

The 101-Guide to Searching for Jobs

Thinking about applying for the McMinnville WORKS program or looking for other opportunities? This is a great place to start. Read through to learn about the best practices for resumes, cover letters, and how to make your application stand out.

BEGINNING THE JOB HUNT

ONLINE SITES

Searching online is perhaps the easiest and quickest way to find opportunities. The problem is quantity over quality. Filling out an online form is an option, but if this is the route you choose to go, always follow-up. Interviewers get hundreds of emails a days from these sights and it's up to you to stand out. Here are some hints for online applications:

- **Check if your school has a job posting board first.** Often college and universities have their own job posting site that is available for their students only and this can be a great place to start.
- **Keep a list of every job you have applied for online.** If someone asks for more information, you'll want to know exactly what you applied for and what resume you used.
- See if you can **make the application personalized** to someone at the company. Saying Dear _____, is always more impressive than "To Whom it May Concern."
- **Save your documents with your name in the title** to help companies organize your information.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

If you have a dream job, or are searching for what your passion is, informational interviews are a fantastic way to learn more about what a career in any given field can look like. If you found

a job opportunity on your college or university's job board, it's likely someone in charge of the postings has a connection for you. Here are some tips for informational interviews:

- Always dress as though you are in a formal interview.
- **Come prepared with detailed questions** that show you have researched the company, interviewee, and the job that they do.
- End the interview with the question **“Is there anyone else you know that I should talk to?”**

BUILD YOUR NETWORK

We know, you're sick of hearing the word networking, but indulge us. The most surefire way to get a job is to know someone who is offering one. Building a network takes time and effort, but the rewards are worth it. Here's some tips on building your network.

- **Ask for informational interviews** from professionals you know, and then ask them for connections to people they know.
- **Attend local job fairs, career expos, or conferences** to meet professionals from different fields.
- **Follow-up** with the connections you make to build relationships.
- **Join a region-wide, statewide, or nation-wide group** relevant to your dream career.
- **Create a LinkedIn account** and use it to make connections.

RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS

Once you find the right job to apply for, it's important that your resume and cover letter are up to minimum standards. Businesses get so many applications a year that if your resume or cover letter have even a simple mistake, it may automatically be put in the reject pile. Read on to learn some tips for both resumes and cover letters.

RESUMES

A resume should be constantly updated to reflect your accomplishments throughout life. It's the easiest way to show why you would be qualified for the job. Here are the “need-to-knows” regarding resumes.

- **Customize your resume to every job you apply for.** Every job is slightly different and your resume should play to the strengths of the position.

- **Keep it to one page.** Someone looking at hundreds of resumes is only giving about 10 seconds to each one. They will not take the time to flip the page and keep reading.
- **Read it out loud.** It may seem silly, but reading your resume out loud can help you find the grammar and spelling mistakes your mind glosses over.
- **Use action verbs.** Some applications, especially online applications, use automatic tracking that highlight certain verbs before a human ever looks at your application. Using the right words can help you stand above the competition.

COVER LETTER

A cover page is the first chance you get to let an employer know something about yourself, show off your writing skills, and connect on a deeper level than your resume is able to. Expect to write a cover letter for every resume you send. Here are some tips to make the most out of your cover letter.

- Your cover letter should cover **three points**: why you are interested in the company, why they would benefit from hiring you, and a promise to follow up that tells them when and how the follow-up will happen.
- **Leave space at the bottom to sign** the letter by hand and type your printed name under the signature. Scan the cover letter with the signature back into the computer if it needs to be sent online.
- It should only be **1-3 paragraphs long** and should never go over a page.
- **Address the cover letter to the person you expect to be reading it.** If you cannot find this information, personalize it to the best of your abilities.
- **Keep a copy of every letter** you send so you can refer to it if you get an interview.
- **Create a customized letterhead** so the company can easily find your contact information
- **Proofread** your cover letter and then proofread it again.

THE INTERVIEW

If you have made it the interview portion of the hiring process, congratulations! You are already ahead of many other applicants. Interviews can seem intimidating, but with enough preparation it becomes a less daunting task. Here are our tips on how to be a step ahead of the other candidates.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- **RESEARCH. RESEARCH. RESEARCH.** The more you know about the company and the person interviewing you before you begin, the more comfortable you will be asking deeper questions than “what does an average day at this job look like?”
 - Referring to past projects the company has worked on and other components of the company you like, such as their philanthropy, shows you care.
- **Pick out your outfit the day or days before.** Researching will help with this. Often it is better to go with too formal of an outfit than too casual. If you are worried you will be too formal, you can always shed a blazer or sportcoat before you go in.
 - Always pin your hair back so it does not get in your face while you speak.
 - Arrive clean and fresh. When it comes to perfume and cologne, less is more.
- **Arrive early.** You should be sitting in the reception area 10 minutes before the interview begins. Not only does this give you a chance to get acclimated and go over your resume and cover letter, it shows you care.
 - Note: coming in more than 10 minutes early may be seen as an inconvenience to the employer and should be generally avoided.
- **Be polite and cordial with the receptionist.** The receptionist is part of the company and can often inform the interviewer on how you behaved.

THE INTERVIEW

- The best way to answer interview questions is with a story. Though this may seem counterintuitive, almost every question can be answered with one of eight stories. To prepare for the interview questions write down eight different stories that you think highlight skills within yourself.
 - Use the **STAR method**. The stories should describe the:
 - **Situation:** State what needed to be accomplished/the situation at hand.
 - **Task:** Tell what you needed to do to fix the problem or create success.
 - **Action:** Explain what steps you took to complete the task.
 - **Results:** Give the results of the actions. In an interview, all stories you tell should have a positive ending.
- **Be yourself.** Though you need to be polite and professional, the company you work for should share aspects of your personality and disposition. If it’s not a good fit, you probably wouldn’t last long at the company even if you were hired.
- **Take notes.** Throughout the interview there will probably be points you want to follow-up on or questions you think of to ask. It’s completely appropriate to take short notes during the interview.

- **Come prepared.** Always have copies of the resume and cover letter you used when applying in case there are multiple people in the interview. Also come prepared with a portfolio of your work relevant to the position you are applying for.
- **Ask questions.** You should write six to eight questions before coming into the interview. Though you may only ask two to four, the more questions you have prepared the more likely your questions will not be answered during the interview.
 - Make your questions as detailed and personalized as possible.
- **Make eye contact.** If you are being interviewed by more than one person make sure you are splitting the eye contact evenly.
- **Don't be afraid to look nervous.** Being nervous means you care, so don't worry if you need a moment to breathe or think about the response to a question, the interviewer understands.

FOLLOW-UP

- When your interview is over, ask for a **business card** from everyone present.
- Send **handwritten thank you notes**. This is standard protocol in the business world.
- Send a **thank-you email**. People like to be appreciated.
- Let the interviewer know in the thank you note/email when you will be contacting them for further information and then follow-up with them. You never know when another position might open up. Keeping your information fresh in the interviewer's mind makes you a top candidate when another job opens up.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Finding and securing a job is not an easy task, and the more lucrative the job is, the more competition you will have. Luckily, it is easier to set yourself apart than you might think. Remember to network and be prepared. The more effort you put into your job search, the more likely it is you will land a job you love.