

# *Career Services* **Career Guide**



**ForsythTech**

*Education For Life*

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- > Take an inventory of your personality and interests.
- > Research occupations that interest you.
- > Ensure career choices work with realities and commitments.
- > Learn about education options.
- > Get experience through internships and volunteering.
- > Plan and conduct your job search.

## 4-Step Career Development Process

# 1

### INSIDE

Who am I?

- > Physical & Personal Attributes and Character Qualities
- > Temperaments
- > Abilities and Aptitudes
- > Strengths and Weaknesses
- > Attitudes

What's Important to Me?

- > Life and Work Values
- > Interests

# 2

### OUTSIDE

Awareness/Exploration

- > World-of-work (Occupational Clusters, Characteristics, etc.)
- > Education and Training Options (Vocational/Technical/Colleges/Universities, etc.)
- > Become aware of both supportive and non-supportive aspects in your life

# 3

### CLOSER LOOK

Take a detailed inspection of Steps 1 and 2 above. Narrow them down to best fit you.

May include:

- > Informational Interviewing
- > Job Shadowing
- > Part-Time Work
- > Externships/Internships
- > Volunteer Work

Usually includes:

- > Decision Making
- > Goal Setting

# 4

### MATCHING UP

Take action on decisions made in Steps 1 - 3.

Usually includes:

- > Cover Letters
- > Interviewing
- > Job Hunting
- > Résumés

May include applying for:

- > Financial Aid
- > Military
- > College or Vocational/Technical School
- > Job(s)
- > Peace Corp

## Career Decisions

### Self Assessment

**Self assessment is the first step of the career planning process.** During a self assessment you gather information about yourself in order to make an informed career decision. A self assessment should include a look at the following: values, interests, personality and skills.

- 1 Values:** the things that are important to you, like achievement, autonomy and status
- 2 Interests:** what you enjoy doing, i.e. playing golf, hanging out with friends and taking long walks
- 3 Personality:** a person's individual traits, motivational drives, attitudes and needs
- 4 Skills:** the activities you are good at, such as writing, computer programming and teaching



There are two types of values: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic values are related to the work itself and what it contributes to society. Extrinsic values include external features, such as earning potential and physical setting. Values inventories will ask you to answer questions like the following:

- > Is a high salary important to you?
- > Is having a prestigious job important to you?
- > Is it important for your work to make a contribution to society?
- > Is it important for your work to involve interacting with people?

### Interest Inventories

Interest inventories are frequently used in career planning. When you complete an interest inventory you are asked to answer a series of questions regarding your interest. Dr. John Holland provided a system of matching interest with one or more of six types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional. Dr. Holland then matched these types with occupations. The results of your interest inventory are compared against the results of this study to see where you fit in. Are your interests similar to those of a

school teacher or those of an accountant? Interest inventories will ask you to answer questions like the following:

- > What are your hobbies? Reading-thought about library work? Outdoor activities-what about Landscape Design? Carpentry?
- > What are your "fantasy" jobs?

### Personality Inventories

Many personality inventories used in career planning are based on a theory by psychologist Carl Jung. He divided people into eight personality types-extroverts, introverts, thinking, feeling, sensing, intuition, judging and perceptive. Individuals of a particular personality type are better suited to certain careers. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is used for the assessment of personality. It measures differences in traits between individuals. It looks at how one energizes (Extroversion vs. Introversion), perceives information (Sensing vs. Intuition), makes decision (Thinking vs. Feeling), and demonstrates his or her lifestyle (Judging vs. Perceiving). Personality inventories will ask you to answer questions like the following:

- > Are you best at leading or being an individual contributor?
- > Do you get your energy from working on a team or alone?
- > Do you like routine or excitement in your job?

### Skills Assessment

When deciding what field to enter, you need to determine what skills you have. You should look at what you are good at, as well as what you enjoy doing. While you are assessing your skills, you should consider the time you are willing to spend on acquiring more advanced or new skills. Skills assessments will ask you to answer questions like the following:

- > Are you creative or artistic?
- > What school subjects come easily to you?
- > What are your natural talents and what skills have you learned?

### Values Inventories

Your values are possibly the most important thing to consider when you are choosing an occupation. If you don't take your values into account when planning your career, there is a good chance you will dislike your work and therefore not succeed in it. For example, someone who needs to have autonomy in his work would not be well suited in a job where every action is decided by someone else.

## Job Search

### Online Job Application Tips

Follow directions. Make sure you enter correct responses into the correct fields.

Update your résumé. Your résumé should include up-to-date information that is tailored to that particular company and industry.

Include keywords in your résumé. Look at the job posting and use the same words the employer uses to describe your skills.

Use statistics and numbers to describe your job accomplishments and duties. (i.e., supervised 6 bakery/deli clerks per shift)

Keep your résumé simple (see plain text résumé on page 12 of this booklet), especially when you apply electronically.

Keep a copy of your résumé, the actual job description and other pertinent information.

Take extra time to answer optional questions.

Think about your salary expectations. If you are asked to provide your salary expectations and you are not allowed to enter “Open” or “Negotiable”, it is considered acceptable to enter all zeros in that field before submitting.

Attach a cover letter with your résumé if the application allows it.

Proof read your completed application before hitting “send.” Not all online applications have spell check. Typos are not acceptable and will count against job seekers.

Save a completed online application for your file and/or print out a copy before submitting in case you need to make changes or resubmit.

Consistency count. Information provided by the job seeker in an online application must match other information provided because it may be used when conducting background checks. Any inconsistencies, inaccuracies or misrepresentations may be used to decline an interview or be used as legal grounds for potential disciplinary action if you are hired.

### Employable Skills *Employers Seek*

#### Adaptability

- > Solve problems effectively and quickly
- > Work well with diverse populations
- > Develop a habit of curiosity
- > Think creatively

#### Communication Skills

- > Be able to communicate orally, concisely and persuasively
- > Use active listening skills
- > Be curious enough to probe for critical information
- > Be able to ascertain that you and another have a common understanding of the message

#### Computer Skills

- > Be able to use a major word-processing program
- > Be able to use a data base management program
- > Be able to use the Internet and World Wide Web
- > Be able to use e-mail

#### Group Interactional Skills

- > Be able to solve problems in a group
- > Be able to judge and engage in appropriate behavior
- > Be able to think creatively in a group
- > Be able to deal with and absorb stress
- > Be able to interact effectively with others

#### Self-Management Skills

- > Set goals for yourself
- > Generate internally the motivation to accomplish your goals
- > Believe in your self-worth
- > Take actions that will ensure your personal and career development

#### Interpersonal Skills

- > Be able to achieve personal goals, as well as influence others
- > Know how, when, why and by whom decisions are really made

## Job Search

### Career Tips for People With Disabilities

Advertise your skills, not your disability

#### Know Your Rights

According to the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC), employers may ask if you will need reasonable accommodations to perform essential functions of the job. It is illegal to ask about the existence, severity or specific nature of your disability.

