knowledge, your skills and your abilities is not what you may think. Despite the importance many students place on the marks they receive, your degree classification tells the employer *almost nothing* about what you know and understand or what you are able to do.

This is because prospective employers do not know on what your marks were based (what projects you were assigned, the criteria by which your work was assessed, or how strictly these criteria were applied in assessing your work). As a result, employers are well aware that someone with a 2:2 from University X – where assignments are very complex and challenging and the assessment of work reflects current industry standards – may actually be more capable and better qualified than someone with a First from University Y – where lecturers are (*ahem...*) 'encouraged' by management to award high marks as part of the university's marketing and recruitment strategy for attracting customers. (*Come and study with us – our students get very high final marks...*)

(I will spare you a repetition of the argument that students – and their employment prospects – would benefit more by reflecting on the feedback they received in order to understand how to improve their knowledge, skills & abilities than complaining about "unfair" marks. Before you engage in 'grade grubbing', consider what it is that you are asking for: a mark that implies that you know more – or that you performed better – than you did. Does that help you improve your knowledge, skills or abilities?)

There are, in fact, only three people who care about your degree classification:

- i. Your nan
- ii. You
- iii. Your parents

End of list.

What will convince employers that you have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities is a portfolio of your work. (The term 'portfolio' is often mistakenly assumed to refer only to creative executions. It doesn't. A graduate looking for a job as, say, an account manager should also have a portfolio of work: one which includes examples of your research, analysis & strategy.) **THIS** will show a prospective employer (one way or the other...) what your marks don't: whether you are capable of doing the job.

Proving that you will do the job

Demonstrating that you will do the job (that you approach and carry out assigned role/s) in a mature, professional and responsible manner is, admittedly, more difficult – which is why it is the aspect of the recruitment process that usually gives the prospective employer the most difficulty.

From the perspective of the applicant (that's you...), there are two issues:

- Making sure that you clearly understand the attitude that will be expected of you
- And then – assuming that you do understand the attitude expected of you – finding a way to demonstrate ('prove') this to the prospective employer. (And no; simply claiming or promising that you have a professional and responsible attitude to your work won't convince them.)

How, then, can you demonstrate ('prove') that you know what is expected of you and that you will deliver this?

As explained above, agencies, companies and organisations only hire people when they have a 'problem' (or have a gap that must be filled). Regardless of the role – from Executive Director to junior creative (so junior, they don't even merit sentence case) employers want to hire people who will achieve results. To be the kind of person who achieves results, you have to be trying to achieve results. In other words, you must believe – and prove that you believe – that your primary responsibility is 'to achieve results'.

Convincing a prospective employer that you are this kind of person is done in two ways:

In your CV:

Rephrase your description of what you did in your last job (or what you did in your university projects) from a focus on what you were "responsible for..." to what you achieved and/or accomplished. (What results did you achieve or produce for the organisation? What did you make happen? What does the organisation now have as a direct result of your contribution?)

By describing your previous role(s) in terms of your achievements, accomplishments or the problems you solved, you demonstrate clearly that this is how you 'see' your responsibility.

In your letter of application ('cover letter'):

Explain clearly how your knowledge, skills and abilities will enable you to achieve the results the organisation needs (as defined by the detailed job description which you ignore at your own risk)

This too, will demonstrate clearly that this is how you 'see' your responsibility. But of course, you won't be able to do this unless you understand the nature of their problems. This will require research. (This research also 'proves' that you are the kind of person who is focussed on results.)

4. PREPARING YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE

Your CV is a concise summary of your relevant qualifications for the post (your academic, personal and professional achievements). It highlights your skills, abilities **and attitude** to show that you are the best candidate for the post by **providing the evidence** that you are a problem-solver. Employers will often skim through the CV first, looking for the candidate whose background most closely corresponds to the requirements of the position. *Your CV must make the reader want to read your Letter of Application.*

Provide this information in the standard format. There are conventions for the presentation of CVs and if you don't follow these, the employer may conclude that either that **you don't know what they are** – or, even worse, **that you believe that they don't apply to you**. This is **not** the place to show how original or creative you can be. Instead of using an unconventional layout, the best way to make your CV stand out from the rest is to ensure that it presents you as the most suitable candidate for the position.

Many suitable candidates are regularly rejected because of careless mistakes or poor organisation on their curriculum vitae (CV) or résumé. The person reviewing your application will assume **this is the best quality work you are capable of producing**. Your CV shows a prospective employer how much care and attention to detail you put into your work and so must contain no spelling mistakes or 'typos' (typographical errors). Careless mistakes in what is understood to be the best work you can produce will tell the prospective employer that you have an inattentive and unprofessional approach to your work.

Your CV is a sales document – and you are both the salesperson **and** the 'product' being sold. The most effective sales documents do not simply **claim** that "This is the best product" but provide the **evidence** that leads the reader (your prospective employer) to conclude this for him/herself.

