

ELEVENTH EDITION

# Successful Writing at **Work**



**PHILIP C. KOLIN**

## **CHAPTER 7**

**How to Get a Job:**  
*Searches, Networking,  
Dossiers, Portfolios/Webfolios,  
Résumés, Letters, and  
Interviews*

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# Steps the Employer Takes to Hire

**From the employer's viewpoint, the stages in the search for a valuable employee include the following:**

1. Deciding what duties and responsibilities go with the job and determining the qualifications the employee should possess
2. Advertising the job on the company website, in on-line job posting sites, in newspapers, and in professional publications
3. Reviewing and evaluating résumés and letters of application
4. Having candidates complete application forms
5. Requesting further proof of candidates' skills (letters of recommendation, transcripts, portfolios)
6. Interviewing selected candidates
7. Doing further follow-ups and selecting those to be interviewed again
8. Offering the job to the best-qualified individual

# Steps to Follow to Get Hired

As a job seeker, expect to go through the following procedures:

1. analyzing your strengths and restricting your job search
2. enhancing your image
3. looking in the right places for a job
4. assembling a dossier and portfolio
5. preparing a résumé
6. writing a letter of application and filling out a job application
7. going to an interview
8. accepting or declining a job offer

# Analyzing Your Strengths and Restricting Your Job Search

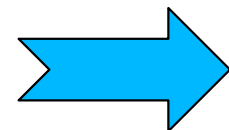
**Job counselors advise students to start planning for their careers several years before they graduate. Here are points to consider as you develop your professional career plans:**

1. Make an inventory of your most significant accomplishments and identify your greatest strengths.
2. Decide which specialty within your chosen career appeals to you the most.
3. Consider what types of working conditions most appeal to you.
4. Ask yourself what are the most rewarding prospects of a job in your profession.
5. Identify some of the greatest challenges in your career today.
6. Look into which specific companies or organizations have the best track record in hiring and promoting individuals in your field.

# Enhancing Your Professional Image

There are several steps you can take to help improve your chances of getting hired. Here are some suggestions:

- Attend job fairs and interviewing workshops.
- Go to trade shows.
- Join student and professional organizations.
- Apply for relevant internships and training programs or a temporary job in your profession.
- Ask instructors to critique your work in light of your career plans.



# Enhancing Your Professional Image (continued)

- Confer with your academic adviser regularly.
- Find a mentor.
- Consider developing competency in another language.
- Learn more about Web design.
- Do volunteer work.
- Write a blog.

# Looking in the Right Places for a Job

You can avoid the uncertainties of looking for a job by consulting the following resources for job-related information:

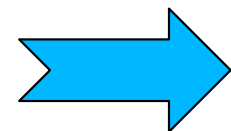
1. personal (face-to-face) networking
2. your campus placement office
3. online job-posting sites
4. newspapers
5. federal and state employment offices
6. professional and trade journals and associations
7. the human resources department of a company or agency you would like to work for
8. a résumé database service
9. professional employment agencies

# Using Online Social and Professional Networking Sites in Your Job Search

- Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are not only personal media sites. They are essential tools to help you find a job and advance your career.
- Use Facebook to start your network by finding former employers or co-workers, former instructors who might act as professional references, and even friends and classmates who may work at companies of interest to you.

# Promoting Your Best Image—Some Do's and Don'ts

1. Supply a current photo showing how you want employers to see you at an interview. Never use an unprofessional-looking photo.
2. Choose appropriate “likes” and “activities” relating to professional or community service work. Don't list any hobbies that detract from your professional profile.
3. Highlight your strongest career accomplishments, but be careful not to quote or reference someone without first obtaining that person's permission.
4. Ensure that your tone, words, and comments are ethical. Never use sexist, racist or obscene language.
5. Respect all the ethical guidelines of your current or former employer. Do not give out privileged information.



# Promoting Your Best Image—Some Do's and Don'ts (continued)

6. Check other sites where you may appear or be quoted to ensure you look and sound professional. (Google yourself to find these links.) Delete anything that makes you look unprofessional.
7. Be careful when blogging, even on your own site. Avoid criticizing colleagues, employers, or clients.
8. Keep information up-to-date and consistent. Do not bombard a potential employer with repeated small posts.
9. Verify that all video clips are clear and professional.
10. Be discreet and check your security settings to ensure that information about you is available only to those you want to have it.

