4

Résumés, Interviews, and Negotiation
Many job seekers focus so much on answering interview questions that they forget they need to ask questions as well. Don’t waste this opportunity. Ask smart questions, not just as a way to show you’re a great candidate but also to see if the company is a good fit for you. You’re being interviewed, but you’re also interviewing the company. Haden (2016) recommends a few example questions:

- **What do you expect me to accomplish in the first 90 days?** If you weren’t asked this question, ask it yourself. Great candidates want to hit the ground running. They don’t want to spend huge chunks of time in orientation and training but end up with failure.

- **What are the company’s highest-priority goals this year, and how would my role contribute?** Great candidates want a job with meaning, with a larger purpose, and they want to work with people who approach their jobs the same way.

- **What percentage of employees was brought in by current employees?** Employees who love their jobs naturally recommend their company to their friends and peers. The same is true for people in leadership positions—people naturally try to bring on board talented people they previously worked with. They’ve built relationships, developed trust, and shown a level of competence that made someone go out of their way to follow them to a new organization. All of that speaks incredibly well to the quality of the workplace and the culture.
As you read this chapter, remember that there is no one-size-fits-all type of résumé, cover letter, or interview strategy. It is important to do your homework on the company and tailor your job-hunting strategy to the goals of the company. After reading this chapter, you should have the tools necessary to make your pre- and post-interview impression stand out with potential employers.

What do you want to be when you grow up? This is a question you have been asked from the time you were old enough to speak. Back then, you probably had no trouble responding. “I want to be an astronaut/a movie star/a princess.” These are all common responses from children and, indeed, all interesting occupations. However, as you aged, most of you probably became less certain about what you wanted to be when you grew up.

This uncertainty makes selecting a major in college a daunting task for many students. Once you have selected, the uncertainty remains as you face the plethora of career choices available to every major. For example, communication is a highly sought-after skill but not a job title. So in a way, a degree in communication makes you qualified for nothing and everything all at once. The communication major must explore various areas of the discipline to find his or her individual focus. Within each of those areas are countless opportunities that can be both exciting and overwhelming.

Even seemingly defined majors such as nursing, accounting, and teaching require career exploration. You may want to be a nurse, but what kind of nurse? Do you want to work for a doctor’s office, a clinic, or a hospital? With what kind of population do you wish to work? Would you prefer to work with children, women, the elderly, diabetics, burn victims, or cancer patients? The choices are many.

Fortunately, there is no need to fear. Considering that the average person holds numerous jobs in his or her lifetime, you’ll have your entire career to grow, develop, and find your perfect fit. However, getting started on the right path can help maximize success and minimize frustration. By applying KEYS to the job-seeking process, you can start on the right path.

**THE JOB-SEEKING PROCESS**

What is the job-seeking process? What does it entail? Seeking a job is a multifaceted process that is part research, part performance, and part roller-coaster ride. The job-seeking process involves six stages: exploring, researching, applying, interviewing, following up, and negotiating.

We have integrated the KEYS process into our discussion of the stages of job seeking. By doing this, we hope that you will begin to see how the KEYS process can be applied to this communication situation, as well as to others that we cover in later chapters. Our discussion of the job-seeking process will be skills based. In other words, we are going to focus on communication skills (e.g., writing résumés, being interviewed) that will help you excel in the job-seeking process.

As a student of communication, it’s important to realize that the discussion of communication skills is, in fact, the application of communication theory. As you
read about the various skills, reflect on the theories and concepts we covered in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. For example, you learned that communication is a transactional process, not a pipeline. In this chapter, you will apply that concept by developing audience-centered messages. You also learned in the opening chapter that the communication context affects messages. Being offered a job changes the context and thereby changes the rules. So the question “What is the salary range and the benefits package?” sends two very different messages depending on when it is asked during the interviewing process. You learned in Chapter 2 that nonverbal communication is a vital component in any message. This chapter shows how the regulative rules for nonverbal communication (e.g., clothing, handshakes, eye contact) matter in the job-seeking process. In Chapter 3, you learned strategies to improve your listening. Excellent listening is a critical first step to successfully answering questions during interviews.

**STAGE ONE: EXPLORING**

The **exploring stage** begins with you, the **job seeker**. During this stage, you will need to explore both yourself and potential careers.

**Self-Exploration**

The first step in the KEYS approach is **know yourself**, so begin there with self-exploration. Take time to explore your goals and priorities. Here are just a few questions you should consider: What are you best at? What do you enjoy doing the most? What motivates you? What salary range do you need to live the lifestyle you desire? Is a family-friendly career a priority for you? Would you prefer to work in a large or small organization?

Taking time to think about your goals and priorities is an important part of the job-seeking process—it will help you determine what type of career you wish to pursue and what types of organizations you wish to work for.

**Career Exploration**

Career exploration requires you to research opportunities in your major that correspond with your goals and priorities. Being a foreign correspondent may sound like a wonderful career, but if being a highly involved parent is your top priority, foreign correspondent would not be a wonderful career for you. Instead, you could use that same skill set to work for a local public relations firm, which would not require you to spend long periods of time away from your children.

As you narrow down career opportunities, it’s important to develop a clear understanding of what each career entails. When you find a career that seems interesting, you need to do some investigating. Interview several people in that line of work and find out what the job involves. Ask questions that will help you determine if this career lines up with your goals and priorities. If it seems like a good fit, try **shadowing** someone in the field for a week or two. Then seek an **internship** that will allow you to develop a clearer understanding of this career choice. To many people, this may seem like an unnecessary step, but the interviewing phase of the job-seeking process isn’t about finding the candidate with the most qualifications; it’s about finding the person who is the best fit for the job and the company. The more you know about a given occupation, the more effectively you will be able to describe how your skills line up with the position.
STAGE TWO: RESEARCHING

The researching stage of the job-seeking process comprises two components: researching openings and researching potential employers.

Researching Openings

Once you have an idea of what you are looking for in theory, you must begin to seek positions that exist in reality. For some students, this can be disappointing. Your dream job may require five years of experience that you do not have. The honest truth is that few students land their dream job right out of college. So become aware of the steps or experiences you’ll need to get to your dream job, and begin working your way up the ladder.

When should you start your job search? This is a process that will take months, so plan accordingly. A good rule of thumb is for graduates to allow between three and six months to find that first job after graduation.

Where should you look for a job? The answer is simple: everywhere! Begin by using the resources available at your college or university. Most institutions of higher education have career planning centers. Your center may go by a slightly

KNOW YOURSELF

Ron Explores His Career

As you read the passage below and answer the questions, think about how this knowledge can help you with your career search.

Ron was an outstanding student who was driven to succeed. As graduation approached, however, he was shocked to realize he had never clearly defined his goals for his future career or for his life. He had never thought about his priorities as they related to the type of position he wanted after graduation. "I guess I just thought I would graduate and someone would knock on my door and say, 'Come work for us! We have the perfect job for you!" When he came to the realization that such a knock was never coming, he began with the first step in the KEYS approach to professional excellence, know yourself. He determined he wanted a position that gave him autonomy, allowed him to lead groups, would pay for graduate school, and would not make him wear a tie. He also discovered that his interviewing skills needed some polishing. Armed with this insight, Ron began searching for a position that would meet his criteria, simultaneously practicing his interviewing skills. After a few months of searching and interviewing, Ron found a position that was the perfect fit. Five years later, he has completed his master of arts degree, received a promotion, and not worn a tie since his initial interview. If you find yourself in the same position as Ron, use the following questions to guide your career exploration.