Your CV must:

- **Be completely free of errors**
- Present information clearly and sequenced in a logical order
- Describe and emphasise specific accomplishments – not just list previous responsibilities
- Contain no vague generalisations or empty self-congratulation
- Explain any obvious gaps if organised chronologically (*Tip: If you are ever unemployed for more than two months, volunteer your time to a non-profit group or register for continuing education courses. This will not only show an interest in self-improvement, but may even lead to a job.*)
- Be kept to one page until you have sufficient professional achievements. (A CV is a *summary* of your achievements; you want to give the reader the impression that these are just the highlights)
- Be honest (Most companies will verify the truthfulness of the information on your CV. If, after being hired, it is discovered that you lied on either your CV or your Letter of Application, you may be dismissed without recourse)

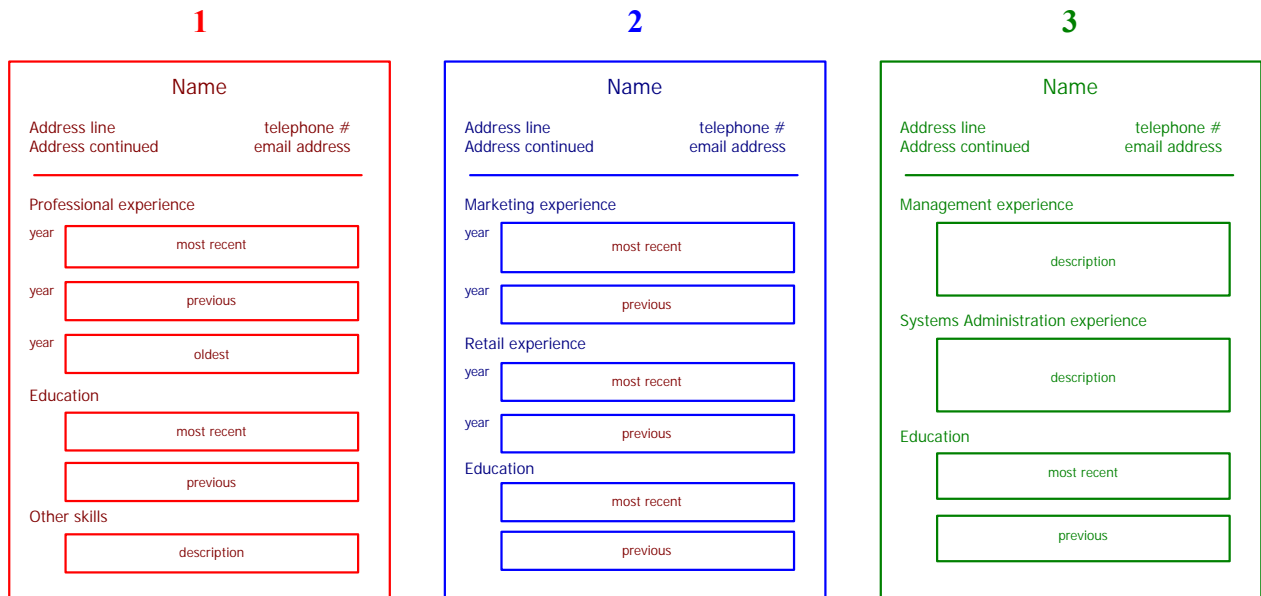
*n.b.: your age, marital status and photo are **not** normally included in North American CVs*

CVs may also include:

- Languages spoken and/or written – including courses taken and certificates achieved (if any)
Indicate your level of proficiency in other languages accurately and honestly:
Beginner/Basic level, Good working knowledge, Conversational or Fluent (nota bene: *Fluent* means that your command of the language is equivalent to that of a native speaker)
- Memberships in professional organisations
- Names and email addresses/telephone numbers of people **who have agreed in advance** to provide references. (Alternatively, you can state that "References are available on request")

THREE DIFFERENT WAYS TO ORGANISE AND PRESENT YOUR EXPERIENCE IN A CV:

1. *Chronological* (listing experience with the most recent or current job or experience on top)
2. *Thematic* (grouping similar positions together – but still chronological within categories)
3. *Skills-Based* (organised by skills or abilities without direct reference to previous employers)



FORMATTING AND LAYOUT:

Your curriculum vitae **must**:

- contain no speling mistakes or tpyographical errors. **Spell-check and proofread before printing**
- present information clearly and in a visually attractive layout
- be kept to one page (unless you have professional publication or research credits)
- use a single clear, professional 11, 11.5 or 12 point serif typeface throughout (avoid using more than two typefaces; doing so makes your CV look very unprofessional)
- be very judicious with **bold**, **colour**, *italic* and underlined typefaces

avoid the use of boxes (they emphasise headings rather than the all-important *content*)

- have more space *between* the different sections of the CV than *within* sections
 - use consistent tab settings (**never** use the spacebar to indent text)
- use only one style of bullet
- ☞ avoid the use of ‘artistic’ bullets (and do not use typographic symbols ¶ > as bullets)
- be Left justified. Full justification can make the text difficult to read
- be well-balanced on the page – preferably with *minimum* 2cm margins all around (Tip: to judge the balance of your layout, place the document on the floor at your feet)

nota bene: If you are planning to send your CV by email to a North American company, be sure to format the document as **US letter not A4** – otherwise it will not fit on their paper.

Proof-read your resume very carefully – and then show it to trusted friends and colleagues to make sure you haven't inadvertently **substantiated** the wrong word. **Remember that spell-check will usually not catch these errors, since the problem is one of incorrect word choice (diction) rather than spelling.**

(Tip: when proofreading your CV, read it backwards from the end to the beginning: reading it in reverse order will help you to catch errors of diction and careless spelling & typographical mistakes.)