The American with Disabilities Act (1990) requires that an employer provide reasonable accommodations – any modification or adjustment to a job or work environment that will enable a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions. Employers are not required to make accommodations that cause undue hardship to the company.

Prepare to present documentation of your disability when requesting accommodations at work. Know the type of job accommodations you will need.

Research companies employing diverse individuals.  
Visit [www.business.disability.com](http://www.business.disability.com).

Anticipate the type of questions employers are likely to ask and have your answers prepared.

DO visit Forsyth Technical Community College Disabilities Services Office at Allman 148.

#### *Do Not:*

- 1** Focus on your medical history or health during an interview.
- 2** Mislead or exaggerate your abilities to a potential employer.
- 3** Neutralize, defend, apologize for or explain away your disability.
- 4** Start a cover letter with details of your disability; feature your strengths and abilities instead.

## Tips to Get the Most Out of Career Fairs

**Career Fairs** offer benefits to job seekers as well as recruiters. Job seekers get a chance to maximize the number of employers with whom they make contact in a short amount of time. Career fairs offer job seekers the opportunity to apply for a job but also to talk about their professional qualities directly to the employer.

**Do your homework.** You can review the online directory of employers before the job fair. Spend extra time gathering background information on organizations so you can ask very focused questions. This shows assertiveness and impresses the representatives. It shows you have a genuine interest in them.

**Bring extra copies of your résumé to submit to employers.**

**Dress appropriately.** Present a professional image to the employer. Business casual is appropriate attire. Men should wear neatly pressed slacks and collared shirts. No jeans or sneakers. Women should wear a pantsuit, skirt or simple black or neutral color dress. No jeans or sundresses.

**Allow yourself adequate time.** Fairs are typically less crowded in early hours and are busiest during the lunch hour and at the end. Fairs close promptly at publicized ending times to accommodate employers' travel arrangements.

**Prioritize the employers you are most interested in.** You may want to start with the employers you are least interested in. This allows you to hone your approach and to be most confident when you approach the employers you are most interested in. Balance your time. Assume that you will need to wait to speak with some employers.

**Introduce yourself.** Extend your hand, say "Hello", state your name and express your interest in the company/organization. Have your résumé ready to give to the employer.

**Take notes when you inquire about next steps and the possibility of talking with additional managers.** Write down names, telephone numbers, e-mail address, etc. of managers and other staff in the organization whom you can contact later. Note specific employer information sessions and projected hiring dates that will affect you.

**Be flexible.** Some representatives attending fairs are there to share their experiences working at the company and may not be involved in the hiring process. If the employer rep does not know specifically about job openings within the company, ask for the name of someone who can help you.

**Ask the representative for his/her card and send a thank you card.** First, you have a direct contact with the company, including the proper spelling of the representative's name, direct telephone line, etc. Secondly, a brief thank you acknowledges the help they gave you. Thirdly, sending thank you notes is a good professional habit.

**Respect employers' materials.** Be sure to check with employers before taking materials or giveaways from their tables and do not take material still packed in boxes.

**Be courteous.** In addition to presenting yourself, you also represent your department and the College. All of the organizations at the fair are there because of their interest in hiring Forsyth Tech students. Demonstrate sensitivity to other students waiting to speak with employers by keeping your questions brief. Take a business card to continue conversation at a later time.

In addition to presenting yourself, you also represent your department and the College.

## Résumé Writing



### Resume Writing

A resume is used when applying for full-time jobs, part-time jobs, and work base learning. It may also be requested as part of, scholarship, and fellowship applications. A resume is always accompanied by a cover letter unless you hand-deliver it to an individual. Your resume should not be a complete history, but rather a summary of what you have to offer. Your goal is to create a resume that will attract an employer's interest and result in an interview. It must make an immediate positive impact. Create one general resume that will work in most situations. Customize it later for specific opportunities.

### Get started

If you are updating or fine-tuning a current resume, take a look at the samples provided in this guide and on-line. Evaluate formats and choose one that presents your accomplishments in the best light. First timers may want to start with a resume Worksheet found in the Career Guide. We invite you to bring your resume to the Career Development Center to have it critiqued by a Career Counselor. Call to make an appointment with a Career Counselor at 734-7206.

### Resume templates

Certain websites and software offer resume templates for you to use to construct a resume. We advise you to avoid using templates since they often prevent you from developing a resume that utilizes the space on the page effectively and organizing your information the way you would prefer. We recommend using a blank word document and looking at samples as a guide when creating your resume.

### Create a structure

Create your heading and place these two categories first.

1. Objective
2. Education

Select two to five additional categories from the list below. Choose those that best present your strengths and prioritize them. A first year student may choose "Honors" next. A graduating student may choose "Projects" or "Experience" next.

- Courses
- Projects
- Experience
- Related Experience / Other Experience
- Skills (subcategories optional)
- Computer Skills
- Study Abroad
- International
- Leadership
- Honors & Activities
- Choose your own!

### Choose content

#### Heading

Include your name, current address, phone, and email (be sure your email address is professional).

#### Objective

In one or two lines, briefly state the type of position you seek or career area of interest. You may include specific skills you will contribute, allowing the employer to match these to positions. Customize your objective for each position, when possible. A general objective is advisable for situations such as career fairs.

#### Education

Begin with your current degree and work in reverse chronological order (including college transfer. Highlight your best GPA, overall or major. Study abroad fits well here, but you may prefer to Create a separate section for this experience.



### Courses

Use this section for one of the following reasons: (1) You are a freshman and you do not have much to put on your resume. (2) Your major is not well known; selected courses will help to clarify. (3) You have taken some hot courses in your field that will be of interest to employers. (4) Your coursework reflects your true career interest more than your major.

### Projects

List career-related projects and go into detail if space permits. Where practical or space permitting, add your role within project description – chances are an employer will ask. Note the project sponsor, when appropriate. This section is a jewel, often underestimated by students, and valued by employers.

