

Job Application Tips from an HR Professional's Perspective

1. Spend good, quality time on your resume. Landing a job is a significant event so invest the time to prepare a professional resume.
2. Proofread your resume. Run it through spellcheck and read it aloud. Have a friend review it since it's often hard to see your own mistakes. Is one of the traits being sought after in a candidate attention to detail? Then demonstrate that in your application.
3. Follow the application instructions in the job advertisement and follow them precisely.
4. Send your resume out on your own behalf. Don't have someone else do it for you. It's fine to get assistance but you want to demonstrate resourcefulness, independence and capacity when you apply for a job.
5. If applying by email, take the time to write a nice, brief message when attaching your resume. It is bad form to simply email a file attachment with no introductory text.
6. Double check the email address you're sending your resume to.
7. Send your resume in by the deadline, not after. It will likely not be accepted if it's late.
8. Tailor your resume to the job you are applying to. Your resume should change with each different job you apply to.
9. Don't make the HR person guess about your knowledge, skills and experience. Highlight how your experience, education, etc. translates to what the employer is looking for.
10. Explain gaps in your employment where possible.
11. Provide the month and year you started and ended a previous job. If you are vague the HR person will notice and may think you're being vague for a negative reason.
12. Do not attempt to contact the HR person directly by phone to ask about the position. If this was welcomed it would have been stated in the job advertisement.
13. Do not drop by the organization unannounced and ask to speak to the HR department. Same reason as above.
14. If providing a hard copy, don't use coloured paper or paper with decorative borders. Use plain white paper for a more professional application.
15. Try to keep your resume concise and no more than three pages long.
16. It may not be necessary to list every single job you've ever had if you have significant experience later in your career and your early jobs are not related to your current profession.
17. It may not be necessary to provide a list of your hobbies unless they have some bearing on the position you're interested in.
18. If you know someone who works at the organization you want to apply to, feel free to ask them for tips on how to craft your application. You should also ask that person to email the HR department with a personal recommendation.
19. If you're listing references in your application, double check with them and get their approval to use their name as a reference beforehand. Ask them if they would provide a positive reference. If they hesitate or don't respond, they are not a good reference.
20. Provide references from direct managers or supervisors. It is not usually useful to provide a character reference or a reference from a co-worker.
21. Academic or volunteer references are valuable. As long as the person can speak to your performance and had the responsibility to manage or direct you, they are a useful reference.

How to Make Your Resume Strategic and Attractive to the HR Department

Brand your resume, through a unique value proposition. A value proposition addresses what the employer needs which in turn will make you an attractive candidate.

<p style="text-align: center;">Value Proposition</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The value proposition answers the employer’s question: “Why Should I Hire You?” (What does the employer want? Make it about their needs, not your needs)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Hiring Motivators</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What value do you bring to the employer? (List what you have that the employer wants)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Supporting Qualifications</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What skills, abilities and/or credentials do you offer? (List the qualifications you have that match what the employer wants)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Added Value</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How can you show that you bring more to the job then expected? (Add what makes you irresistible)</p>

Interview Preparation Tips from an HR Professional's Perspective

1. Research, research, research

- You should always try and learn as much as you can about the organization you are applying to. Review the website, do a Google search, read Annual Reports, etc.
- Study the job description or job advertisement closely. Be very certain what the role is all about since this will help you anticipate interview questions.
- Review your resume and refamiliarize yourself with the range of your education, experience and accomplishments. Go back and think through the projects and assignments you're proud of and what you learned from them.
- Ask the HR person what style of interview it will be (hiring committee, one-on-one, etc.). Ask who will be on the interview panel (names and positions) and then research these individuals online.

2. Practice and Prepare

- Come up with some tough questions you think you might be asked and then practice how to answer them. Ask a friend to role play with you. You don't need to memorize everything, but you should get feedback on how you answer these questions and practice them so they come easily to you during the real interview.
- Consider doing a dry run of the route to the interview location. If you're taking the bus, know the route well and know how long it takes to get there. Give yourself extra time in case of vehicle breakdown or heavy traffic - it's always better to be a bit early than late.
- Pick out your wardrobe well in advance and make sure to wear clean, well pressed clothes. Always err on the side of caution and dress in professional business attire.

3. Arriving at the Interview Location

- Arriving 10 to 15 minutes early is good.
- Be polite to everyone you encounter (the Receptionist, people in the elevator, etc.), overall impressions are important and the HR Manager may ask how you interacted with others.

4. During the Interview

- Introduce yourself, smile, and use a firm handshake.
- Remember to relax and be yourself. You are there because they are interested in learning more about you.
- Breathe. If you have to voice that you're nervous, that's okay. They will understand and once you voice it you'll feel less nervous.
- Speaking about your strengths and accomplishments is not bragging and is perfectly acceptable in an interview. The interviewer needs to hear this information from you in order to make an informed assessment of your fit for the job.
- Ask if you can take notes during the interview.
- Ask for questions to be repeated or rephrased so you understand fully what information they are looking for.
- Ask to come back to a question you're having trouble answering.

- It is never okay to use curse words.
- Don't make up answers or try to wing it if you really don't have any relevant knowledge or experience. The people interviewing you will appreciate your honesty.
- Do try and relate as much as you can to a situation/question presented to you. Your answer may not be totally relevant but your response still might be close enough and have value for the interviewer(s).
- Don't give "theoretical" or "sidestepping" responses. Example: Q: Please tell us how to bake a cake. A: I like cake, cake is delicious and knowing how to bake a cake is a good skill to have. The interviewers want to hear how you've been there and done that; they want to hear about your relevant experience.
- Try and answer questions by telling a brief story, breaking your response up into three parts:
 - **Situation** (what the conditions/challenges were that had to be addressed),
 - **Action** (what did you do to address the above),
 - **Results** (what happened as a result of your actions (emphasis on positive results due to your efforts)).
- Have a list of questions you want to ask following the interview.
- Generally, it is not a good practice to ask about salary in a first interview.
- Have three references with you to provide just in case you're asked for them.
- Don't forget to thank the interviewers for the interview.

5. After the Interview

- Send a follow up thank you note as soon as you can
- If you don't hear back in the timeframe you were given, wait a few extra days and then follow up.
- Don't be discouraged if you aren't selected. Keep searching and keep applying. Perseverance pays off – every time.