To help ensure that your application is not consigned to 'the round filing cabinet', avoid the kind of mistakes listed below*. (The following 10 mistakes were not invented, but culled from actual CVs).

1. Revolved customer problems and inquiries. (Just what every employer is looking for – an expert in administrative 'buck-passing'.)
2. Consistently tanked as top sales producer for new accounts. (Sales Managers aren't likely to be impressed by a self-proclaimed underachiever.)
3. Dramatically increased exiting account base, achieving new company record. If, as this statement implies, customers were leaving in droves, it's fair to assume that this candidate also tanked as a top sales producer.
4. Planned new corporate facility at \$3 million over budget. Every manager's dream candidate: an employee who exceeds budgets by millions of dollars.
5. Directed \$25 million anal shipping and receiving operations. This candidate is either trying to indicate compulsive management qualities, or has an unconventional way to resolve product packaging/storage problems.
6. Participated in the foamation of a new telecommunications company. In charge of bubbles?
7. Promoted to district manger to oversee 37 retail storefronts. This is a common typo. There must be thousands of mangers looking for jobs in today's modern world. (Tip: Use the find/replace feature to quickly correct this common mistake. You can also modify autocorrect feature so it won't recognise the word *manger*.)
8. Experienced supervisor, defective with both rookies and seasoned professionals. Many of us have had a boss like this at some point in our careers, but it's unusual to find anyone being so honest about their leadership inadequacies.
9. I am seeking a salary commiserate with my training and experience. There are a couple problems with this statement. To begin with, salary requirements don't belong on a CV. Secondly, a salary should be *commensurate* with experience (meaning proportionate to), not *commiserate* with (meaning to express sympathy for).
10. Seeking a party-time position with potential for advancement. Nice work if you can get it.

* If you did not spot the mistakes in these excerpts, take this as a warning of your capacity to make them.

sample CV (student):

Benjamin D. ANDREWS

200 Queen Street East
Toronto, ON L8B 7K9

tel (416) 555-1234
email bendan@yorku.edu

Objective: an internship in the financial management of a small or medium enterprise

EDUCATION

2014 to present **York University**, Toronto Canada

BSc in Business Administration, to be completed in 2004

Programme includes courses in Management, Marketing, Finance and Human Resources Management
Coursework included several practical projects for external clients (developed Marketing Plan for high tech startup, customer satisfaction survey for retail chain, staff reorganisation model after buyout)

2010 to 2014 **Pierre Trudeau Secondary School**, Hamilton Canada

Ontario Secondary School Honours Graduation Diploma

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2013 (summer employment)

Dewey Cheetem and Howe Insurance Brokers, Toronto Canada

- Contacted potential clients to collect accurate information and generated useful sales leads
- Assisted with analysis of financial data, maintained and improved accuracy of client database

2012 (2-month internship)

Green Ribbon Campaign, Toronto Canada

- Worked with the National Director on development of marketing plan to increase donor base
- Processed charitable donations by electronic bank deposit and maintained the national database
- Worked with Director of Communications to organise and supervise telephone fundraising events

2012 (summer employment)

JiffyKwik Offset Printing, Toronto Canada

- Assisted office manager with accurate processing of all financial, employment and sales records
- Learned how to maintain and a large commercial database and to collect outstanding invoices

2010, and 2011 (summer employment)

The Hudson Bay Co., Hamilton Canada

- Retail Sales Assistant in Hardware, Sporting Goods and Automotive departments
- Learned how to sell different types of products and to maintain accurate product inventory

OTHER SKILLS

- Proficient with several software programmes ((Word, Excel, Access and DBIII
- Conversational French
- Public Speaking (member of amateur theatre group since 1997)

sample CV (professional):

Andrew J. BENNETT-HAMLEY

1958 King Street West
Toronto, ON M6K 1J7

tel. (416) 555-1234
email ajbenham@server.com

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2009 to present

Green Ribbon Campaign, Toronto Canada

- Director of Communications for national non-profit organisation, co-ordinated all communications activities with members, donors and the media, layout & design of publicity materials, staff training
- Planned and organised community events to raise public awareness on the issue of domestic violence, generate sympathetic coverage by local and national media, and support regular fundraising initiatives
- Since 2000, membership has increased by 22% per year -- charitable donations increased by 30-35%

2006 to 2009

Alpha Technology Transfer, Toronto Canada

- Prepared project proposals for the Science Council of Canada to explain the strategic and competitive benefits for Canadian companies and industries of high technology R&D projects to request funding. From 1997, the proportion of ATT's project proposals approved by the Council increased by 15%
- Implemented corporate communications plan to integrate all marketing and public relations activities
- Designed multimedia content of company's website as well as all corporate communication materials

2002 to 2006

Design Flow Technology, Toronto Canada

- Designed and produced technical documents and complex monthly corporate management reports
- Promoted to Manager of Graphics department design, increased range of materials produced in-house

1999 to 2002

Society of Renewable Energy Producers Ontario, Hamilton Canada

- Researched and wrote environmental impact reports on community-based energy generation projects
- Planned and organised annual industry conferences and tradeshow, designed all promotional materials