Questions to Help You Explore Your Career

1. What are my greatest strengths?
2. What are my greatest weaknesses?
3. What kind of organization do I want to work for? What kind of organization do I not want to work for?
4. What do I know about this organization?
5. Where do I really want to work?
6. Why do I want to change jobs?
7. What do I expect as far as salary and benefits?
8. Where do I see myself going in the next few years?
9. What makes me stronger than other applicants?
different name, such as career services, career placements, career development, or career consulting; regardless of the name, these centers are a vital resource in your job search.

Career services centers will often hold **job fairs** on campus or have information about job fairs in the surrounding community. Find out the dates for these job fairs and come ready to be interviewed. This means you should dress in business attire and have a résumé with you.

Once upon a time, the **classified/help-wanted ads** in the newspaper were the place to go when looking for a job. When job seeking, you should make it a habit to check the newspaper(s) in the city or cities that interest you. However, realize that in the 21st century, many organizations no longer post positions in the newspaper.

The **internet** has become an excellent tool for locating employment opportunities. Multiple websites are dedicated to matching employees to jobs, including Monster.com, SnagAJob.com, CareerBuilder.com, Job.com, Jobs.com, JobsOnline.com, USAJobs.gov, and the like. In addition to employment-based websites, many organizations now post job openings on their company websites.

Another useful tool for finding openings is **word of mouth**. Tell everyone you know that you are job searching, making certain to be specific about the kind of job you are looking for. Saying “I am looking for a job in business” is very different from saying “I am looking for a job in hotel management.” Whom should you tell? Tell family, friends (your friends and your parents’ friends), classmates, professors, former employers, people at church, contacts from your internships—tell anyone who will listen.

One family member you should be certain to contact is your **Uncle Sam**. Yes, Uncle Sam (aka the U.S. government) can help you find a job. If you are looking for jobs with the federal government, you must go through the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, which is easily accessed via www.opm.gov.

If you don’t wish to work for the federal government, Uncle Sam can still be of help. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ (2010) *Occupational Outlook Handbook*,

The **State employment service**, sometimes called the Job Service, operates in coordination with the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration. Local offices, found nationwide, help job seekers to find jobs and help employers to find qualified workers at no cost to either. To find the office nearest you, look in the State government telephone listings under “Job Service” or “Employment.” (p. 21)

In addition to state employment agencies, which are run by the government, **private employment agencies**, also known as headhunters, can assist you in your
## How to Use LinkedIn

To use LinkedIn for your job search and professional networking, follow these useful tips:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Points</th>
<th>Practical Tips</th>
</tr>
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| Make a findable and visually appealing profile. | • For your profile picture, use a headshot that is as professional looking as possible.  
• Write a headline that is sharp and to the point, yet says a lot about who you are. Use the 120 characters to express your creativity and give viewers a clear vision of the kind of person you are.  
• Use keywords that relate to your career or field of work, which will make your profile easier to find. |
| Use your profile to showcase everything that doesn't fit on your résumé. | • Fill out as many of the description areas as possible; this gives viewers even more insight into you as a professional and individual, and it says more about you than your headline gives you the room to do.  
• Link to outside sources (i.e., previous employers, examples of previous work) to further highlight your skills and accomplishments.  
• The more you develop your profile, the more likely you are to establish new connections. |
| Strategically connect with others. | • Connect with existing contacts (whether professional or personal) to establish a foundation for forging new relationships.  
• If you receive a connection request from someone you don't know, or you wish to connect with someone you don't know, research the person to find out whether it is worth connecting with him or her.  
• When connecting with someone new, craft a personal, detailed message that lets the person know who you are and why you want to connect with him or her. This will help you get your foot in the door, without scaring off the prospective new connection.  
• If connecting on LinkedIn fails, approach the person about connecting somewhere less formal, such as in person or on another social media site. |
| Snoop on your valuable network. | • If you're interested in a specific company, or you are hiring for your own company, don't be afraid to look through other users' profiles for any information that could give you a leg up, or help you find the perfect employee.  
• Keeping tabs on the connections you've made can help open doors you may not know existed, or give you the opportunity to help someone else. |
| Stay active on the site. | • You get the most out of LinkedIn by using it consistently, not just when you need it for a specific purpose.  
• Treat your profile as you would any other social media account by logging in on a consistent basis and keeping your account information current and updated.  
• Staying active on the site will also keep you in the loop of any site changes and help you adapt to these changes. |

job search. Unlike state agencies, private agencies are for-profit organizations that charge a fee for their services. The amount of the fee and who pays it vary.

An often overlooked place to find openings is professional associations. Almost every industry has a professional association that sponsors meetings and conferences. Joining the local, regional, or even national chapter of a professional association will greatly enhance your ability to network with other professionals who may be looking to hire. When joining a professional association, be certain to inquire about outlets for job postings as well as student membership fees or dues.

**Researching Potential Employers**

At this point, it should be clear that job searching is time-consuming. Therefore, you do not want to waste valuable time and energy on positions and organizations that do not fit your desires, goals, and priorities. Think about this stage of the job-seeking process as job researching, not job searching. You are not simply searching for vacant positions. You are researching positions and companies to find the right fit between your skills and desires and their needs and opportunities. (See Tools for Professional Excellence 4.1 to explore several best practices for how to use LinkedIn.)

Before applying, take a few moments to research the position and the company. This research not only will help you determine if you truly wish to apply for this position with this organization but also will help you down the line when you customize your résumé and prepare for your interview. Remember, excelling as a communicator means you must be audience centered. You can’t be audience centered if you do not know your audience.

Where do you find information on potential employers? You can begin by researching their websites, but remember that the purpose of company websites is to make the organization look appealing, so you do not want to end your research there. If you know anyone who works for the organization in question or has a similar type of position with a different organization, interview him or her for insights. Other sources of information that may be helpful include the Chamber of Commerce, Better Business Bureau reports, your college’s annual placement reports, and CollegeGrad.com. According to Crosby (2000),

> Public libraries and career centers have valuable information about employers, including companies’ annual reports to shareholders, reports kept by local chambers of commerce, trade journals, and business indexes, such as *Hoover’s Business Index* and *Dun and Bradstreet*. (pp. 15–16)

(Note: In 2003, Hoover’s was acquired by Dun & Bradstreet, and in 2017, the platform began operating as D&B Hoovers.)

**STAGE THREE: APPLYING**

Once you have researched a place you would like to consider for employment, it’s time to turn your attention to résumés and cover letters.

**Developing Résumés**

A résumé provides a picture of who you are as an employee by highlighting your skill set. An excellent résumé illustrates how you fit this position and this organization.
and highlights the skills you possess relevant to the skills required by the position for which you are applying.

There is no one standard form for a résumé—it’s not one size fits all. When selecting the format for your résumé, select a format that will highlight your strengths and downplay your weaknesses. Regardless of which format you select, whenever possible, you should customize your résumé to each position and organization. Although formats vary, every résumé should be no more than one page and must be visually appealing.

Chances are you’ll be applying for multiple positions while you are job seeking. Therefore, it’s important to develop a **generic résumé** that you can use as a starting point for the **customized résumé** you develop for each position.

When developing your résumé, you will have to determine if you plan to use a chronological, functional, or combination résumé. These résumé types are defined in the sections that follow.