### Experience

List work based experience, volunteer, and other work experiences in reverse chronological order (most recent first). Select those most relevant to the reader. Include name and location of the employer, your title, and the dates you worked. Use action verbs (see list) and create short statements in bullet or paragraph form to describe your duties, skills developed, and accomplishments. Consider adding work challenges you overcame, and/or what you learned or taught yourself as well as the value to you and the employer.

### Skills

Create a list or use subcategories (such as laboratory, computer, language, technical, artistic) to organize your skills.

### Computer Skills

Prioritize a list of skills developed in class, at home, and at work. Use subcategories (such as operating systems, programming languages, software) if they help to

organize information. Use descriptive words (such as proficient, experienced, exposed, familiar) to help describe your ability.

### Honors & Activities

Prioritize honors and activities from campus and the community. Include awards, leadership, organizations and clubs, athletics, conferences, travel experiences, interests and hobbies. Significant items from high school may be included. Note leadership roles or specific accomplishments when appropriate.

### References

It is not necessary to place a statement such as “References Available Upon Request” on your resume. Employers assume that you will provide them if requested.

### Adapt for electronic delivery

When employers ask you to submit your resume electronically, consider the following suggestions.

### Email

Your email message can either serve as a brief introduction or it can contain your cover letter. It is well written, concise, and professional. It is not casual. Use a descriptive subject line to catch the reader’s eye. Attach your resume to the email. We recommend a test run by emailing your resume to yourself and be sure to correct any problems you discover with transmission.

### Proofread carefully

Employers report that a typo or grammatical error on a resume is one of the top reasons for rejection. Once you have reviewed your resume carefully, ask a friend to look it over. It is often difficult to catch your own mistakes

## Action Verbs

### Make Your Résumé Easier to Read

When creating your résumé, using concise wording is essential. Often the success of your résumé rests upon an employer wanting to read through the entire document. Making it as easy as possible to read and showcasing your skills, education and experience are very important. Action verbs are a great way to effectively list your job duties. Whether used in present tense to describe your responsibilities at your current job or in past tense to illustrate previous duties, action verbs are helpful to you and the employer because they are easy to use, easy to read and easy to understand.

Below is a selection of common action verbs (in past tense) used to give potential employers an idea of what you had at previous jobs.

Activated	Completed	Enhanced	Illustrated	Operated	Selected
Actuated	Created	Examined	Investigated	Organized	Specialized
Addressed	Customized	Executed	Launched	Oversaw	Staffed
Administered	Decreased	Facilitated	Learned	Performed	Stimulated
Advised	Delivered	Forecasted	Lectured	Planned	Supplied
Assessed	Demonstrated	Funneled	Located	Prepared	Targeted
Assisted	Designed	Founded	Logged	Prescribed	Terminated
Balanced	Detected	Generated	Maintained	Presented	Tested
Began	Determined	Guided	Managed	Proposed	Took Charge
Budgeted	Developed	Handled	Maximized	Raised	Trained
Built	Devised	Headed	Minimized	Reconciled	Updated
Calculated	Directed	Helped	Motivated	Recommended	Upgraded
Chartered	Edited	Hired	Navigated	Represented	Used
Collected	Educated	Hosted	Negotiated	Researched	Verified
Communicated	Ensured	Identified	Observed	Saved	Volunteered
Compiled	Eliminated	Illuminated	Obtained	Secured	Wrote

There are many more words you can use; consult your dictionary and thesaurus for additional suggestions. Think of how you can use these words to improve your résumé and remember them in place of “responsible for...”

Once you learn the words, see the examples below on how to use them.

### **Jones & Keller HVAC, Mocksville, North Carolina** **HVAC Service Technician**

#### **May 2013 - Present**

- Install, repair and maintain rooftop units, split systems, central plants, VAV boxes, boilers, controls and other mechanical equipment
- Test, troubleshoot and repair systems by identifying malfunctions and replacing parts and components
- Read diagrams, specifications, drawings, blueprints and schematics
- Demonstrate exceptional time management skills by organizing and prioritizing high volume of work orders to ensure maximum quality and service to customers

### **Forsyth Medical Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina** **Senior Licensed Practical Nurse**

#### **June 2011 - March 2014**

- Provided full range of nursing care
- Collected patient data, both objective and subjective, and entered information into kardex/ppc
- Treated patients with chest, oral, nasal and tracheal tube
- Assisted with burn treatments, wound care, suture and staple care and decubitus ulcer care

## Avoid Résumé NO-NOs

Nothing can eliminate you from consideration for a job as fast as an unprofessional résumé.

**Avoid these NO-NOs.**

### **1** Spelling and Grammatical Errors

Use spell check and get someone to proof your résumé and cover letter.

### **2** Identifying Yourself

Do not use “I”, “me”, “my”, “our”, “mine”, etc..

### **3** Avoid Using Passive Statements

Avoid using “Responsible for...”  
Use action verbs to make your résumé stand out.

### **4** Avoid “a”, “an” and “the”

For example, don’t use: “Created a career guide for the Career Center.”  
Instead use...”Created career guide for Career Center.”

### **5** Use Statistics When Appropriate

For example, use: “Increased production sales by 10%.” Always include accomplishments and experiences related to the position.

### **6** Keep It Limited

Keep your résumé limited to one or two pages. Elaborate on pertinent information during the interview.

### **7** Graphics and Pictures

Do not put graphics or pictures on your résumé. Your résumé should address your skills, knowledge and abilities. Create a portfolio to show off your creativity.

**SARAH MASON**

235 Jones Street  
Advance, NC 27006  
336-940-5686

[masonsarah@gmail.com](mailto:masonsarah@gmail.com)

**SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATION**

- Highly skilled in developing classroom environments that are stimulating, fun, and diverse to accommodate all learning styles
- Strong planning, organization, and leadership skills
- Patient, confident and committed to working with children in a supportive and child-centered environment
- Ability to establish positive relationships with children, parents, and colleagues

**EDUCATION**

Forsyth Technical Community College  
**A.A., Associate in Arts**

Winston-Salem, NC  
May 2015

Forsyth Technical Community College  
**A.A.S., School-Age Education**

Winston-Salem, NC  
December 2011

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Kids-R-Us Daycare  
**Preschool Teacher**