EDUCATION and PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

University of Toronto, Canada

MA in Corporate Communications, completed 1999

Thesis project: creation of corporate communications plan for technology transfer firm that integrated all corporate marketing and public relations functions. Hired by client at graduation to implement this plan

Humber College of Applied Arts & Technology, Toronto Canada

Diploma in Desktop Publishing, completed 1997

Trained in the use of communications and design software including Quarkxpress and Photoshop

McMaster University, Hamilton Canada

BA in History, completed 1992

Vice-Chairman of OPIRG (Ontario Public Interest Research Group), organised projects to co-ordinate student involvement in community-based public education initiatives. Increased the participation of local businesses

5. LETTERS OF APPLICATION (aka COVER LETTERS)

The letter of application (or 'cover letter') is the first piece of your work that a prospective employer will see; it is therefore your most important (and often only) opportunity to clearly demonstrate your:

- **awareness that the sole purpose of recruitment is to solve the employer's problem(s)**
- ability to communicate clearly and positively
- ability to organise and present relevant information
- ability to prepare documents to a professional standard

You may have prepared different versions of your CV for different types of jobs, but each letter of application **will be written especially for the specific position for which you are applying.**

Just as with your CV, ensure that your letter contains no spelling mistakes or 'typos'. **Your letter must be completely free of errors and prepared to a professional standard.** In addition to describing **how** and **why** your background makes you the ideal candidate for this position, your letter is also the first indication of your professionalism and the degree of effort and attention that you put into your work. A letter that contains careless mistakes tells a prospective employer that you don't care about your work.

Your letter of application is primarily a sales letter, and so you should write it as one. Your CV presents your skills and experience as appropriate for the position, but it is your letter of application that will prove that you are the ideal candidate by **providing the evidence** (not just empty self-praise) that your experience, abilities and attitude towards work match the specific requirements of the advertised post.

Before you begin to draught your letter, study very carefully all the details about the job provided in the advertisement. The ad usually includes a number of key words and phrases about the experience and qualities the company is looking for. **DO NOT OVERLOOK THEIR IMPORTANCE!** These are the best (and often the only) clues you have about how the company 'pictures' their ideal candidate. (Think of this as the first and most important test of your ability to recognise and follow instructions.)

Your letter of application is **not** an expanded version of your CV, but is a selective presentation that shows how your unique combination of experience, skills, abilities, and personal qualities relates to the specific challenges and responsibilities of the advertised position. If you try to develop everything in your CV, the employer will not get a clear idea of your relevant abilities – but will conclude that you are unable to analyse the requirements of a situation and to organise your materials accordingly, and therefore that you obviously have very poor judgement. This is not the first impression you want to make. Instead, choose the two or three key elements from the advertisement and, in one paragraph each (with *Unity, Coherence & Adequate Development*), explain how your background and experience makes you the ideal candidate. Do not hesitate to refer to any relevant or specific details not included on your CV.

Make a list of all keywords/phrases in the ad, and beside them, write down all the things about you which fit or correspond to them and use these as the basis of your letter. If the advertisement says that the company is looking for a problem-solver, make sure you cite some relevant problem you have solved. If the advertisement says that the company is looking for a dynamic team player, be sure to refer to the results of a project team of which you were an important member and how you contributed to this.

Rather than describe your previous experience and responsibilities, wherever possible emphasise the specific results you have achieved (improved productivity, increased sales, improved a department's efficiency, reduced costs, expanded the ability of the department to perform specific tasks, etc.).

Do not hesitate to refer to experiences outside of paid employment. Employers know that young people who have just completed their studies often do not have a substantial amount of relevant professional work experience; they are more concerned with finding someone who has demonstrated an ability or competence in the relevant area(s) as well as a professional attitude towards their responsibilities.

IN PREPARING YOUR LETTER, REMEMBER:

- **Never** begin your letter with “I” (“I am...”, “I would like...” etc.) Instead, use “Please accept...”
- Describe **clearly and specifically** how your experience or abilities will solve the company’s problem(s) and/or contribute to its success
- Always address your letter **to a person** – not to a department (unless otherwise specified)
- Make sure that the identifying information is correct and complete. *If you are uncertain of the spelling of the company name, the correct address, or the name or correct title of the person to whom you are to address the letter– call the company and ask!*
- Text should be single spaced *within* paragraphs, double (or 1.5) spaced *between* paragraphs
- Left justified – **never** full justified
- **Never** use bold, underlining, italics, coloured text or more than one standard serif typeface in a Letter of Application. (In a business letter, the use of bold, underlining, italics or coloured text is considered unprofessional – and suggests that you cannot communicate information clearly or effectively by the use of language alone.)
- Keep your letter to one page

WRITE YOUR LETTER IN FOUR PARAGRAPHS:

I INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH INCLUDES:

- your source of information about the job (person, date/source of advertisement etc.)
- the specific position for which you are applying
- a clear statement that you wish to be considered for this position (of course this is obvious, but it is standard format to say it)
- a forecast of the remainder of letter (encourages them to read it and provides a transition)

II TWO BODY PARAGRAPHS

One paragraph for each key point, describing how your qualifications & experience correspond with the key qualifications specified in the advertisement. (*Remember, the only reason a company goes through this expensive process is to find someone who can meet its needs; prove that your experience and qualifications correspond directly to the criteria identified in the advertisement.*)