**Chronological**

This is the most common form and probably the easiest to prepare. The chronological résumé emphasizes employment and/or experience history, listing elements in reverse chronological order (i.e., your most recent experience first). This format is especially useful to new graduates or those with limited work experience.

**Functional (Skill Based)**

This functional résumé emphasizes skills and attributes that can be applied to a variety of employment situations; your skills are broken down into categories that quickly communicate to employers what you can do for them. This format is useful for candidates without direct employment-related experience or for those who wish to work in fields unrelated to their academic major.

**Combination**

For many candidates, a combination of elements from the chronological and functional résumé formats works best. Regardless of which résumé type you select, your résumé will include some or all of the following sections.

**Contact Information**

Begin your generic résumé by listing your **contact information** (see Figure 4.1). You should include your name, address, phone number, and email address. Believe it or not, many prospective job seekers are taken out of the running due to problems with their contact information. You should make certain the address you provide will be valid throughout your job search. The same holds true for phone numbers and email addresses.
Heather Gutiérrez  
3606 Bon Soir Drive  Houston, Texas 78044  361.815.4949  
heather.gutierrez@gmail.com

Summary of Qualifications
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Bilingual (Spanish, speak, read and write fluently)
- Conduct audits procedures, create reports and implement corrective/preventive measures
- Perform inventories, create reports and reconcile results
- Expert in Microsoft Office
- Prepared professional presentations
- Ability to manage multiple projects
- Effective problem solving techniques
- Purchases supplies and conduct inventory using on-line procedures
- Skilled in normal administrative processes
- Experience in training staff in software and administrative duties

Education
University of Houston  
Spring 2013 – Expected Graduation Date August 2016  
Bachelor of Arts in Communication  
3.5 GPA

Coursework
- Interpersonal Communication  
- Business and Professional Communication  
- Communication Theory  
- Persuasion  
- Graphic Design  
- Digital Journalism

Class Project
Coordinator, ABC: Read With Me October – December 2014
Duties – Leading team discussions, planning meetings, collaborate with team members, develop and promote campaign, develop relationship with donors, and create data report.

Work Experience
Office Assistant, Texas University of Houston – Dean’s Office August 2014 – June 2016
Duties – General Administrative including: answer phone, create correspondence, supply inventory, record retention, and maintain personnel files.

Other assignments: planned special events, designed web content, developed brochures, flyers, press releases, and presentations, drafted letters, and oversaw two major projects to revamp the personnel files and records retention processes.

Office Administrator, Zales, Inc. August 2010 – February 2014
Duties – General Administrative including: answer phone, pay invoices, create correspondence, inventory responsibility, handle money, reconcile statements, conduct inventory, customer service, and inventory audit control.

Student Organizations
- Lambda Pi Eta, National Communication Honor Society  Inducted May 2016
- Leadership Award Recipient, Communication Club  2015
- National Society of Leadership and Success  Inducted February 2015
- Student Reading Council  2013 – 2014

References available upon request
When it comes to the telephone, remember that your ringtone and message are going to make an impression on prospective employers. If you want to communicate with professional excellence, use a standard ringtone (no songs) and record a professional message for your voicemail. This same level of professionalism should extend to your email address. An email address such as “partygirl2010” or “mrtequila” is going to land your résumé in the trash. Addresses such as “snugglebear” or “cutie-pie” are unprofessional as well. Choose an email address related to your name, and be certain to check your email account regularly.

It’s also important to make sure there is nothing in cyberspace that you would not want your future employer to see. What comes up when you “Google” your name? What information can be found on your Facebook and Instagram accounts? If you think prospective employers don’t bother to check these sites, you’re wrong. Not only do employers use Google and Yahoo to run background checks on potential employees; they also check Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media (Finder, 2006; Slovensky & Ross, 2012).

**Objective and Summary**

An **objective** is a one- or two-sentence declarative statement about your career goals. An example of an objective would be “To obtain a position as a reading specialist with the Altoona Area School District.” The benefit of including an objective is debatable. Some people argue it can be beneficial and has been a résumé standard for years. Others argue that since the objective is clear (to obtain the position), there is no need to waste space stating the obvious. Many résumés have moved away from the objective to a **summary** of skills and traits.

**Education**

If you’re a recent college graduate, your education is, in all likelihood, the most important thing you want future employers to consider, so your **education** section should be displayed prominently. Include the name of any college or university from which you have graduated or that you are currently attending. As a general rule, a college graduate should not list his or her high school education or high school accomplishments.

List the name of your degree and your major (e.g., bachelor of science in biology). You may also wish to state a minor if you have one. Include the date of graduation (e.g., “Degree conferred December 2017”). If you’re in your final semester, you can use something such as “Degree anticipated May 2020.”

You may also wish to list some relevant courses. For the purposes of the generic résumé, list all the courses you think may be relevant during your job-seeking process. You can narrow the list during the customizing step.

Students often ask if they should include their grade point average (GPA) on their résumé. The answer is simple—it depends on your GPA. If your GPA is a 3.0 or higher, include it. For some students, the overall GPA is under a 3.0 but the GPA for coursework in their major is much higher. If that’s the case, then list your major GPA.

**Experience**

A section on experience is a standard part of the résumé. As you advance in your career, you will most likely label this section as **employment experience**, which will take precedence over your education. Yet, for most college graduates, including **relevant experience**, not just employment experience, is more beneficial. Using the general title “Relevant Experience” allows you to incorporate a broader range of
Résumés, Internships, and New Ideas, and Skills

Information. In this section, you can list your relevant employment history as well as internships, relevant class projects, relevant work with student organizations, or volunteering. For example, you may be applying for a job that requires leadership and grant-writing experience. During college, you worked as a waitress, but you were also the president of two student organizations, and as part of an English course, you wrote a grant for the local food bank, which was funded. All this information can be included in the “Relevant Experience” section because it’s relevant to the position for which you are applying.

Skills may be incorporated under your experiences or may be a separate category. Some students opt for a résumé format that includes a separate skills section or lists skills rather than integrating them into the “Relevant Experience” section. Which format should you use? The answer is whichever format does a better job of highlighting you.

Relevant Experience

If you’ve been lucky enough to work at a job that’s relevant to the position you’re seeking, prominently display that experience and your job duties. For most college graduates, however, this will not be the case.

Let’s look at a few possible scenarios. In the first scenario, your work history is by and large unrelated to the career you are pursuing, but your work on campus through class projects, internships, and student or volunteer organizations is related.

To best showcase your skills in this situation, list the class projects, your internship, and your work with the Sociology Club under “Relevant Experience,” as previously discussed. Give some details about each experience. Then you can simply list your work on campus.

If you’ve been lucky enough to work at a job that is relevant to the position you’re applying for, you may integrate that relevant work into your résumé. For example, you may be applying for a job that requires leadership, and you wrote a grant for the local food bank.

Mays’s Facebook Problem

As you read this passage and answer the questions, consider how the way you communicate has an ethical dimension.

Mays had excellent experience, credible references, and an outstanding grade point average. Nonetheless, she was repeatedly passed over while less-qualified friends were interviewed and then hired. Mays could not understand what was going on. So she went to her university’s career service center for some help. The counselor said she should be honest about her Facebook account. Mays was shocked. She could not believe her private social networking account was being viewed by employers.

Questions to Consider

1. Do you think it’s ethical for employers to conduct an online background check on candidates? If so, do you believe they should be informed of the results? Why? Why not?
2. If you were Mays, would you change your Facebook account? Why?
3. What do you believe should be the ethical norms for social networking sites such as Facebook?
4. Was being viewed by employers on social networking sites fair or unfair? Why?