Clemmons, NC  
2010-Present

- Establish and enforce rules for behavior, and procedures for maintaining order
- Organize and lead activities designed to promote physical, mental and social development, such as games, arts and crafts, music, storytelling, and field trips
- Teach basic skills such as color, shape, number and letter recognition, personal hygiene, and social skills
- Observe and evaluate children's performance, behavior, social development, and physical health
- Provide a variety of materials and resources for children to explore, manipulate and use both in learning activities and in imaginative play
- Assimilate arriving children to the school environment by greeting them, helping them remove outerwear, and selecting activities of interest to them

Greenway Park Elementary School  
**Teacher Assistant**

Burlington, NC  
2007-2010

- Observe students' performance and record relevant data to assess progress
- Present subject matter to students under the direction and guidance of teachers, using lectures, discussions, or supervised role-playing methods
- Prepare lesson materials, bulletin board displays, exhibits, equipment, and demonstrations
- Organize and supervise games and other recreational activities to promote physical, mental, and social development

**REFERENCES**

Available Upon Request

## Functional Résumé Example

### **Amy Johnson**

237 Tower Street  
Jamestown, NC 27532  
336-263-8965  
[alj237@gmail.com](mailto:alj237@gmail.com)

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To obtain the Administrative Assistant position at Winston Corporation	
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Forsyth Technical Community College <b>A.A.S., Office Administration</b>	Winston-Salem, NC May 2012
<b>SKILLS</b>	<b>Records Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create and updated electronic files</li><li>• Proofread files to ensure accuracy and completeness</li><li>• File confidential, hardcopy documents according to alphabetical system</li><li>• Follow security guidelines for access to files</li></ul> <b>Customer Service</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide responsive customer service in retail setting</li><li>• Use telephone, email, and in-person communication skills to work with customers</li><li>• Recognize for excellent customer service in February 2012</li><li>• Collaborate with volunteers and vendors when planning events</li></ul> <b>Computer &amp; Office Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Used Microsoft Word to create professional business documents</li><li>• Created and used Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to keep track of and organize numeric/financial data for community service organization</li><li>• Demonstrated resourcefulness with Internet searches and other web-based applications</li><li>• Created new databases in Microsoft Access, ran queries and reports for group presentations and assignments</li><li>•</li></ul>	
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>Greensboro Urban Ministry</b>	Fall 2013-Present
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prepare and serve meals to the hungry every Tuesday evening</li></ul>	
	<b>Habitat for Humanity</b>	Summer 2011
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assisted in the building of new homes for low income families in Winston-Salem, NC</li></ul>	
<b>WORK HISTORY</b>	<b>Assistant Manager</b> , Office Depot, Greensboro, NC 2010-2013 <b>Cashier</b> , Walgreens, Clemmons, NC 2008-2009	

## Plain Text Résumé Example (Use When Applying Online)

Kimberly Matthews  
2603 Dunbree Drive  
Winston-Salem, NC 27103  
336-263-7432  
ktm123@psi.com

### SENIOR BOOKKEEPER

#### QUALIFICATION SUMMARY

Senior bookkeeper with over 12 years of experience in the public and private sector. Expertise in corporate profit and loss and management of balance sheets. Supervisory experience, including directing a staff of three.

#### EDUCATION & SKILLS

A.A.S., Accounting, May 2013  
Forsyth Technical Community College, Winston Salem, NC

CPA Eligible – Passed two subjects on first examination; Eligible to complete remaining test

Computers – Proficient in Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, Quicken, ProSystems FX and Internet/Web

#### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

##### SENIOR BOOKKEEPER

- \* Corporate Accounting, Inc., Greensboro, NC, March 2010 – Present
- \* Manage staff of 4 junior bookkeepers
- \* Present budget reports at quarterly board meetings and annual shareholders conference
- \* Assist with independent auditor in reviewing corporate financial statements

##### BOOKKEEPER

- \* Giant Way Food Stores, Winston Salem, NC June 2005 – February 2010
- \* Promoted to Officer of the Chief Accountant upon initial hiring
- \* Summarize external audit reports for internal company reports
- \* Review suppliers and distributors for compliance with corporate accounting policies

##### AUDITOR

- \* H & R Block, Mocksville, NC, May 2003 – June 2005
- \* Review individual and small business tax forms for accuracy
- \* Maintain 100% correction ratio for all reviewed forms
- \* Represent company at local Chamber of Commerce meetings

KEYWORD SUMMARY: accounting, bookkeeping, tax, budget, analyst, accuracy, record keeping, manage, corporate, computers, Quicken, CPA, auditing, ledger, balance, data, budgets

## Requesting References

Before you approach a reference provider, take a few minutes to provide him or her with the following information:

- 1** A copy of your most recent résumé including specific information that may or may not appear on a standard application form. For instance, membership in campus organizations, volunteer work, awards, leadership positions, etc.
- 2** The position description for the job for which you need this letter.
- 3** Specific information regarding why you are interested in this position. How does this position fit into your career goals?
- 4** Specific information regarding your special interests, background, motivation and personal qualities that may distinguish you from other applicants.
- 5** Three phrases describing your strengths and weaknesses.
- 6** Only request references from sources that are able to give credible information in regards to your work ethic and integrity. Use former professors, teachers and employers. Never use family members as a reference.
- 7** References should be listed as below:

**Andre Folk**  
423 Luke Drive  
Winston-Salem, NC 27103  
336-751-5695  
[afolk@aol.com](mailto:afolk@aol.com)

### **REFERENCES**

**Janice Johnson**  
Manager, Chico's  
5236 Birkdale Lane  
Greensboro, NC 27165  
336-785-1235

**Sharon Davis**  
Instructor  
Forsyth Technical Community College  
785 Fitness Lane  
Advance, NC 27006  
336-998-6514

**Michelle Brooks**  
Director, Sylvan Learning Center  
521 Montfort Drive  
Winston-Salem, NC 27106  
336-734-6253

## Building a Cover Letter

Job seekers often overlook them, but cover letters tell employers the job for which you are applying. Cover letters also provide a great chance for you to sell yourself to the hiring manager. Try to get complete information on the person doing the hiring so you can address your letter to someone specific. This shows you did your research. Make sure your letter is professional, short and friendly. Cover letters are meant to be read first and should be on the same type of paper as your résumé. Don't forget to sign your cover letter.

[Use this template as a guide to create your paper-based cover letter.](#)

**Your Street Address**  
**City, State, Zip Code**

**Date**

**Recipient's Full Name With Salutation** (Dr., Mr., Mrs., Ms., etc)  
**Recipient's Job Title**  
**Company Name**  
**Work Street Address**  
**City, State, Zip Code**

**Dear (Dr. Sanders:)**

**First Paragraph:**

The first paragraph of your letter should include information on why you are writing. Mention the position you are applying for. Include the name of a mutual contact, if you have one. Be clear and concise regarding your request.