Remember the rules for writing paragraphs:

- begin with a topic sentence
- develop one main idea in each paragraph
- be clear and specific, using positive, achievement-oriented language

I have seven years experience as a direct mail copywriter.

weak

Seven years practical experience as a direct mail copywriter has equipped me with the ability to prepare your direct mail solicitations.

adequate

As a direct mail copywriter for seven years with Smith & Jones Ltd., I increased the return rate of catalogue orders by 24% and total sales by 35%.

better

III CLOSING PARAGRAPH

As in any sales letter, the primary objective in the closing paragraph of your letter is to stimulate action – in this case, to invite you for an interview. The first three paragraphs told them *why* they should invite you to the interview – now tell them *how* to do so.

In the closing paragraph, you will formally request an interview and provide them with a simple means to do so (“Please contact me at the email address below”), including a time reference if necessary (“between 5:00 and 6:00pm”) and then *remember to put your email address below!*

sample job advertisement:

The key phrases to which a cover letter must refer have been highlighted.

Public and Community Relations Associate

Established in 1903 as the first automobile club in Canada, CAA South Central Ontario is a progressive Membership organisation. From the original mandate to represent the interests of motorists, the Company has expanded the range of products and services to include Travel, Insurance and Automotive Services. Today, we have a team of more than 200 employees working hard to deliver top quality products and unparalleled service to more than 260,000 Members. CAA South Central Ontario is on a Journey, to be the #1 Service Organisation in North America, as we provide security, value and peace of mind to our Members.

We are currently seeking a full time Public & Community Relations Associate to be part of the CAA SCO Marketing Team. Reporting to the Communications Manager, the Public and Community Relations Associate will create a positive public image of CAA SCO as the motorists advocate by promoting CAA SCO programs, services and special events to Members, the general public, media, government and related organisations.

Specifically this position will have the following responsibilities:

1. Work with CAA SCO Marketing, Business Lines and Presidents office to ensure successful execution of community events, specifically our 100 year anniversary planned events.
2. Establish strong relationships with community groups and organisations to raise CAA SCO's profile as an organisation committed to safety.
3. Develop communication material (i.e. media releases, newsletters, articles, website content) that bolster CAA SCO's image.
4. Support internal business lines and corporate communication (i.e.. speeches, reports)

Working in an environment that involves intense activity, high energy, and multiple projects, the successful candidate will have **a college diploma preferably in the communications or public relations field** and **a minimum of 3-5 years experience with public relations/media or event planning**. **Demonstrated experience in program and event planning** is key to the success of this role, as well as **experience working with community groups**. You are a powerful and innovative presenter with **exceptional communication and interpersonal skills** such as conflict resolution and relationship building. You are an **expert user of Microsoft office and are familiar with Illustrator, InDesign and Photoshop**.

If you are interested in this exciting opportunity please submit your resume and cover letter to Laura Courtney, Recruitment Specialist to careers@caasco.com or fax 905-525-7930.

Laura Courtney
Recruitment Specialist
CAA South Central Ontario
Organisational Effectiveness
905-555-1520 Ext. 2268

sample cover letter:

Ms Laura Courtney
Recruitment Specialist
CAA South Central Ontario
careers@caasco.com

14 June, 2016

**Important note for all letters:
Never ever ever begin any
professional letter with "I..."**

Dear Ms Courtney,

Please accept this letter and the accompanying curriculum vitae as an expression of my interest in the advertised position of Public and Community Relations Associate with the Canadian Automobile Association of South Central Ontario listed on the Globe & Mail careers site.

After completing a Master's degree in Corporate Communications in 2006, in the past six years, I have worked with a wide variety of local stakeholders to develop effective public information materials (including media releases, newsletters, articles, website content) to engage and solicit the active support of several community-based organisations.

As the Director of Communications with the Green Ribbon Campaign (GRC), I regularly work on multiple and simultaneous projects throughout the year. At present, I am organising the many important last-minute details of our annual Father's Day picnic next weekend, planning the schedule for our Summer Run (to be held in August), and our Annual General Meeting and fundraising dinner at the end of December. As part of the preparations for our Father's Day picnic, I have prepared media kits for distribution to the many local newspapers, television and radio stations with whom I have established good working relations. I will serve as the Campaign's media spokesperson throughout the event.

An important part of my role at GRC includes responsibility for community relations and volunteer recruitment for the WRC. In this capacity, I make regular presentations to schools, churches and community centres as well as to business luncheons, seminars and government departments. Since completing an intensive university-level programme in computer graphics software (including Illustrator, InDesign and Photoshop), I have used these skills to create materials for these presentations. As a result of the relationships I have succeeded in building with these and other groups, the GRC has exceeded its fundraising objectives and has been able to expand its outreach programme and to raise awareness within a number of new communities.

I would look forward to meeting with you at your convenience to discuss how my experience might contribute to the continued and future success of the CAA South Central Ontario.

Please contact me at (416) 555-1234 or by email at ajbenham@server.com at your earliest convenience in order to arrange an interview.