Ethical Dimension

Consider how the way you communicate has an ethical dimension. As you read this passage and answer the questions, consider how the way you communicate has an ethical dimension.
If your work history is not directly related to the position you are pursuing, list the place of employment, job title, employment dates, and some skills you acquired at this job. Even if the job is not directly related to your career, you likely gained or honed some skill(s) that will make you a more appealing applicant. For example, if you worked as a waiter, you have developed your customer service skills, worked both independently and as part of a team, handled difficult situations with professionalism, and demonstrated the ability to multitask.

Awards and Hobbies

Should you include awards and hobbies on your résumé? As always, the answer is it depends. Include an awards and honors section only if you have multiple listings and they are relevant to the position. Academic awards and honors strengthen you as a candidate, but noting that you were homecoming queen does not. If you have only one award or honor but you think it is relevant, make sure to include it somewhere but do not set aside an entire section of the résumé to highlight it. It may be best to discuss it in your cover letter.

As for hobbies, do not put a hobbies and interests section in your résumé. If you do have a hobby or interest directly relevant to the position, work it into your résumé as a skill or experience. Otherwise, leave it out.

References

References should not be listed on your résumé. You can make a note about references at the bottom of the page (e.g., “References available on request”), but the purpose of the résumé is to highlight you, so don’t waste space listing references. This is not to imply that securing good references is not an important step in the job-seeking process; references are an extremely important part of the process.

Do not ask your references for generic letters of recommendation. You should submit letters of recommendation only to positions that request such letters. If letters of recommendation are required, then and only then should you solicit them from your references.

Customizing Résumés

The second step in the KEYS model is to evaluate the professional context, which includes your audience and the organization. All the research you have gathered during the previous stages of the job-seeking process will enable you to do just that. During the remaining stages of the process, you must take the information you have gathered and apply it to your communication interactions. These interactions include customizing your résumé and cover letter, as well as being interviewed (see Figure 4.3 on page 79).

Reviewing Your Audience

The research you have done on the organization will give you some insight into the organization’s mission and values. In addition, the job posting will tell you exactly what the organization is looking for in terms of this position.

How do you customize your résumé? Begin with the generic résumé you have already developed. Systematically go through the generic résumé, identifying the information that is most relevant to this position. During the first round of cuts, delete all the information that is not relevant to the position. If the remaining information does not fit on one page, go back and eliminate the information that is least relevant to the position. When customizing your résumé, the goal is to include information about yourself that addresses every qualification noted in the job posting without exceeding the one-page limit.
Your first audience may be an employee in the Human Resources (HR) Department whose job is to determine if you meet the minimal qualifications for this position. In some cases, the HR Department may use a computer scanning program that counts the number of key words from the job posting found in each résumé. Because of these types of HR screening processes, you must make certain that the language on your résumé matches the language in the job posting exactly. Once you have determined which information will be included in this customized résumé, go back and customize the language. Let’s say, for example, that you have applied for a position that requires “proven leadership experience.” You believe your two-year tenure as the president of the Kinesiology Club demonstrates your leadership experience. In your generic résumé, you’ve listed this experience and included “leadership” as one of your skills—this is not enough. The job posting specifically states “proven leadership experience,” so you should not imply or dance around the wording used in the posting. To customize your résumé, change the wording in the skills section from “leadership” to “proven leadership experience.”

Creating Visual Appeal

Although résumés can come in a variety of different forms, all résumés should be visually appealing and utilize a parallel structure. In terms of visual appeal, you need to include a balance between text and white space. Too much white space indicates a lack of qualifications. On the flip side, too much information jammed on a page does not make you look more qualified. Instead, it makes your résumé difficult to read, which makes you less appealing. Remember, a résumé is a snapshot. You can’t include every detail of your life, so make sure to include the information that is most relevant to this position at this organization.

The font you select for the text of the résumé should be 12 point—no less than 11 point if you need more space—for easy reading. When selecting a font, you want to stick with standard fonts such as Arial, Helvetica, and Times New Roman to ensure easy electronic transfer.

As for parallel structure, decide on a heading system, and keep it consistent throughout the résumé. If your first major heading is bold, 14 point, and all capitals, then all major headings should be bold, 14 point, and all capitals.

The use of a parallel structure can also be applied to your word choices. For example, when listing your duties/work experience, use active verbs (see Figure 4.2). In addition, you may utilize a list of bulleted duties/skills. Whichever format you select, remember to use that format throughout that section of the résumé.

It’s also critical to edit résumés, applications, and cover letters carefully. Make it a habit to check, double-check, and triple-check. Spelling errors seem to jump off the page at potential employers. If you want to be considered for an interview, your résumé can contain no spelling errors. Remember, spelling and grammar check catches only misspelled words, not incorrect words. Also, make certain your grammar is correct. For example, when discussing a former job or experience, use past tense; when discussing a current job or experience, use present tense.

Once your résumé and cover letter are complete, you should laser print them onto 8½-by 11-inch bond paper, also known as résumé paper. Pink paper with a spritz of perfume may have helped Elle Woods get into Harvard Law School in Legally Blonde, but that works only in the movies. Your best bet is to select white or off-white paper—unscented, of course.

Developing Electronic and Scannable Résumés and Online Applications

Back in the day, résumés and cover letters were either mailed or hand-delivered to organizations. Today, organizations are requesting that résumés be submitted
electronically or that the information traditionally found in a résumé be submitted via an online application.

When it comes to submitting electronic or scannable résumés, you must be sensitive to the style and formatting of the document. Electronic résumés should be prepared in common programs, such as Microsoft Word. Scannable résumés should be simplistic; so avoid any decorative fonts or graphics.

For electronic applications, you’ll most likely be cutting information from your résumé and pasting it into the application. Although this may allow you to include more information than the standard one-page résumé, the information presented should still be concise and relevant.

Developing Cover Letters

Cover letters accompany your résumé and serve to introduce you as a potential employee, highlight your résumé, and demonstrate your writing skills. According to Buzzanell (1999),

The goal of the cover letter is to get prospective employers to look at your résumé, the goal of a résumé is to get the prospective employer to ask you on an interview, and the goal of the interview is to get you the job. (p. 155)

Begin the cover letter by stating that you’re interested in a specific position (state the exact position title). In the next paragraph or two, highlight why you are qualified for this position, making specific reference to the required skills and qualifications noted in the job posting. End the letter by expressing your desire to discuss your qualifications further during an interview. Like the résumé, your cover letter should be concise, no more than one page. Use the same paper and font for both your résumé and your cover letter.
Customizing the Résumé

As you evaluate the passage below, note how effectively Heather adapts her experience for this professional context.

Heather Gutiérrez will soon be graduating from college. She has taken time to know herself and has developed clearly defined career goals. She is currently pursuing positions that will allow her to combine her love of communications and campaign development. She has found a position with HDS Life, Inc. (see the job posting below). After doing some research on HDS Life, she is certain she would be a good fit for both the position and the organization. In Figures 4.1 (page 73) and 4.3 (below), you will find (1) her generic résumé, (2) her cover letter, and (3) her customized résumé.

Questions to Consider

1. How does the customized résumé differ from the generic résumé?
2. Has Heather effectively adapted her experience to this professional context?
3. Has she done an effective job in customizing her résumé and cover letter?
4. Do they reflect the information found in the job posting?
5. Are they visually appealing?
6. What advice would you give Heather?