**Middle Paragraphs:**

The next section of your cover letter should describe what you have to offer the employer. Convince the reader that they should grant the interview or appointment you requested in the first paragraph. Make strong connections between your abilities and their needs. Mention specifically how your skills and experience match the job you are applying for. Remember, you are interpreting your résumé, not repeating it. Try to support each statement you make with a piece of evidence. Use several shorter paragraphs or bullets rather than one large block of text.

**Final Paragraph:**

Conclude your cover letter by thanking the employer for considering you for the position. Include information on how you will follow-up. State that you will do so and indicate when (one week's time is typical). You may want to reduce the time between sending out your résumé and follow up if you fax or e-mail it.

**Complimentary Close:**

Respectfully yours,

**Signature:**

Handwritten Signature (for a mailed letter)  
Typed Signature

## Cover Letter Example

Shannon Smith  
205 Lake View Drive  
Winston-Salem, NC 27104

September 10, 2014

Mr. Michael Moore  
Graphic Arts Director  
Michael Moore Graphic Designs  
4565 Jonestown Road  
Winston-Salem, NC 27103

Dear Mr. Moore:

Please consider me an applicant for the position of Graphic Designer. I was excited to learn of your opening on Indeed.com, as your position fits my background, talents, and career goals. After reviewing your Website, and researching your company and its products and services, I would consider it a privilege to work for your company.

I am a recent graduate of the Graphic Arts and Imaging program at Forsyth Technical Community College. As a freelance designer, I have gained valuable experience designing advertising and marketing materials including logos, booklets, Web sites, and posters. I am proficient with industry-standard design software including Illustrator, InDesign, Dreamweaver, and Photoshop.

I am a creative, reliable, hard-working designer who can work well in a collaborative team environment or individually. My career goals are to continue to learn and grow as a graphic designer while utilizing my education, knowledge, and creative skills to benefit my employer.

The accompanying resume can serve to provide you with greater details of my accomplishments and what I have to offer. I look forward to meeting with you to further discuss my qualifications, goals and portfolio of sample work. You may contact me directly at any time at 336-754-5986 or [ssmith@gmail.com](mailto:ssmith@gmail.com). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Shannon Smith*

Shannon Smith  
Enclosure

## E-mail Correspondence Examples

To: kellyj@eri.com  
From: mark.davis@aol.com  
Subject: Thank You

Dear Ms. Johnson:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview for the position available in your production department. I want you to know that this is the sort of job I have been looking for, and I am enthusiastic about the possibility of working with you.

Now that we have spoken, I know that I have both the experience and skills to fit nicely into your organization and to be productive quickly. The process improvements I implemented at Argo, Inc. increased their productivity 25%, and I'm confident that I could do the same for you.

Thanks again for the interview; I enjoyed the visit.

Respectfully,  
Mark Davis

To: Chris.Casper@ttb.com  
From: Johnsmith456@gmail.com  
Subject: Résumé

Dear Mr. Casper:

Please accept the attached résumé as an expression of my interest in the position of Sergeant as posted in our recent memorandum. I believe that my training, years of experience and proven record of leadership and service as a police officer make me an excellent candidate for this position.

I believe that our job as police officers is to serve the community and that all members of the public deserve to be treated with respect. This is something I emphasize in my training activities with new recruits, and it is the guiding principle that I would want to communicate to my squad.

I am confident that I have the knowledge and skills to be an outstanding sergeant, someone who can inspire and motivate others to achieve superlative results that will make the department proud. I would be pleased to have the opportunity to prove myself in this role.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

Sincerely,  
John Smith

## Salary History and Requirement Letter Example

**Susan Grant**

5200 Jonestown Road\*Greensboro, NC 27235  
336-333-2512\*susan234@pcd.net

April 10, 2014

Mrs. Brandy Hodges  
BC&B Incorporated  
7723 Moore Drive  
Lexington, NC 28523

Dear Mrs. Hodges,

This is in reply to your request for my salary history.

Based on the assessment of experience, skills, education, and research of industry and regional salary standards for this position, I have determined that my salary requirement is a figure between the annual range of \$34, 000 and \$37, 000. It is negotiable, depending on the job requirements and benefits offered.

Thank you very much for your interest. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

*Susan Grant*

Susan Grant

## Portfolios

### What is a Professional Employment Portfolio?

A portfolio allows you the opportunity to organize information about yourself in a professional manner. It is typically assembled in a binder with materials/entries kept in clear plastic sleeves. Textile designs, art work and interior architecture majors may use a larger case/notebook designed specifically for this purpose.

Portfolios help you organize items that demonstrate your skills in a format that will highlight your strongest attributes to potential employers. As you grow professionally, your portfolio will continually change and be updated.

### Why Do I Need a Portfolio?

In an interview a portfolio can serve as proof of your skills and abilities. It can provide samples of your work, lists of your skills, pictures of your work and/or letters

of recommendation. You can use it to market yourself to potential employers. Preparing a portfolio can give you an edge on the competition because not everyone takes the time to prepare one.

### How to Use Your Portfolio

Make the potential employer aware of the fact that you have a portfolio. Direct attention to it in your cover letter or in the reference section of your résumé. A statement at the end of your résumé stating “Portfolio available for your review” should suffice. Remember to bring an abbreviated copy of your portfolio with you to interviews. It is not necessary to take your entire portfolio with you to an interview. Bring only the sections of your portfolio that include the attributes you want the employer to notice. This “mini-portfolio” can be compiled and presented in a smaller binder in place of your complete portfolio. You can rearrange your portfolio putting in items you want the interviewer to see at the front.

### Pointers for Portfolio Use

During the interview, you can use your portfolio to support your responses to the interview questions and to demonstrate the scope of your ability.

Do not rely solely on your portfolio during the interview. It is not necessary to lead the employer through every page.

Be sensitive and perceptive to the interviewer’s style and needs when deciding to utilize the information in your portfolio.

Keep in mind that in some interview situations referring to your portfolio may be appropriate due to time constraints or other factors.

Refer to it only when appropriate, and you will find it to be a useful tool both in job searching and in self assessment of your goals and accomplishments.

