



Congratulations!!

You've finished school and/or obtained a qualification in a particular field or industry. You're now more knowledgeable and more valuable than ever before! But to put your knowledge to good use, to make yourself more marketable and to be part of the country's dynamic economy, you need a job. JumpStart will help you to help yourself find one.

A Job-Search Strategy

Combine your self-knowledge (see Self-Knowledge) with lessons you've learned from surveying the job market. Develop an idea of the kind of job you'll need to kickstart your entry into the world of work, based on what's out there and what's in demand. Focus your efforts on companies that are relevant to your qualifications, experience, interests and goals.

Spend time on your strategy. Apply yourself to writing down job-search goals on a daily, weekly and monthly basis (see Goal Setting). For instance, commit yourself to setting up and participating in a certain number of interviews each week.

Do the required research. Read the business and career sections of as many newspapers as you can get your hands on. Explore trade journals. Surf the Internet for vacancies on company websites. Network (talk to people around you): family members, friends, teachers, lecturers, acquaintances and professionals. Ask them to suggest possible job opportunities for you, or to speak to their contacts on your behalf.

Experts suggest that networking should be the starting point in any job search. Why? Because advertising costs money and is seen as a last resort by many employers. In fact, advertised positions account for less than 3% of jobs available.

Part of your strategy could be to approach a recruitment agency, which specialises in helping job-seekers to find employment in your field of work. The agency will network on your behalf. Remember that you don't have to pay for signing up with a recruitment agency. The agency charges the company or client a fee for finding you.

As you go along, adapt your strategy. Fine-tune it. Or change it altogether. It may be necessary for you to compromise your career goals, at least temporarily, to seize opportunities that could serve as stepping stones to greater things. Especially if the job-search process becomes drawn-out.

You'll need a variety of documents to facilitate (ease) your successful passage along the jobsearch path. These are called...

Job-Search Documents

You've probably heard of the Curriculum Vitae (CV) and Cover Letter before. Now you're going to become an expert on both. These documents are crucial job-seeking tools. In addition, the presentation and accuracy of this written communication with a prospective employer can speak volumes about you and your potential. They are your first impression. So make them as close to perfect as you possibly can. They can be a foot in the door... or a door in the face!

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The Curriculum Vitae (CV)

A CV tells your story. It's a summary of your history, education, work experience, achievements, abilities and aspirations. Essentially, it advertises you and your skills – seeking to attract employers' attention, interest them in your potential, create the desire to have you in their company and stimulate the action required in getting you to the next step, the interview.

True or False? The best qualified people get the best job:

False. The best jobs usually go to the candidate who has done the proper research and who has developed the marketing skills to present him/herself well in a competitive marketplace.

Basic rules for CVs:

- Submit typed CVs only. Black ink on white paper. No frills!
- Ensure that your CV is spotless and wrinkle free
- Pay attention to layout, user-friendliness and easy access to information
- Always include a Cover Letter (not the same as a cover page)
- Number the pages of your CV
- Ensure that your name appears at the top of each page
- Modify your CV for each position
- Keep the information concise (to the point), specific (not vague) and relevant
- Never, ever lie or embellish (exaggerate) in your CV!
- Use formal language: no slang, no friendly phrases
- Grammatical and/or spelling mistakes (even typing errors) are unacceptable!
- Make sure your CV isn't too long. Maximum: three pages plus cover letter

Update your CV regularly, adding to it any new details regarding experience, abilities or qualifications. Postponing kills all deals. A quick response is vital. Have your CV on the desk of the recruiter within an hour of hearing of the position.

Your CV must be exceptional. It must stand out from the hundreds and hundreds of other CVs piled up on the hiring manager's desk. And it must distinguish you from every other applicant.

Compiling a great CV:

Use the following headings to structure your CV:

Personal Details:

Name and surname
Physical or postal address
Contact telephone numbers
Nationality
Gender
Home language
Other languages (specify level)
Driver's licence (if Yes, specify code)
Computer literate (Yes or No)

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Personal Profile: This provides a brief overview of your personality. For ideas, delve into your selfknowledge and keep it positive, simple and catchy.

Education: These details should be listed from your most recent studies backwards. That is, start with your post-graduate (after-tertiary) qualifications, describe your tertiary education and then refer to your secondary education. Use headings like Qualification, Period, Institution, Majors, Subjects and/or Achievements/Awards. Be brief, but do mention accolades (honours), like scholarships.

Work Experience: If you've done part-time, vacation or volunteer work, include it. Work backwards from your most recent employment and include details of any achievements, like Salesperson of the Month. Use headings like Organisation, Type of Business, Dates of Employment, Job Title, Key Responsibilities, Reason/s for Leaving and/or Major Achievements.

Additional Information: This is any other information that you think works in your favour: membership of professional bodies, computer skills, training courses, hobbies and interests and/or personal achievements like completing the Argus Cycle Tour. Show the employer what a great all-rounder you are!

Referees: Selecting referees (previous employers or people who can verify your good nature and skills, like teachers) is an important action in the job-seeking process, especially since CV fraud is so widespread. Referees are also a great way for employers to learn about your work performance and competencies. List three good (ideally, senior) referees, their names, job titles, relationship to you, business addresses and contact numbers.