FIGURE 4.3
Customized Cover Letter and Résumé

CUSTOMIZED COVER LETTER AND RÉSUMÉ

Advertisement for Position

HDS Life, Inc. seeks an Assistant Director of Communications

Position Description

The Assistant Director of Communications actively develops and promotes the HDS Life, Inc. narrative to key external and internal audiences and stakeholders. This role works across businesses to help build HDS Life’s strategic communications message, and promotes efforts to achieve business goals and growth targets. The Assistant Director of Communications will provide administrative assistance for the Director of Communications, provide high-profile communication support to the HDS Project Management Office and to a variety of stakeholders.

Position Requirements

Proven administrative experience and expertise interacting with Leadership with strong execution and results orientation. Excellent organization and project management skills. Excellent communication (oral, written, and design). Effective problem-solver with expertise at anticipating and resolving issues; solution oriented, proactive and team-spirited. Strong collaborator. Advanced software skills in PowerPoint, Visio, Word, Excel and industry experience preferred. Bachelor’s degree required; communication field preferred. Ability to stay up to date on presentation technology and capabilities.

(Continued)
Be certain to maintain the font and format for both the résumé and the cover letter.

Include which position you are interested in.

Include education.

Use specific language the job posting requires for the candidate.

Include any skills and abilities that qualify you for that particular position.

Express desire to further discuss your qualifications during an interview.

Cover letter should be limited to one page.

CUSTOMIZED COVER LETTER

Heather Gutiérrez
3606 Bon Soir Drive • Houston, Texas 78044 • 361.815.4949
heather.gutierrez@gmail.com

July 1, 2016

HDS Life, Inc.
2727 Allen Parkway
Houston, Texas 77019

Attention: Ms. Natalie Contreras

Re: Assistant Director of Communications

Dear Ms. Contreras:

I am writing in regard to the job description for the Assistant Director of Communications position. I believe my skills, education, and experience are an excellent match for the job duties and requirements listed. My résumé is attached for your review. The document includes information regarding my Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication and work experience. Also enclosed is a list of references.

I have proven success and direct experience in all position requirements. During my time at the University of Houston, I created brochures and other marketing materials; wrote the web content that developed the narratives of the College of Liberal Arts and provided support to senior management and all other stakeholders. I am proficient in Microsoft Office, have experience with event planning, preparing and delivering professional presentations, preparing correspondence, conducting inventories, responding to audits, maintaining accounts payable and receivable, and handling all aspects of customer service.

Strengths I would bring to the Assistant Director of Communications position include my ability to learn quickly, attention to detail, initiative, and strong communication skills. I pride myself on my professional and organizational skills, as well as my strong work ethic. I would appreciate the opportunity to interview for this position.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Heather Gutiérrez
CUSTOMIZED RÉSUMÉ

Heather Gutiérrez
3606 Bon Soir Drive • Houston, Texas 78044 • 361.815.4949
heather.gutierrez@gmail.com

Summary of Qualifications
• Excellent oral and written skills
• Excellent organization and project management skills
• Proven interpersonal, customer service, and collaborative skills
• Proactive problem solving skills
• Bilingual (Spanish, speak, read and write fluently)
• Advanced software skills including, PowerPoint, Visio, Word, and Excel
• Ability to manage multiple projects
• Highly experienced at developing professional presentations and reports

Education
University of Houston
Bachelor of Arts in Communication, 3.5 GPA
Spring 2013 – Expected Graduation Date August 2016

Relevant Coursework
Interpersonal Communication
Business and Professional Communication
Communication
Public Speaking
Intercultural

Relevant Experience
Office Assistant, University of Houston
August 2014 – June 2016
Office Administrator, Zales, Inc.
August 2010 – February 2014
Relevant Duties – Provided outstanding customer service, created correspondence, paid invoices, planned event ranging from 10–200 attendees, served as project manager, developed a variety of communication and marketing materials, and designed web content.

Coordinator, ABC: Read With Me
October – December 2014
Duties – Facilitated team discussions, planned meetings, collaborated with team members, developed and promoted public relations campaign, develop relationship with donors, and create data report. Exceeded fundraising goals by 150%.

Student Organizations and Awards
Lambda Pi Eta, National Communication Honor Society
Inducted May 2016
Leadership Award Recipient, Communication Club
Received 2016
National Society of Leadership and Success
Inducted February 2016
Student Reading Council
2013 – 2014

References available upon request

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STAGE FOUR: INTERVIEWING

When your average college graduate thinks of the job-seeking process, he or she thinks about the fourth stage, interviewing. But for students such as yourself who wish to achieve professional excellence, the work you have done in the previous stages will benefit you immensely during the interviewing stage. As you prepare for the interview, you already have a clear sense of who your audience is and what they are looking for in a candidate. Furthermore, your first communication interactions with the potential employers (your résumé and cover letter) not only highlighted you as a candidate but also began to demonstrate how you’ll fit into their organization.

Although securing an interview is an exciting milestone in the job-seeking process, you're still several steps away from being hired. To land the position, you must do two important tasks: prepare and practice.

Before the Interview

To demonstrate professional excellence, you will need to prepare your message, anticipate the questions, script your answers, practice your answers, prepare your appearance, and reduce your nervousness.

Preparing Your Message

A student once remarked, “Preparing for an interview would be simple if we knew the questions in advance.” The bad news is that you do not have a crystal ball that will magically reveal your interview questions, but the good news is that you have something almost as telling. By reviewing your skills, the job posting, and your research, you can determine exactly what information to present during the interview.

Prior to walking into your interview, you should have a clear understanding of the information you plan to present. Begin by looking at the job posting. What qualifications are a must for this position? How do you meet each of these qualifications? For example, if the position states that the candidate must be highly organized, make a list of examples that demonstrate your organizational skills. Review the duties you'll be responsible for in this position. If you'll have to write, make a list of examples that show you are an effective writer. Then gather some samples of your writing to bring along to the interview.

Next, review your résumé and cover letter. Are there areas where you might need to elaborate? What information do you want to restate in the interview? What are some examples or experiences that illustrate the skills highlighted on your résumé? In the end, you should be ready to discuss specific examples, stories, and experiences that are relevant to the position.

Finally, make a list based on important points you learned while doing your research. This list should include things you learned about this company that made it appealing to you and questions you may have about the position or the organization.

Anticipating Questions

Once you have completed your lists and reviewed your research, it’s time to practice answering questions. You can never be 100% certain about what’s going to be asked during the interview, but you can make some educated guesses.

Begin by imagining yourself as the interviewer. If you were going to hire someone for this position, what questions would you ask? How could you learn more about the interviewee’s qualifications and skills? What would you be looking for in
his or her answers? This exercise can help you anticipate possible questions, but it should also help you formulate stronger answers to those questions when the time comes for you to answer them.

Next, check out some resources that include sample interview questions as well as some helpful tips. Books such as *Best Answers to 201 Most Frequently Asked Interview Questions*, *301 Smart Answers to Tough Interview Questions*, and *The 250 Job Interview Questions You’ll Most Likely Be Asked* provide a variety of possible questions.

Be certain to practice both behavioral questions and traditional questions. Behavioral questions explore how you have handled past situations and ask you to respond to hypothetical situations. For example: “Tell me about a time when you had to meet a very short deadline” or “Give me an example of a time you served as a leader.” Traditional questions include some of the old standards listed below:

- Tell me a little about yourself.
- Why did you apply for this position?
- What makes you qualified for this position? Why should we hire you?
- What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- What would your former employer (professor, friend) say about you?
- What are three words that describe you?
- What are your short-term goals? What are your long-term goals?
- Do you have any questions for us?