**Items you can include in your portfolio are virtually endless.** Consider objects that help depict skills or attributes visually such as pictures, documents and written text. Start your collection now. Items which can impress an interviewer in a few seconds overview without the necessity of significant reading are most desirable. Below is a list of items to include:

**Copies of college transcripts**

**Lists of special trainings, honors, certificates and awards**

**Documentation of activities, achievements, etc.,** that demonstrate that you know how to learn and communicate

**Newspaper clippings** that address special achievements

**List of references**

**Letters of recommendation and thank you letters** from advisors, professors and employers

**Samples of your work** such as drawings and brochures

**Copies of professional licensure or certification and special licenses** such as chauffeurs license

**Evidence of campus involvement** including pictures

**Photos of you in action** leading a group, teaching, training, participating in volunteer work, etc.

**Evidence of communication, technical and computer skills** including a list of special software programs with your level of skill and samples created from various programs

**Examples of work to support your verbal and written communication abilities** including published articles, class papers, samples of technical writing, outlines of presentations and newspaper/newsletter articles

**List of student organizations** related to your field of study and social groups, teamwork activities, special projects and leadership positions you held

### Organizing Your Portfolio

To begin you will need an attractive three-ring notebook (preferably zippered), sheet protectors and extra wide three-ring tabs with labels. Sections you may want to include are résumé and letters of recommendation, work samples, awards and other categories to suit your occupational goal. Neatness and careful planning and organization are essential in producing a portfolio which can be an asset.

## General Guidelines for Interviewing Skills

Interviewers have high expectations of their candidates for potential hire. The greatest expectation of a candidate is that you research the organization and understand the nature of it before entering for your interview. Your goal is to demonstrate your interest and qualifications for the position in which you are interviewing. It is known that the best candidate does not always get the job. Therefore, many qualified candidates are eliminated due to lack of preparation or inability to articulate their interest or ability of the job.

Since the interviewers will often meet with hundreds of candidates in order to find five to seven potential employees, **below is a list of suggestions** to make sure you are well prepared to gaining employment with the company you desire.



### Analyze the Position

- > Understand and know all aspects of the job in which you have applied and are now ready to interview for. Check resources if you are unclear about some things.
- > Make sure that your qualifications match up to what the company is looking for in a candidate. Don't fluff your résumé but do elaborate on your experiences in the interview.
- > Participate in an internship in the field you wish to pursue. An internship will help you gain interest and firsthand experience of the field.

### Research the Organization

- > It is imperative to research the company to determine the dynamics of the organization that you wish to represent.
- > A demonstrated knowledge of the company helps convince the employer of your interest in the job.
- > Only through research will you be able to answer the question "Why do you want to work for our company?" Go online and find out as much information as you can about the company and anyone that you will be interviewing with.
- > Through research you should become knowledgeable of the companies:
  - > Hierarchy system (if they have one)
  - > Products or services
  - > Size
  - > Competitors
  - > Location (including international organizations if applicable)

*General Guidelines for Interviewing Skills  
continued on the next page*

## General Guidelines for Interviewing Skills *Continued*

### Market Your Skills

- > Compare your skills and qualifications to those of the job to make sure there is a direct connection between the two.
- > Express yourself clearly by defining your relative experience to what the job is asking for by re-evaluating your résumé.
- > Articulate related education experience and recognize your strengths and weaknesses as it relates to you obtaining the position.

### Make a Good First Impression

- > Nonverbal skills and the manner in which you present yourself will be evaluated in addition to your verbal responses to the interview questions. Watch your body language and think before you speak!
- > Arrive 10-15 minutes early for your interview. This allows you to have a few extra minutes to think about your responses as well as check your last minute appearance.
- > Smile often and greet others in the office as a courteous manner. Sometimes the little people make a lot of difference in the hiring phase.
- > Give a nice firm handshake, maintain eye contact and speak clearly to all parties of the interview committee when answering questions.

### What to Wear

Dressing for the interview may be different from how one might dress day-to-day on the job. People usually get sloppier in their appearance instead of improving after they have been hired. The key to dressing for an interview is not what is right or wrong but what is appropriate. Remember, you only have one chance to make a first impression.

#### Men should wear:

- > Two-piece business suit – preferably navy or other dark color
- > Long-sleeved oxford cloth shirts in white or light blue
- > Conservative necktie in terms of color and pattern – avoid cartoon characters and other graphics
- > High-fitting dark socks – avoid light colored socks with a dark suit
- > Business-style shoes – no casual shoes
- > Minimal cologne

#### Women should wear:

- > Two-piece suit in a neutral color with a knee-length skirt as opposed to pants
- > White or neutral colored blouse with conservative neck line
- > Closed toe pumps with medium

heels – avoid open toe high heels with distracting decorations

- > Skin-colored hosiery
- > Conservative nail polish – avoid bright colors
- > Understated make-up – don't wear too much where your suit is wearing more than your face
- > Small studded earrings instead of long dangly ones
- > Long hair pulled back nice and neat – avoid “big hair” or elaborate styles

#### Last minute things to check for:

- > Hair out of place
- > Cover body art such as tattoos and piercings
- > Pop a mint to make sure your breath is refreshing when speaking with the employers

### Overall Remember:

- > Take time to think before answering any question. Stick to the subject and always answer questions in terms of the job only!
- > Don't ask about salaries or benefits on the first interview. The employer will bring that up at the appropriate time.
- > Don't exaggerate on experience but do state the facts.
- > Mention all qualifications for a job that you have obtained. No one knows what you can do unless you tell them.
- > Don't criticize previous employers. This makes you look bad and makes the employer wonder if you would criticize their company.