# LinkedIn

- **LinkedIn** is a social network site whose purpose is to connect you to people who can help you professionally.
- Being a member of LinkedIn signals to prospective employers that
  - you are serious about pursuing your professional goals
  - you possess the qualifications to enter and advance in the world of work
  - that you want to participate in a forum to discuss and share professional information about your major/industry

# Five Ways LinkedIn Can Help Your Job Search

1. LinkedIn allows you to search for a specific type of job by targeting a particular specialized field, company, job title, or even zip code.
2. LinkedIn gives you valuable information about a company, such as its mission statement, the names of the CEO and directors, its products and services, its locations, its awards, and even its competitors
3. LinkedIn helps you to become part of a network and expand your list of contacts.
4. LinkedIn improves your search by including short recommendations from people in your network.
5. LinkedIn allows you to create a public profile that shows you are a professional.

# Establishing Your LinkedIn Network

Here are some of the individuals you might consider asking to be members of your network:

- current and former instructors
- former bosses, managers, or co-workers
- Individuals who belong to a professional organization you have joined
- community leaders you have worked for
- individuals in the military you served with or under
- people you do business with on a regular basis
- alumni and parents of classmates
- neighbors and friends (select cautiously from this group)

# Dossiers

A **dossier** provides a file of information about you and your work that others have supplied. It includes:

- letters of recommendation
- letters that awarded you a scholarship, gave you an academic honor, or acknowledged your community service
- letters that praised your work on the job
- your academic transcript(s)

# Letters of Recommendation

- **Letters of recommendation** are written by individuals you approach who agree to construct a letter demonstrating your strengths and qualifications to a potential employer.
- Consider asking previous employers, previous professors, supervisors, and community leaders. Only ask individuals who are familiar with your work and strong supporters of you.
- If your present employer is already aware that you are looking for a job or you are working at a part-time job, ask him or her for a letter of recommendation.

# Career Portfolios and Webfolios

A **career portfolio or webfolio** contains documents you have created yourself:

- a mission statement or personal profile
- an additional copy of your résumé
- copies or scans of diplomas, certificates, licenses, internships, papers, and unofficial transcripts
- impressive examples of written work
- newspaper stories about your academic, community or on-the-job accomplishments
- pertinent examples of media presentations or other graphic work you have done
- a list of references with contact information

# What Not to Include in a Career Portfolio or Webfolio

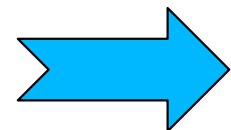
Exclude the following types of documents from your career portfolio or webfolio:

- documents that show your membership in clubs, fraternities or sororities, sports teams, and so on (unless the organization is directly relevant to the job)
- links to personal Web pages
- pictures of family, friends, and pets
- newspaper stories about you that are not directly related to your job search

# Résumés

The **résumé**, a brief record of your accomplishments and experiences, may be the most important document you prepare for your job search. Employers like to see the following in a résumé:

1. **Honesty**. Be truthful about your qualifications.
2. **Attractiveness**. The résumé should be pleasing to the eye.
3. **Organization**. Information should be easy-to-follow, logical, and consistent.
4. **Conciseness**. Generally, keep your résumé to one page.



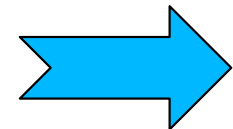
# Résumés (continued)

5. **Accuracy.** Grammar, spelling, dates, names, titles, and programs should be correct.
6. **Currency.** All information must be up-to-date and documented.
7. **Relevance.** Your résumé needs to be appropriate for the job.
8. **Quantifiable information.** For example, include specifics about how much revenue you generated for an employer.

# The Process of Writing Your Résumé

To write an effective résumé, ask yourself the following important questions:

1. What classes did you excel in?
2. What papers, reports, surveys, or presentations earned you your highest grades?
3. What computer skills have you mastered?
4. What other technical skills have you acquired?
5. What jobs have you had?
6. How did you open or expand a business market?  
Increase a customer base?