**Scripting Answers**

When it comes time for the interview, remember you are in control of your answers. The interviewer may ask slightly different questions from the ones you’ve practiced. Yet the information you present during the interview should be the same information you practiced prior to the interview. The purpose of practicing is not to guess the exact questions that will be asked—it’s to learn to professionally present important information about your qualifications for the position and your fit in the organization.

If possible, you should prepare by scripting answers that follow a three-part formula. First, directly answer the question. Then, back up your answer with a specific example that supports your answer. Finally, connect the answer back to the company and/or the position.

Let’s say you are applying for a position managing a retail team for Company A. The interviewer asks, “Have you had much experience working with groups?” Begin by answering the question: “Yes, I have had extensive experience working with groups, both as a group member and as a leader.” That would be an average answer.

Some interviewers will inquire further about your experience; others may not. You do not want to miss this opportunity to highlight your experience, so extend your answer to include an example:

Yes, I have had extensive experience working in groups, both as a group member and as a leader. For example, last semester, I worked with a group of graduating seniors on a semester-long marketing project. It was a
challenging experience, because the majority of the group had senioritis. At first, they didn't care much about the assignment, but I knew I could change that attitude, so I volunteered to be the leader. Once I was elected, I made certain everyone in the group participated when selecting the topic. This helped get everyone involved from the beginning. Then we divided the project into manageable pieces that allowed everyone to have a balanced workload and a sense of ownership. In the end, we received the highest grade in the class.

This is a good answer, but to turn it into an excellent answer, the job seeker needs to take one more step by relating the answer back to the position and the organization:

In fact, one of the things exciting to me about working for Company A is the opportunity to lead teams. I realize the challenges on the job will be different from what I faced in the classroom, but that is precisely the kind of challenge I am looking for in a position.

When it comes to answering questions, you want to be strategic. Answering strategically means discussing and emphasizing your skills and experiences that relate to this position. It means applying the KEYS of knowing yourself and evaluating your professional context. It does not mean you can lie, exaggerate, or fudge your answers. Lies, even little white lies, are unethical in any interview situation. If you have to lie to get the job, then this is not the right job for you.

How do you answer questions strategically? Let’s say that during your research you learned that Company A has won awards for its customer service. During your interview, you might emphasize your desire to work for a company that has been

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### Skills for the Job Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review your résumé/cover letter.</td>
<td>Check to see if your résumé/cover letter fits the job requirements and adjust if necessary.</td>
<td>Align your skills and experience to correlate with requirements listed in the job description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand your personal selling points.</td>
<td>Identify what key skills and experience you can offer to the employer.</td>
<td>Do a self-assessment that highlights your strongest qualities, and intertwine those with your listed professional skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare answers to expected questions.</td>
<td>Be prepared to answer what can be expected of you about the job, and identify the key message you want to get across.</td>
<td>Gain feedback from other professionals already in the industry, as well as their own personal job interview experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice delivery.</td>
<td>Make sure you can deliver your answers with the utmost confidence.</td>
<td>Practice several times in front of family, friends, or any other willing audiences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
recognized for excellence and/or highlight your excellent customer service skills—assuming, of course, that both these things are true.

In many interviews, the interviewer will allow some time at the end for you to ask a few questions. Therefore, you should prepare several questions for the employer. Although you would love to ask about salary, benefits, and vacation, this is not the time. That comes after you are offered the job. At this stage in the process, your questions are more about showing your research and interest in the position than about getting additional information. It is an opportunity for you to demonstrate that you have researched this company and will be a valuable asset. So you might ask something like “When researching Company A, I noticed you have a six-month training program. Can you tell me a little more about what that program entails?”

Practicing Answers

Reading questions and thinking through the answers is an effective way to begin practicing, but to be fully prepared, you must take part in mock interviews. Enlist the help of family members and friends to run through questions with you. Have different people take different approaches to the interview. Have some mock interviewers smile and give you a lot of feedback. Have others be stern and cold and provide little feedback.

One of the best tools in improving your skills as an interviewee is the video recorder. On most college campuses, the career services center can help you in this process. Receiving professional feedback from the career services staff will be helpful, but watching yourself in action is the most powerful tool available for improvement. If your campus does not have a career center or if your career center does not tape mock interviews, find someone with a smartphone or tablet and record it yourself.

When practicing, keep in mind that there are a wide variety of interview formats. The good news is, although the settings vary, the basic rules for an effective interview remain the same across situations.

Telephone interviews are often used during the early screening phases of the interview process. When doing a phone interview, remember to block the call-waiting feature if you have it. Using a landline is preferred to using a cell phone; however, if you have access only to a cell phone, make sure the battery is charged. Never chew gum, smoke, eat, drink, or use the bathroom during a phone interview, because the noise will be picked up on the other end. When you have finished delivering your answer, wait for the next question. Even if it takes the interviewer(s) a moment or two to ask the next question, do not try to fill that silence. When being interviewed via videoconference, try to imagine the camera is a person and respond accordingly. This means making eye contact with the camera and smiling.

Face-to-face interviews also come in a variety of formats, which include the standard one-on-one interview, a series of one-on-one interviews, panel interviews, and interviews with multiple interviewees. The same rules that apply
in the standard one-on-one interview apply in each of these settings, but keep a few things in mind for each context. If you have a series of one-on-one interviews, you may feel as though you are repeating yourself. But remember, each interviewer is hearing your information for the first time, so not only is it okay to repeat yourself, it is necessary. If you find yourself answering questions for a panel of interviewers, always acknowledge the person who asks the question but address your answer to (and make eye contact with) the entire group when responding. If you find yourself being interviewed with a group of other candidates, always treat your competition with respect and professionalism. The way you treat the other candidates is indeed part of how you will be assessed.

On occasion, your interview may be conducted during a meal. In this context, answering questions, not eating, is your priority. Keeping this in mind, order food that will be easy to eat. This is not the time to order barbequed ribs or crab legs, even if the interviewers order it for themselves. The same goes for alcohol. During the meal, follow all the basic rules of etiquette. If you are not certain of all the rules, review an etiquette book prior to the interview—at the very least, review the different types of silverware. And never talk with your mouth full.

Preparing Your Appearance

For many students, preparing for the interview begins and ends with purchasing a suit. Although presenting a professional image is an important part of your nonverbal communication in the interview, wearing an Armani suit will not land you the job. Your interviewing attire is in a sense a uniform that identifies you as a professional. Many books and articles have weighed in on the subject of appropriate interview attire (Dorio & Axelrod, 2000; Molloy, 1988, 1996; Ruetzler, Taylor, Reynolds, Baker, & Killen, 2012). In the end, these books can be summarized in a few basic rules that job seekers should follow when putting together their interviewing uniform.

The main piece in an interviewing uniform is the standard business suit. For men, that suit includes a jacket and pants. For women, it includes a jacket and skirt. Many female students question the necessity of wearing a skirt. For better or worse, even in the 21st century, the standard interviewing uniform for women is the suit with a skirt. Some interviewers may not think twice if you elect to wear pants, but some might. The jackets, pants, and skirts should be black, dark gray, or dark blue. The business suit should be coupled with a light-colored shirt or blouse, preferably white. Men should wear a silk tie with a conservative pattern.