## Interviewing

### Tips on Preparing for a Job Interview

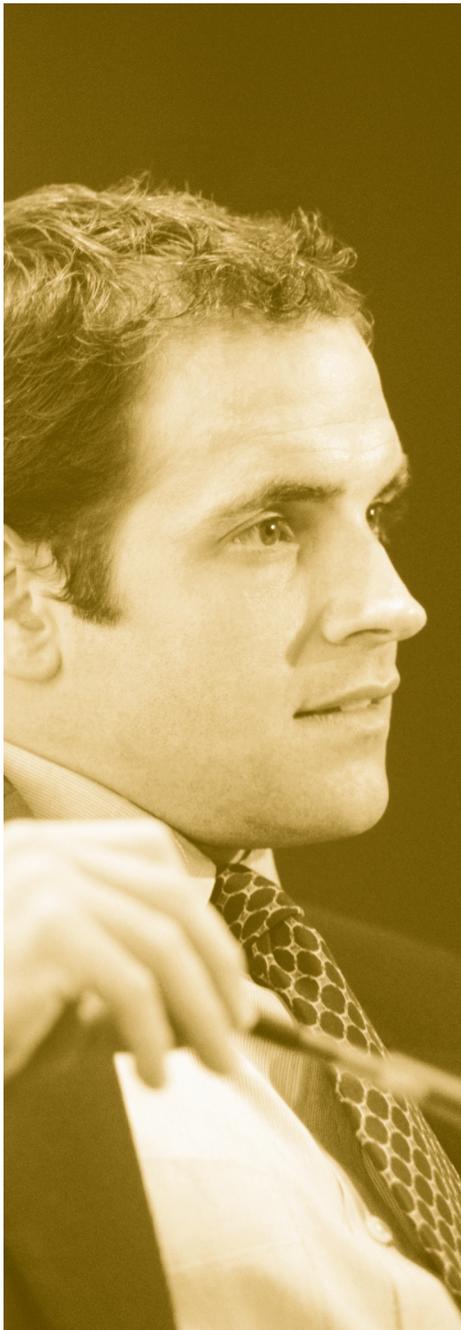
- 1 **Do your homework.** Research the company beforehand so you can showcase that knowledge during the interview. This will boost your credibility with the interviewer and will help you to formulate intelligent questions to ask him or her.
- 2 **Know where you're going.** Make sure to find out where the office is and how to get there, how long the trip will take, the name and phone number of the person you'll be meeting with and available parking. Save yourself time and unnecessary stress by knowing these things before heading to the interview.
- 3 **Look the part.** Your clothing should be neat, pressed and professional looking. As it can be difficult to know the culture of the office environment beforehand, err on the side of conservative. Even if everyone's wearing jeans when you arrive, you're still probably better off having shown up in a suit. However, don't be afraid to inject some personality into your look, and don't neglect the details. Make sure to have a fresh haircut and clean, manicured nails.
- 4 **Rehearse beforehand.** Conduct a mock interview with a career counselor as practice. Prepare answers to common questions the interviewer is likely to ask, such as:
  - > "What are your strengths and weaknesses?"
  - > "Why do you want to work here?"
  - > "Why should we hire you?"
  - > "Tell me about yourself."
- 5 **Secure your references.** Find at least three key people – former supervisors, colleagues, or instructors – who are willing to serve as your professional references. Be sure to secure their permission beforehand, and be certain that they will speak highly of you if contacted by a potential employer.
- 6 **Arrive early.** Be sure to arrive at least 15 minutes before the interview. Visit the restroom and check your appearance in the mirror. Announce yourself to the receptionist to let him or her know that you have arrived and that you have an appointment. Turn your cell phone off so it doesn't ring during your meeting.
- 7 **Sell yourself.** The interview is your chance to shine, so now is not the time to be humble. Develop a 25-second sales pitch that sings your praises – a compelling overview of "why you?" that can be recited in the time it takes to ride the elevator. It should include your strengths, your abilities and what sets you uniquely apart from other applicants.
- 8 **Don't neglect to ask questions.** Based on your earlier research, ask how the responsibilities of the open position relate to the company's goals and plans for the future. Interviewers are often favorably impressed by candidates who show that they are knowledgeable about the organization.
- 9 **Follow up.** After the interview, don't forget to send a handwritten note or friendly e-mail thanking the interviewer for his or her time and consideration, as well as restating your interest and commitment to the position. If you don't hear anything after one week, call to politely inquire when they will be making a final decision.

# Interviewing

## Typical Interview Questions



## Responses



Question	Response
<i>Tell me about yourself.</i>	The interviewer is interested in the information about you that relates to your qualifications for employment, such as education, work experience and extracurricular activities.
<i>Why do you want to work for us?</i>	Focus on how your talents specifically meet the company's needs.
<i>Why should we hire you?</i>	Stress what you have to offer the employer, not how nice it would be to work there or what you want from the employer. Give concrete examples of your abilities, experience, knowledge and skills.
<i>How long are you planning to stay with us?</i>	Indicate that you intend to stay as long as you are still contributing and growing.
<i>What is your biggest weakness?</i>	Be honest. End on a positive note. Turn a negative into a positive or explain that it is something on which you are actively working to improve.
<i>Why are you leaving your present job?</i>	Never speak negatively about your former employer or manager. You want more opportunity to advance, more challenges and responsibility.
<i>What is your greatest accomplishment?</i>	Be as specific as possible. Cite programs created, awards, number of people you supervise, the money you saved the company, etc.
<i>How do you work under pressure and with deadlines?</i>	Assure the employer by providing relevant examples.
<i>What do you expect to be doing in five years from now? Ten years from now?</i>	The interviewer is looking for evidence of career goals and ambitions rather than minutely specific descriptions. The interviewer wants to see your thought process and the criteria that are important to you.
<i>Do you prefer to work alone or on a team?</i>	State your preference, but indicate what you are capable of doing.
<i>What are your short and long term goals?</i>	Indicate that you would like to improve your skills and that you intend to remain employed there for a long time. Your answer should be relevant to the position. Do not indicate that you want the job interviewer's job.
<i>How long will it take you to make a meaningful contribution to our company?</i>	Cite an example of how you learned quickly in a previous job and state that you will do the same in the new position.

## The Behavioral Interview

### What is It?

Behavioral interviewing is a technique used by employers in which the questions asked assist the employer in making predictions about a potential employee's future success based on actual past behaviors, instead of based on responses to hypothetical questions. In behavior based interviews, you are asked to give specific examples of when you demonstrated particular behaviors or skills. General answers about behaviors are not what the employer is looking for. You must describe in detail a particular event, project or experience and how you dealt with the situation, and what the outcome was.

### Examples of Behavioral Interview Questions:

- > Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?
- > Give me an example of an important goal you had to set and tell me about your progress in reaching that goal?
- > Describe the most creative work related project you have completed.
- > Give an example of a time when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
- > Give me an example of a problem you faced on the job, and tell me how you solved it.
- > Tell me about a situation in the past year in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
- > Give an example of when you had to show good leadership.

### Responding Well to These types of Questions:

- > The "S.T.A.R." technique is a good approach. Describe the Situations you were in or the Task you needed to accomplish; describe the Action you took and the Result.
- > Be specific, not general or vague.
- > Do not describe how you would behave. Describe how you actually behaved. If you later decided you should have behaved differently, explain this. The employer will see that you learned something from the experience.