Yours faithfully,

Andrew J. Bennett-Hamley
encl. curriculum vitae

6. AT THE INTERVIEW

The fact that you have been invited for an interview means that you have the basic qualifications for the job – but at the interview, you will be assessed closely for **your ability to meet** three main criteria:

- i) Ability (*Can* you do the job?) Bring your portfolio to provide evidence of your abilities.
- ii) Willingness (*Will* you do the job?)
- iii) Manageability (Will you be a pleasure – or a pain – to supervise and to have around?)

THE DECISION TO HIRE YOU (OR NOT TO HIRE YOU) WILL BE INFLUENCED BY THE WAY IN WHICH YOU ANSWER – AND REACT TO – THESE FOUR QUESTIONS:

I WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN TO APPLY TO THIS COMPANY/FOR THIS POSITION:

If you have done your research into the company **and** the job (based on the details given in the advertisement and a look at the company's website and/or annual report), you will be able to answer this question – if you haven't, you won't. A good answer would be some variation on:

“I am very interested in working for an organisation that _____, and your advertisement attracted me because of _____ and _____.”

II WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR ME (OR BRING TO THIS COMPANT/DEPARTMENT)?

As discussed, the reason why companies spend the time and money to recruit, interview and train a new employee is because they have *a problem* and they are looking for someone who can help to resolve it. As a manager or executive with the company, the interviewer will be looking for evidence that your particular combination of skills, experience and characteristics can solve their ‘problem’.

With this question, the interviewer is asking whether you will be able to help the company to solve its problems and to meet its goals and objectives. If you have done your research, you will be able to answer this question – if you haven't, you won't. You must be prepared to provide specific information that will answer this question to the satisfaction of the interviewer.

III WHAT KIND OF PERSON ARE YOU?

- i) Will you be difficult to supervise and/or to correct?
- ii) Will you be difficult for other employees to get along with?

You will answer this question by **everything you say and do during the interview**. It is likely that **nothing** about you will escape the attention of the person conducting the interview, including:

- your awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses
- your ability to communicate clearly, effectively and positively
- your degree of hesitancy/confidence in answering questions
- the care with which you researched (or didn't research) the company and the position
- evidence of your enthusiasm for this position/this company
- your values and level of knowledge (based on the things that do or don't impress you)
- your hairstyle and manner of dress (**including the state of your shoes**), your personal hygiene, including body odour and amount of perfume/cologne, your breath, teeth and fingernails
- your body language, including the way you use your hands
- whether or not you interrupt the interviewer when s/he is speaking
- whether you make eye contact
- whether you showed courtesy to the receptionist (interviewers often ask them after you leave)

S/he will also be looking for any signs of:

- dishonesty or lying (By this time, the interviewer has probably already spoken to one or more of your previous managers and may know much more about you than you realise.)
- irresponsibility, laziness, inattentiveness, lack of motivation, or an inability to follow instructions
- arrogant or aggressive behaviour
- tardiness or tendency not to keep appointments (Did you arrive on time for the interview?)
- tendency to complain or to blame things on others

IV HOW MUCH ARE YOU GOING TO COST ME?

- i) What is the lowest salary you will accept? (Don't ask about £ until offered the position)
- ii) How long will it take to train you for the job?

IN ADDITION, BE PREPARED FOR THE FOLLOWING TEN QUESTIONS WHICH ARE ALSO OFTEN ASKED BY INTERVIEWERS:

1: TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

The concern behind the question:

That there is something in your background that will make you A Bad Employee™ and that s/he won't ask the right questions to bring it out

The point you need to get across to address their fear:

You would make a good employee, capable and productive, that you have a professional attitude and that you have demonstrated this in your performance in your previous job(s)

2: WHAT KIND OF WORK ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

The concern behind the question:

That it isn't the same as the position the company is looking to fill

The point you need to get across to address their fear:

You have done your research and understand the nature of this position, and that the type of job you want (at this point in your career) is consistent with the position the company wants to fill

3: WHAT CAN YOU BRING TO THIS COMPANY (OR DEPARTMENT)?

The concern behind the question:

That your skills are not relevant to the needs of the position s/he is looking to fill

The point you need to get across to address their fear:

You have done your research and understand the nature of this position, and that you have skills and abilities that will allow you to make a useful contribution to the company or department

4: WHAT ARE YOUR LONG-RANGE CAREER GOALS?

The concern behind the question:

That this position is not relevant to your career goals and that, if hired, you will consider this a temporary job and stay only until you find another job more consistent with your ambitions

The point you need to get across to address their fear:

Based on your research into the company and the position, you know that it represents a valuable opportunity to gain the _____ skills/experience you will need to achieve these career goals

5: DON'T YOU THINK THAT THIS JOB IS BENEATH YOUR ABILITIES?

The concern behind the question:

That, if hired, you will only stay until you find something else

The point you need to get across to address their fear:

Stress that this job offers the opportunity to learn valuable _____ and _____ skills

6: HAVE YOU EVER DONE THIS KIND OF WORK BEFORE?

The concern behind the question:

That you don't have the necessary skills or experience to do the job

The point you need to get across to address their fear:

That your education and/or previous experience has prepared you for the responsibilities of this position -- or that your _____ skills are transferable (Give specific examples)

7: WHAT IS/ARE YOUR GREATEST WEAKNESS(ES)?