Interviewers do not expect to see new college graduates in expensive, designer-label suits, nor do they expect to see them in ill-fitting suits. When purchasing your suit, the fit is extremely important. There is nothing professional about sleeves that cover your hands or a too-short skirt. Spend the extra $20 to have your suit professionally altered.

Female job seekers should wear a black or dark blue, closed-toe pump with a small heel, no higher than 2 inches. If you are not comfortable walking in heels, practice far in advance of your first interview. Your pantyhose should be flesh-colored. (Always keep an extra pair of hose on hand in case you get a run. Runs look very unprofessional.) You can wear jewelry during the interview, but you want to keep it simple. The rule of thumb for women is no more than five pieces of jewelry. Those five pieces consist of a watch, a pair of earrings (counts as two pieces), a necklace, and a wedding/engagement ring. The earrings should be small posts, and the necklace should be very simple.
Megan’s Skype Interview

As you read the passage below, consider what would be a more effective communication strategy in this situation.

Megan is preparing for a Skype interview with a company to which she has applied. She wants to be comfortable for the interview, so she grabs her laptop, a cup of coffee, and settles into bed in her favorite plush bathrobe. A few minutes later, her laptop beeps and the chat screen pops up with the interviewer. Megan and the interviewer exchange introductions, and the interview begins. A minute later, Megan’s dog begins barking loudly down the hall, which causes Megan to yell for it to be quiet. The interviewer then asks Megan a series of questions about why she wants to work for the company, what she enjoys most about the work she does, and so on. Megan suddenly cannot remember any of the answers she had come up with the night before, and when she nervously goes to take a sip of coffee, she spills it all over herself and curses out loud. Toward the end of the interview, Megan’s laptop begins beeping loudly, indicating that it is running out of battery power. The interviewer asks what the beeping noise is. Megan replies that she does not hear anything, all while frantically searching for her laptop charger. A few seconds later, the laptop runs out of power, and the screen goes black. Megan stares at the blank screen before pulling the covers over her head and sinking deeper into bed.

Questions to Consider

1. What do you think was Megan’s most critical mistake during the interview?
2. What are some things Megan could have done differently when preparing for the interview? What about during the interview?
3. What do you think Megan’s next move should be?
4. How are video or Skype interviews similar to face-to-face interviews? How are they different?
Men should wear basic black dress shoes. Both men and women need to polish their shoes prior to the interview. Men should wear dark, over-the-calf dress socks that correspond with the outfit. (When you sit down, your pant leg will rise and the interviewer will see if you have on your white running socks!) Men should keep a two-piece rule in mind for jewelry: one watch, as long as it appears professional with the suit, and one ring, such as a wedding band or college class ring.

Both men and women should carry a briefcase, a portfolio, or some sort of professional bag. Under no circumstances is it acceptable to carry your backpack. For women, it is a wise idea to put your essentials in your briefcase and leave your purse at home. Carrying two bags can make you appear cluttered. Your bag must look professional and correspond with your outfit. Inside your bag, you should include extra copies of your résumé, contact information for your references, samples of your work, and mints or a breath freshener. What you should not have in your bag is your cell phone. Nothing will lose you a job faster than your phone going off during the interview. Don’t take any chances; leave it in the car.

When it comes to makeup, men are advised not to wear any, and women are advised to wear only light makeup. Dark lipsticks, dark eye shadows, and fake lashes should be avoided. Everyone’s nails should be clean and filed. If women wear polish, it should be a light, neutral color. With the exception of one small pair of earrings for women, all other piercings should be removed. In addition, tattoos should be covered. Both men and women should also avoid perfumes and colognes when interviewing. Your interviewer may not like your fragrance or, worse yet, may be allergic to it. If you are a smoker, take extra measures to ensure that you do not smell like smoke. If possible, don’t smoke in your suit, wash your hands after smoking, and freshen your breath.

As for your hair, it should be neat and clean. If you have long hair, pull it back. If you wear it short, make sure to schedule a trip to the hairstylist prior to your interview. You don’t want to look like a shaggy dog. Men should avoid facial hair, which includes beards, mustaches, goatees, soul patches, and sideburns. Women should avoid big hair, mall hair, pageant hair—whatever you call it, it went out in the 1980s.

Where do the personal touches fit into the interviewing uniform? They don’t fit in anywhere. Putting on the interviewing uniform may make you feel like a bit of a conformist, but in the end, it’s your interviewing skills and qualifications that will set you apart as an individual, not your clothes or tattoos.

Reducing Nervousness

For many job seekers, interviewing is an uncomfortable communication interaction for several reasons. First, it is a high-pressure situation in which all eyes are on you. Next, your desire to land the job increases whatever anxiety you might normally feel when communicating with strangers. Finally, many job seekers do not feel comfortable “tooting their own horns.” Although you will not be able to eliminate these feelings completely, you can minimize them by practicing. Learning to feel comfortable talking about your skills and accomplishments is a must for successful interviewing. After all, if you don’t promote yourself, no one will.

Being at your best mentally and physically reduces nervousness. Preparing and practicing will help you be at your best mentally. But you also need to be at your best physically. This means getting a proper night’s sleep before the interview. If you have failed to prepare in advance, staying up all night prior to your interview will only make you look and feel less than your best.
If you have to travel to the interview, it is wise to scout out the location a day or two in advance. Be certain you know the route to the building and the interview location inside the building. Always allow plenty of extra time for unexpected obstacles, such as traffic. If the interview is outside your local region, it’s wise to drive or fly there the day before the interview and stay in a hotel or with friends. This will allow you to come to the interview fresh and well rested—as opposed to tired, wrinkled, and sleep deprived, all of which will increase your nervousness.

### How to Interview Online

Nowadays, job interviews using online video communication channels, such as Skype, are becoming more common. Take note of these practical tips to help you nail the online video interview:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Stage</th>
<th>Practical Tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Before your interview** | • Determine the best device to use for the interview (i.e., computer, tablet, cell phone).  
                           • Make sure the interview will be conducted in the proper location:  
                             o Secluded enough so as to prevent any outside interference or distractions  
                             o With a generic background, such as a plain white wall  
                             o With diffused lighting to prevent shadows or glare  
                             o Where you can be seen from the waist up, not just your head  
                           • Test all technological devices: Make sure all batteries are charged, internet connections are working, and the volume is at an appropriate level.  
                           • Conduct a mock interview with a friend or family member so that you can practice your interview skills, as well as test the technology.  
                           • Have at least one backup plan in place in case of any technological glitches.  
                           • Prepare for the actual interview by researching the company, preparing any responses to potential questions, and making sure you look professional. |
| **During your interview** | • Even though it is online, treat the interview as if it were face-to-face: Use your nonverbal skills (solid eye contact, smiling, hand gestures, good posture) to impress the interviewer.  
                           • Always make direct eye contact with the camera, not the screen.  
                           • Have a series of notes off to the side to aid you in the interview, but don’t overuse them or you’ll end up looking away from the camera too often.  
                           • Pause before answering any questions to compensate for any blips in the internet signal. |
| **After your interview** | • As with any type of interview, follow up by sending the interviewer a thank-you letter.  
                           • Follow up occasionally with the interviewer to remind him or her of your interest in working for the company. |

Trying to Fit In

As you read this passage and answer the questions, step back and reflect on what went wrong in this professional situation.