### How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview

- 1** Make a list of past experiences that can demonstrate to an employer how you handle specific situations. Focus on behaviors such as problem-solving, leadership, good decision-making, teamwork or any other behaviors that you think the employer might be looking for. Also include situations that may have begun negatively, but which ended positively due to your efforts.
- 2** Do your research. Investigate the company by checking its Web site, talking to current employees or reading up on any published information about them. This will help you determine what types of behaviors they are looking for and will help you tailor your experiences to those needs.
- 3** Be specific. When asked how you handle a particular situation, include detailed descriptions of your actions, your thought processes and the outcomes.
- 4** Review both your résumé and your list of experiences prior to the interview. This will bring these experiences to the forefront of your mind and have them ready for the interview
- 5** Do a mock interview with a career counselor who will give you honest feedback (both positive and negative) regarding your answers. Try to use a list of questions that you have not already seen in order to get an accurate view of your ability.

## The Job Offer... Negotiating Salary

When you receive an offer, express your interest in the company and enthusiasm for the job. Many people take the first offer they receive and do not consider the benefits package. For instance, most individuals only look at the value of the salary and overlook the total package. Benefits (health and life insurance, sick leave, vacation time, 401K matching, tuition reimbursement, etc.) can be worth up to 30%-50% of your salary. If the company representative does not offer the information, ask about their benefit package.

Ultimately it is up to the employer to initiate the discussion of salary; you should not bring it up in an interview unless the employer does. Some employers will ask for your current or most recent salary. Get the employer to state a salary range first. If you state your requirements, chances are that your number will be lower than they anticipated. You may miss out on the higher salary they were prepared to offer. On the other hand, your number may be so high that you will be removed from consideration.

Ask for at least 24 hours after receiving the offer to make a decision, although you can ask for more if you are interviewing with other companies. Let the recruiter know that your career means a lot to you, and you want to be very sure you are making the right decision.

After you have reviewed the offer carefully, decide which points you would like to negotiate. Anticipate objections such as:

- > *"The budget won't merit it."*
- > *"That is what we pay new hires."*
- > *"That is the maximum pay for this position."*
- > *"You don't have enough experience."*

## The Negotiation

Start with a positive statement about your appreciation of the offer and interest in the position, then indicate that you are hoping to receive at least (name the figure) in salary or whatever you are negotiating. If you have other offers at a higher figure, you can mention them at this point, or use information from your research to back up your request. Ask if your figure is a possibility, if not, ask if there are other ways you can achieve your goal, such as company assistance with housing or a company car if needed, a signing bonus, an earlier salary review, or different options on benefits so you can take home more. Hopefully, the representative will be able to offer something you can accept. Even if your negotiations do not succeed, you have learned an important skill that will help you in the future.

Remember negotiating is a two-way street. It is an important part of the job search process. It requires professionalism and respect. **Use the following tips to guide you through the negotiating process:**

### 1

#### Evaluate the Offer Wisely

- > Identify a salary you can reasonably expect for the type of position
- > Identify your own salary needs according to your needs
- > When you receive an offer, evaluate it in relation to the job's other characteristics, including work environment, benefits and relevance to your long term career goals.

### 2

#### Communicate Effectively

- > Listen carefully. If the offer is less than you expected, let them know that, but state that you are still interested in the position if they want to reconsider this offer.
- > Begin any salary negotiation with reasonable requests and be willing to accept compromises like receiving additional benefits in place of a higher salary. That could include more money, training, tuition, more vacation time, a company car, a flexible schedule, stock options, on site daycare, etc.
- > If the same figure is offered a couple of days later, it is probably the last offer. In that case, you can ask for a salary review in six months to evaluate your performance and value or you can turn the job down, asking that they keep you in mind for future openings.

## **Coping With Rejection in the Job Search**

Accepting the reality that you will not be offered every job will help you survive the process emotionally. Setting realistic expectations is the initial step of coping with rejection.

Acknowledging your feelings is appropriate and important; however, dwelling on them and obsessing about failures is not a productive response. Floundering in negative thinking and emotions can appall you and cause you to abandon the activities that produce success.

Learn to become consciously aware of your emotional reactions and negative thoughts and choose to react differently.



### **Don't take it personally.**

Do not use the job interview as a measure of your professional worth. The decision not to hire you was based on the company's specific criteria and needs which may or may not have anything to do with your skills and abilities. That you weren't the perfect match doesn't mean that you are not an outstanding professional with excellent attributes.

### **Call the interviewer and ask for feedback.**

Ask how to improve your interview, and where your qualifications fall short. Do not push if the interviewer declines to give you feedback. Be appreciative for whatever feedback you do receive.

### **Focus on your strengths.**

It is easy to blame yourself and focus on your imperfections when faced with a job rejection. Focus on what you are good at and what you are passionate about.

### **Change your thinking.**

How can you reframe your perspective into a positive and confident one?

### **Ask yourself questions.**

Ask yourself questions so you learn from the experience. What would you have done differently? What did you learn from the interviewing process? How would you have handled yourself differently? By asking questions, we focus on learning, growth and move forward.

### **Acknowledge.**

Acknowledge that rejection is not about you as a person, but as a candidate for a particular position. Don't personalize.

### **Accept reality.**

Accept that rejection is a part of the job search. Buttress yourself emotionally to handle sadness that comes with rejection. Know that rejection is going to happen repeatedly throughout our lifetime; accept rejection as a part of life.

### **Relaxation techniques.**

Learn and use relaxation techniques. Take a class to learn some strategies that help you relax.

## Following Up With Your Career Development Plans

### Tips for Following Up With Your Career Development Plans

- > **Continue with your job search.**  
Exploring other opportunities can help the person make a final decision about taking the job if offered to him/her.
- > **Don't limit yourself to one interview.**  
Interviewing is a skill and practice makes perfect.
- > **Don't vacation too long without having access to a phone.**  
If you're job searching, you need to be accessible for potential employers to contact you.
- > **Don't appear overanxious.**  
Never beg for a job or try to explain your current situation to make people feel sorry for you.

- > **Volunteer if you're currently unemployed.**  
Don't sit and do nothing. Just because you're not getting paid doesn't mean you can't get the experience.
- > **Contact references.**  
Let them know you interviewed and that they may be contacted soon by the organization.
- > **Please seek help from the Career Services Office.**  
The Career Services Office can provide further assistance with your career or job search skills, résumé writing or interviewing skills. It is located in Room 148, Allman Center, Main Campus.