This is one of the most common questions posed in interviews; be prepared with an answer.

The concerns behind the question:

That there may be a relevant shortcoming in your character (or even worse, that you are unaware of your own weaknesses) which may be a significant obstacle to your ability to function effectively and/or productively in this company/department

The points you need to get across to address their fear:

That, like anyone else, you have limitations, but that you are aware of them and make constant efforts to improve – but they will not prevent you from being able to make a valuable and constructive contribution to the continuing success of the company and department

8: WHY DID YOU LEAVE YOUR LAST JOB? (or any of the possible variations)

The concern behind the question:

That you don't get along with people – *especially with the managers who will give you directions*

The point you need to get across to address their fear:

That you **do** get along with people, and your attitude towards former boss(es) and co-workers proves it. **Never** criticise a former boss. This is a good time to refer to letters of commendation.

9: HOW OFTEN WERE YOU ABSENT FROM YOUR LAST JOB?

The concern behind the question:

That, if hired, you will prove to be reliable and/or that you will often be absent from work

The point you need to get across to address their fear:

Stress your belief in the importance of being a reliable employee – and then live up to your word (*Remember – this employer will be a future reference*)

10: HOW IS YOUR HEALTH?

The concern behind the question:

That, if hired, you will often be absent from work due to illness

The point you need to get across to address their fear:

That you are a hard worker and that you have no health problems that would interfere with your ability to be at work regularly

See: <https://jobs.theguardian.com/article/the-top-ten-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them/>

TECHNIQUES SOMETIMES USED BY INTERVIEWERS (from *Executive Skills* by Minkoff)

- i) Tell me about the distribution network for luxury sportswear in Southeast Asia
- ii) Sell me your necktie
- iii) What would you do if one of your salespeople wasn't reaching the sales targets?
- iv) What is important to you in a job? or What are your long-range goals?
- v) How do you motivate a team of salespeople?
- vi) Judging by the way you dress, I would say that you are someone who never takes risks
- vii) How do you feel about being away from home for three months in the year?
- viii) What is it that you don't like about me?
- ix) How do you handle pressure and stress?
- x) How do you feel after a failure and what do you do?

TAKE TO THE INTERVIEW A PROFESSIONAL-LOOKING FOLDER WITH

- i) a *clean* copy of your CV
- ii) your professional portfolio (rather than transcripts of your marks or anything you claim, **this** is the evidence you must provide of your ability to produce professional-quality work)
- iii) the *originals* of letters of recommendation (the interviewer may want to make copies)
- iv) the *originals* of your academic qualifications

PERSONAL APPEARANCE AND BODY LANGUAGE AT INTERVIEWS

Even though we are often unaware of it, we are strongly influenced by the messages of non-verbal communication. Therefore it is important to recognise – and to try to control – these unconscious messages if you want to convince the interviewer that you will be a valuable addition to the team.

Your appearance, style of dress and your body language will send subtle signals about your: maturity, attitude, professionalism, ability to undertake the assigned task(s), willingness to accept supervision and/or correction, as well as your capacity to integrate into the company, team or department.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE:

- A suit (or blazer and dress pants) and tie for men or a jacket and skirt for women (ideally dark or navy blue as this colour connotes a serious, conservative and confident professional)
- A *freshly ironed* white (or plain, light-coloured) shirt (or blouse)
- No sexually provocative clothing
- *Freshly shined* dress shoes (**never** wear open-toe shoes or trainers to an interview) and clean, dark socks without holes (Many interviewers believe that the state of your shoes accurately reflects your attitude to 'things below the surface')
- Clean, combed/brushed hair (preferably conservatively styled) and clean hands and fingernails
- Make sure that your breath is sweet and clean (Take a lozenge before meeting the interviewer)
- Minimal (ideally **no**) jewellery. If you have facial piercings, remove them for the interview
- Minimal (ideally **no**) makeup and **no** cologne, perfume or aftershave (You are not there to meet potential mates)

BODY LANGUAGE

DO:

- Greet the interviewer with a *moderately* firm handshake (but wait for the interviewer to initiate it); match the interviewer's degree of firmness and give a quick 'eyebrow flash'
- Ensure that your hands are clean and dry (if your hands perspire, carry a handkerchief in your pocket and dry your hands just before entering the interviewer's office or shaking hands)
- Look at the person to whose question you are responding (but without staring)
- Do not adopt either a submissive or dominant stance or position
- Recognise – and respect – the interviewer's personal space throughout the interview
- Choose a chair with a straight back, sit up straight in the chair, and lean forward slightly
- Unbutton your jacket as you sit down
- Subtly expose your palms occasionally (makes you appear open, friendly with nothing to hide)
- Occasionally 'steeple' your fingers when considering a question (but be aware that, if overused, this can give the impression of being condescending)

DO NOT:

- Sit until invited to do so (Doing so takes liberties with the interviewer's personal space)
- Fidget with things (If you do, the interviewer may not ask you to stop, but will congratulate him/herself for having identified an irritating, anal-retentive person before they were hired.)
- Hold your folder or portfolio in front of you (puts a barrier between you and the interviewer)
- Fold your arms across your chest (sends the same message as above) or interlock your fingers behind your head (makes you appear arrogant and superior)
- Stare constantly at the interviewer (look left and right occasionally *but never down*)
- Adjust your tie/clothing (shows insecurity and is often interpreted as a preening gesture)
- Slouch in your chair with your hands in your pockets or your thumbs in belt (makes you appear insolent and has aggressive sexual overtones – especially if interviewer is the opposite sex)
- Pull on your collar/scratch your neck (suggests that you are tense, or possibly hiding an untruth)
- Pick at bits of lint (If you notice lint on your clothing, it is better to ignore it)
- Cross your legs away from the interviewer (forces you to turn away from the interviewer), cross your ankle over your knee (shows whatever is on the bottom of your shoe), or grasp your leg
- Dangle one shoe from the toe of your foot (This sends a signal of sexual attraction)

ALWAYS REMEMBER TO SEND A THANK YOU LETTER AFTER THE INTERVIEW!

Good luck!

(And remember... no-one on their deathbed ever wished that they'd spent more time at the office.)

Rutherford

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 2001

Young Job-Hunters Grapple With Formal New World

By Melinda Ligos
New York Times Service

NEW YORK — The interview was over five minutes after it began.

Ron Donoho, executive editor of San Diego magazine, had barely ushered a job prospect into his office to discuss an internship when he stumped her with what he thought was an easy question.

"All I did was ask her what she could offer the magazine," Mr. Donoho recalled. But the woman, a recent college graduate, froze.

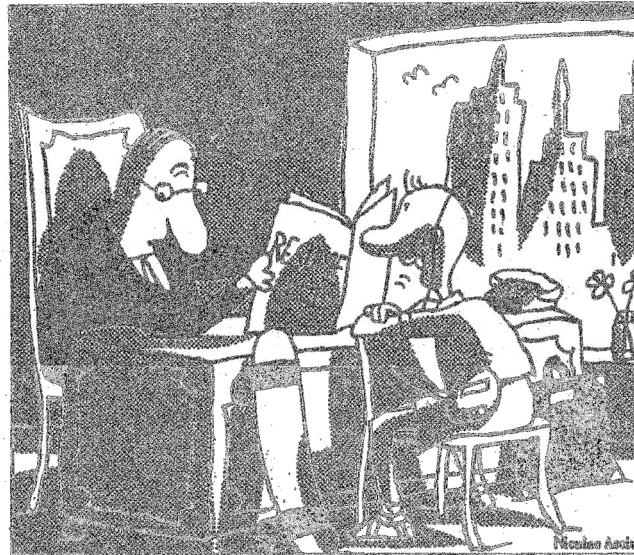
"All she could say was, 'Himmummm, that's a toughie,'" he said. "Then she added, 'I was more wanting to hear what you could do for me.'"

A few hours later, in an apparent attempt to redeem herself, Mr. Donoho said, the candidate sent him an e-mail message on her qualifications for the news reporting post.

The note began: "Besides the occasional hangover, here's what else I could bring into the office," and proceeded to list attributes she seemed to feel would make her more desirable, including her sense of fashion. She did not get the job.

Experts say that such candidates are becoming increasingly common. Many young workers who entered the marketplace in the recent boom years never learned the traditional rules of hunting for a job, from showing up for an interview in a suit to following up with a thank-you note. Now that the job market has tightened, though, more and more job hunters are scrambling to master these basic skills.

For the most part, "20-somethings have never had to compete for jobs" in such a climate, said Allison Hemming, president of the Hired Guns, a temporary-



staffing agency based in New York. She founded the Pink Slip Party, a Manhattan club for people who have been laid off from dot-com jobs. "They're used to being pursued, not being the pursuer."

Certainly, the job market was much different for those who entered the employment world in the mid-1990s. For instance, the U.S. Conference Board's index of help-wanted advertising fell from 82 in July 1995 to 58 last month.

Young job candidates who find they have to sell themselves, Ms. Hemming said, often do not even know where to look for their next job.

"These guys have relied strictly on the Internet and

headhunters in the past," she said. "Now, headhunters aren't as interested in this age group, and so a lot of these people have no clue how to go at it on their own."

Employers say candidates who manage to land interviews are increasingly unprepared — sometimes woefully so — for the interviewing process.

"Many can't provide details to probing questions," said Paige Soltano, a hiring director for Bozell Group, a New York advertising agency. "If they tell you they completed a successful project at their old job, and you ask them why it was successful, they aren't able to give any details."

But the biggest difference that Ms. Soltano has noticed recently is the attire.

Although she is used to interviewing candidates in their 20s, Ms. Soltano said recent applicants had "reached a new low" in dressing for interviews.

"I see young women all the time who wear little sun dresses with bra straps showing, along with fancy flip-flops," she said. "This winter, I had guys coming in T-shirts and Army boots. It's as if no one ever taught them how to look for a job."

Ms. Hemming said she had even had to counsel members of her Pink Slip club on their hair for interviews, recently urging one young Web designer to dye his orange hair back to brown.

Larry Engelgau, president of Management Recruiters of Portland in Oregon, said that while most of the young people he saw were relatively polished, many were less than enthusiastic or even realistic.

"Folks in their 20s are still coming in expecting to get six-figure jobs right off the bat, and they seem put off when you tell them they might have to work their way up to that figure," he said.