# The Process of Writing Your Résumé (continued)

7. What did you do to earn a raise or promotion in a previous or current job?
8. Do you work well with people?
9. Can you organize complicated tasks or identify and solve problems quickly?
10. Have you had experiences or responsibilities managing money?
11. Have you won any awards or scholarships or received a commendation or other recognition at work?

# Balancing Education and Experience

- If you have years of work experience, don't overwhelm your prospective employer with too many details. Emphasize only the skills and positions most likely to earn you the job, eliminate early jobs that are irrelevant to your current job search, combine skills acquired over many years, and include relevant military experience.
- If you have spent most of your life in school, list any part-time or seasonal jobs, volunteer work, and apprenticeships to at least demonstrate you are responsible and knowledgeable about the obligations of being an employee.

# What to Exclude from a Résumé

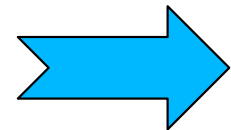
- salary demands and expectations
- preferences for work schedules
- comments about fringe benefits
- travel restrictions
- reasons for leaving your previous job
- your photograph (unless you are applying for a modeling or acting job)
- your Social Security number
- information about your family
- height, weight, hair or eye color
- sexual orientation, religious and political affiliations
- hobbies, interests (unless relevant to the job you are seeking)

# Parts of a Résumé

- **Contact information:** At the top of the résumé, center your name, address, telephone number, and email address.
- **Career objective:** Create an objective that precisely dovetails with the prospective employer's requirements.
- **Credentials (education and experience):** The order of the education and experience sections can vary. See the following two slides for an explanation.
- **Related skills and achievements:** Indicate any additional languages you speak or write, extensive travel, certificates or licenses, and memberships to professional organizations or community groups.
- **Computer skills:** Knowledge of computer hardware, software, word-processing programs, Web design, social media, and search engines is extremely valuable in the job market.
- **Honors/awards:** List any civic and academic honors you have won.
- **References:** Simply indicate that you will provide references on request or do not include a references section at all on your résumé.

# Credentials Section of a Résumé: Education and Experience

- Generally, if you have lots of work experience, list it first. However, if you are a recent graduate short on job experience, list education first.
- Education: Begin with most recent education first, then list everything significant since high school. Instead of listing a series of required courses, concentrate on describing the kinds of skills you learned. Only list your GPA if it is 3.0 or above on a 4.0 scale.



# Credentials Section of a Résumé: Education and Experience (continued)

- Experience:

1. Begin with your most recent experience and work backward.
2. Provide a short description of your duties and achievements for each job.
3. In describing your positions, emphasize any responsibilities that involved handling money, managing other employees, working with customer accounts, or writing letters and reports.
4. Include any relevant volunteer work you have done.
5. If you have been a full-time parent for ten years or a caregiver, indicate the management skills you developed while running a household.

# Organizing Your Résumé

There are two primary ways to organize your résumé:

- **Chronologically.** Most recent education and experience are listed first. This is the traditional way to organize a résumé.
- **By function or skill area.** Achievements and abilities are sorted into two to four key skills areas. Functional résumés are best used by nontraditional students, people changing professions, individuals who have changed jobs frequently, and ex-military people re-entering the civilian marketplace.

# The Digital Résumé

In addition to preparing a hard copy résumé, expect to prepare multiple digital versions. Use these guidelines to prepare different versions:

1. Post your résumé on the Web.
2. Send your résumé via an email attachment.
3. Create a scannable résumé.
4. Create an HTML version of your résumé.
5. Send a video résumé.

# Making Your Online Résumé Search-Engine Ready

The most important section of your résumé contains the keywords you use. Here are a few tips to help you select and use the appropriate keywords:

1. Provide a keyword section at the top of your résumé.
2. Include descriptive keywords found in the employer's ad and website.
3. Use keywords to connect sections or categories of your résumé.
4. Replace the action verbs found in conventional resumes with keyword nouns.

# Making Your Résumé Cybersafe

- Post your online résumé only on legitimate sites.
- Do not put personal information in your résumé.
- Never use your e-mail address at your current place of work.
- Consider using an anonymous email address rather than your personal one.
- Never put the names of your references or their contact information online.
- Block certain readers from searching your résumé, such as your current employer or firms that you know send out spam.
- Never use your present employer's company name or business email address.