Reference Letters and Certifications: Provide all reference letters and/or certifications required in an advertisement. If the ad doesn't specify or you're not sure, include a line in your CV to say that "Written reference letters and certified copies of my qualifications are available and will be provided on request". (You can certify your documents at any police station.)

A good tip for modifying a CV is to focus clearly on the specific job title and then match the CV to each requirement listed. Recruiters usually search for keywords through all responses, and if you've used the right keywords, you've made a good start!

The Cover Letter

There are two types of Cover Letter: the more common one in which you express your interest in an advertised vacancy, and the less common, unsolicited one in which you inquire about the possibility of working for a particular organisation.

Either way, the Cover Letter must accompany the CV. It's an introduction to you and your skills. It's the hook that lures the employer into reading your CV. And it should answer the key questions, "Why has this person written to me?" and "What can this person do for me?".

Basic rules for Cover Letters:

- Get to the point. Keep to a maximum of one page.

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- Present your letter in black ink on white A4 paper, preferably typed.
- Customise (modify) it for the company you're applying to.
- Address each letter to a specific individual with the correct name and job title: not "Dear Sir or Madam". Show the employer (or recruitment agency) that you have the initiative to find out who you're dealing with, which suggests that you'll make the same extra effort if you get the job.
- Use businesslike language and short, crisp sentences.
- Grammatical and/or spelling mistakes are unacceptable!

I am a passionate, dedicated and hardworking person with the ability to give every effort to my tasks. I am also reliable, thorough and unafraid of challenges. My time as a student has taught me to cope under pressure, to interact effectively with others, to plan and organise and to analyse situations in critical and creative ways.

Compiling a great Cover Letter:

Every element of your Cover Letter must be professional and impressive, but your opening paragraph should be particularly catchy:

I am writing in response to your advertisement for a [position as advertised] in the [date] edition of [newspaper/magazine etc]. As you will see, my qualifications, experience and passion make me a very suitable candidate for this position.

The main paragraphs should elaborate on your background. Always refer to the job requirements and substantiate (back up) everything you say by citing evidence:

I have a degree in Public Relations and I believe that this, together with my excellent interpersonal and communication skills, could help you to set up your new Customer Care Centre. As my CV indicates, I have call centre experience and have worked part-time in events management.

Go on to explain how you can benefit the company by adding value to it. Mentally list 10 things you're good at, extract the most impressive and link these to the specifics of the position:

I would like to work in an organisation in which I can apply my knowledge, abilities, creative thinking and experience in a practical way. I am highly motivated to accept responsibility and to develop myself professionally and academically. My ultimate goal is a career in corporate communications, as my interests and inclinations lead me to believe that I can excel in this field. The close of your letter should start with: I think that I would be a valuable addition to your company and I have pleasure in submitting my CV for your perusal.

Then specify your contact details and mention that you'll phone the company on a specific day to further discuss your suitability for the position. Make sure that you phone as and when you promised.

Delivering your CV "by hand" is the best bet. You can check out the company premises and maybe even meet your prospective employer in person, which will really set you apart from the competition.

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The Interview

Interviews can be pretty scary. Especially if you're a first-timer. But if you're prepared (and after reading this section, you will be), you can make a wonderful impression.

Preparing for an interview starts with research. So treat the interview process as a project and find out everything you can about the company (mission, market, competitors) and the industry. Ask around. Read the newspaper, particularly the business section. Surf the Internet. Arrange to collect a corporate brochure or an annual report.

Grooming: Make a special effort when grooming yourself for a face-to-face interview. Ensure that your clothing fits you properly; that your accessories are simple; and that your entire outfit suits the position in question. Suits in dark colours are usually safest. Tie back long hair. Use makeup, perfume or aftershave sparingly. Ensure that your nails, clothing and shoes are spotless. Never eat garlic or drink alcohol before an interview. And check your teeth for stray food.

Starting off: Arrive on time. Carry a folder containing your notes, paper, a pen, a diary, a copy of your CV and certified copies of your references and certifications. Keep it in your left hand so that you're ready to shake with your right. Start off with a nice confident introduction. Get the person's name and title correct. Then ask, "May I sit down?"

During the interview: Few people actually blow the interview. But they do fail to impress the interviewer with their capabilities and are easily forgotten. Focus on your qualifications and capabilities, but use one or two personal insights to make the interviewer remember you. Use anecdotes (stories) to illustrate your skills. Describe specific accomplishments. Even if you've never worked before, use your prefectship or membership of a soccer team to demonstrate leadership or teamwork abilities.

At the end of an interview, take out a list of your own questions to demonstrate your investigative skills and to show that you're particular about the company you work for.

End the interview in the positive and friendly manner with which you started. Shake hands and thank the interviewer for his/her time. Don't be discouraged if no offer is made and no specific salary is discussed. Wait a day or two and then send a brief e-mail or fax to thank the interviewer for having seen you. It's courteous and it'll remind him/her that you exist.

Tips

- Conduct mock (pretend) interviews.
- Make notes before and during the interview. That way, you won't leave anything out or forget to mention crucial keywords.
- Be consistent, measured and thoughtful in your answers.
- Speak slowly and clearly.

The more you know about an organisation, and the larger field in which it operates, the better-equipped you'll be to show how effectively you'd fit into the mix. An interview isn't a casual chat. It's a cross-examination. Be prepared.

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