# Letters of Application

The **letter of application** is a cover letter you send to a prospective employer to supplement your résumé. It should be:

- Personable
- Professional
- Persuasive

# How Application Letters and Résumés Differ

1. A résumé is a persuasive record of dates, important achievements, skills, and other information, whereas a letter of application is much more personal.
2. You may use the same version of a resume for multiple employers, whereas you will write a new, original letter to each prospective employer.
3. A résumé includes all details, whereas a letter of application includes only the most relevant details.
4. A résumé includes personal data as well as specific educational and experiential data, whereas a letter of application does not.

# Writing the Letter of Application

As you prepare your letter of application, use the following general guidelines:

1. Follow the standard conventions of letter writing.
2. Supply all contact information as part of your heading.
3. Make sure your letter looks attractive.
4. Send your letter to a specific person.
5. Don't send a form letter to every potential employer.
6. Be concise.
7. Emphasize the "you attitude."
8. Don't be tempted to send out your first draft.
9. Tell the truth.

# Parts of the Letter of Application

- **Opening paragraph.** This is your introduction and should indicate why are you writing, where you found out about the vacancy or company, and what is your most important qualification for the job.
- **Body.** This section should be one or two paragraphs and will cite evidence from your résumé to prove you are qualified. Keep sentences short and readable, don't begin each sentence with "I," concentrate on seeing yourself as your employer sees you, highlight your qualifications by citing specific accomplishments, and mention that you are enclosing your résumé.
- **Closing.** In this section, briefly emphasize once again your major qualifications, ask for an interview or phone call, indicate when you are available for an interview, and thank the reader.

# Interviewing

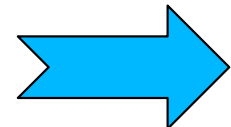
An **interview** is a formal meeting with a prospective employer to apply for a job, is something you should prepare for carefully:

1. Do your homework about the company.
2. Review the job description carefully.
3. Prepare a one- or two-minute summary of your chief qualifications.
4. Bring your portfolio, including three or four extra copies of your résumé.
5. Practice your interview skills with a friend or job counsellor.
6. Brush up on business etiquette.
7. Bring your photo ID and social security card.

# Questions to Expect

The following questions are typical of those you can expect from interviewers:

- Tell us something about yourself.
- Why do you want to work for us?
- What qualifications do you have for the job?
- What could you offer us that other candidates do not have?
- Why did you attend this school?
- Why did you major in “X”?
- Why did you get a grade of “C” in a course?
- What extracurricular activities did you participate in while in high school or college?



# Questions to Expect (continued)

- Did you learn as much as you wanted from your course work?
- What is your greatest strength?
- What is your greatest shortcoming?
- How do you handle conflict with co-workers, supervisors, or customers?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- Why would you leave your current job?
- What are your career goals over the next three to five years?

# What Interviewer(s) Can't Ask You

- By law, interviewers may not ask you about the following topics:
  - your age
  - marital status
  - ethnic background
  - religion
  - race
  - physical disability
- When confronted with an inappropriate question broaching these topics, consider answering it positively (“My home life will not interfere with my job.”) rather than defensively.

# Ten Interview Dos and Don'ts

1. Be on time.
2. Turn off your cell phone and any other portable media device!
3. Dress appropriately and be well groomed.
4. Be careful about tattoos.
5. Greet the interviewer with a friendly and firm, but not vicelike, handshake.
6. Don't sit down before the interviewer does.
7. Speak slowly and distinctly.
8. Do not chew gum, click your pen, fidget, twirl your hair, or tap your foot.
9. Maintain appropriate eye contact with the interviewer.
10. When the interview is over, thank the interviewer and say you look forward to hearing from him or her.

# Accepting or Declining a Job Offer

- When accepting a job, send the employer a letter within a week of the offer. Start by telling the employer you are accepting the job, indicate when you can start, mention any pleasant associations from the interview, express your plans to fulfill any requirements for the job, and reiterate that you look forward to starting the job.
- When declining a job, don't start with the bad news. Ease into it, then tactfully tell the employer why you are not taking the job (be honest but do not elaborate excessively on your reasoning), and end on a friendly note.