Malia was excited about the possibility of working as a computer programmer with Company Y. Company Y had a reputation for being an organization with high-quality professionals who enjoyed a laid-back environment. It was not uncommon for these award-winning employees to come to work in shorts and flip-flops. Given their reputation, Malia took a more relaxed approach to her attire when interviewing with Company Y. She wanted to demonstrate that she could fit in at the organization, so she came to the interview dressed in a business-casual outfit (khakis and a blouse). Although her interview went well, Malia was not offered the position.

Step Back and Reflect

1. What went wrong?
2. How should you dress for an interview?
3. Should organizational culture influence interview attire? Why or why not?
4. How could Malia use the KEYS approach to improve her communication?

During the Interview

Arrive for the interview at least 10 minutes early. When waiting for your interview to begin, show patience and professionalism. Remember that you are being interviewed during every interaction with the organization, whether you’re interacting with the official interviewer or not. So treat everyone from the parking attendant to the receptionist to the CEO with the same level of professionalism and respect. When you meet the interviewer, look him or her in the eye and shake his or her hand. Your handshake should be firm. This means you do not want an overpowering, bone-crushing shake, nor do you want a wimpy, limp-wristed shake (Bass, 2010; Ivy & Wahl, 2014).

First impressions are extremely important when interviewing. Research has found that it takes as much as double the information in the opposite direction to change an interviewer’s initial impression of an interviewee (Huffcutt, 2010; Judge, Higgins, & Cable, 2000). This means if you make a good first impression, you will have to work pretty hard to turn it into a negative impression.

During the interview, try to monitor your nonverbal communication. Sit up straight, maintain eye contact, and avoid speaking too quickly or using vocal fillers. If you are asked a question that you need a moment to think about, take that moment to think. Do not fill the silence with “umms” and “aahs.” The bottom line is that nonverbal cues do bias interviewer ratings (Bass, 2010; Dipboye, 1992).

Central to being an excellent interviewee is being an excellent listener. Focus on each question asked. If you are unclear about what the interviewer wants, ask for clarification. If the interviewer asks a question with multiple parts, make a mental note of each part and then begin to answer.

If you have prepared and practiced, you will be ready to answer the questions. Include as much of the information you practiced as possible in your answers.
Ask the follow-up questions you prepared. Know that your preparation and practice will help you stand out as a candidate.

Remember to remain positive about your qualifications, your experiences, your former employers, your major/field, the job, and the organization. It’s important to remain positive even when discussing weaknesses or failures. This can be accomplished by discussing a weakness or failure that will not affect you in this position (Crosby, 2000; K. Gray, 2011).

Illegal Questions

Ideally, you will never encounter an interviewer who asks illegal questions, but you should prepare in case it happens. What is an illegal question? According to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII, and subsequent legislation, employers may not consider race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or age when hiring or promoting employees. Therefore, they legally can’t ask questions related to these categories.

When an interviewer said to Yelena, “I see you worked for the Jewish Community Center. Are you Jewish?” she was not sure how to respond. There are several ways Yelena could approach this question. First, she could answer it directly and move on: “Yes, I am Jewish.” She could directly answer the question with a follow-up: “Yes, I am Jewish. Why do you ask?” She could use humor to deflect the question: “Is this a test to see if I know which questions are illegal?” Or she could refuse to answer: “I do not see how that question is relevant to my qualifications.” What is the correct way to handle this situation? Although many students would prefer to use one of the last three approaches, they often are afraid such an answer will hurt their chances of getting the job. Regardless of how you answer the question, make note of what occurs. If you believe your answer negatively affected your chances of being hired, then you have a discrimination case on your hands. If you are offered the job, you may decide not to take it because this question might be an indicator of a hostile work environment. At the very least, you should report this behavior to someone higher in the organization.

Salary Questions

Although you should never bring up the issue of salary prior to being offered the position, you should be prepared in case the interviewer asks about your salary expectations. To prepare, research the appropriate pay for the position you are seeking. Be sure to examine pay-scale variations related to credentials, experience, and location. If asked, you can give a vague response such as “I expect a salary that is competitive in this market.” If the interviewer requests something more specific, give a range starting with the employer’s probable salary and ending with a little above what you are willing to accept.

STAGE FIVE: FOLLOWING UP

When the interview ends, be certain to thank your interviewer verbally. Once you return home from the interview, formalize your thank you with a card.
A handwritten thank-you card for the interviewer not only demonstrates professional excellence but also guarantees that the interviewer will think of you favorably after the interview. If you were interviewed by more than one person, you can either send a thank-you card to everyone who interviewed you or send just one card to your main contact and mention the other parties in the message (Crosby, 2000; Vanevenhoven, Delaney-Klinger, Winkel, & Wagner, 2011). If you have been communicating with the interviewer via email, then you can send the thank-you message through email.

If any additional information was requested during the interview, get that information to your potential employer immediately. This will demonstrate your enthusiasm for the position and your attention to detail.

For many, what comes next is the most emotionally draining part of the job-seeking process—the waiting. It may be days, weeks, or even months until you hear back about the position. Remain patient. Under no circumstances do you want to appear like a stalker, calling twice a day to see if a decision has been made.

Use this time to engage in the last of the KEYS, step back and reflect. How would you rate your communication interactions? How did you perform during the interview? What did you do well? What can you improve for next time? What have you learned about the job-seeking process? What have you learned about interviewing? What have you learned about yourself?

STAGE SIX: NEGOTIATING

Although it may seem at times that the job-seeking process will never end, it will—and it will end with you accepting an offer. Yet the sixth stage of the job-seeking process involves more than just saying yes.

Once an offer is made, the ball is in your court. This is the time to ask clarifying questions about salary, benefits, work conditions, and the like. This is also the
time to negotiate. A negotiation is a discussion between two or more parties to reach an agreement that concludes some matter. In this case, the matter being concluded is the terms of your employment. However, the skills and strategies used to engage in employment negotiations are the same skills and strategies needed to successfully negotiate personnel issues, contracts, legal matters, and other workplace issues.

The first rule to good negotiation is to act with professional excellence. In fact, negotiation experts often stress the need to maintain a polite, collegial, and collaborative tone. During negotiations, both parties should be looking for the best solution to meet the needs of both sides. Using the unite approach, described in detail in Chapter 7, is an excellent strategy for achieving this objective.

According to Hansen (n.d.), you should let the employer make the first offer, but you should not feel obligated to accept that offer if it is inadequate. How will you know if it is inadequate? You must do your homework and research salary norms, as well as benefits and other perks, for the industry, the region, and this organization. In fact, doing your homework and thoroughly researching the situation is critical for all types of negotiation. You can’t negotiate a contract if you have no idea what is acceptable and expected in the industry.

According to Johnson (2012), you must also research your value. Your value is based on factors such as education, length of experience, certifications, and management responsibility. Throughout your career, your value will increase, as will your ability to negotiate better contracts for yourself. In other words, the need to negotiate effectively becomes increasingly important as your career progresses.

One common mistake made during negotiations is failing to negotiate for things other than salary. For example, performance expectations, benefits, moving expenses, equipment, and vacation time are all extremely valuable. It may be beneficial to accept a lower salary if the offer includes a company car and great health benefits. Again, keep in mind that your counteroffer must be reasonable and in line with the research you have done.

To make a counteroffer, you can state something such as “I am very interested in working for your company. Although I would love to be a part of your team, I would like to discuss a few small issues. First, would it be possible to increase the salary offer by $5,000? This would put my starting salary in line with other entry-level salaries for folks with similar education and experience in your organization.”

Once you have received the final offer, step back and reflect. Take into account all you have learned about the organization and the position during your research and the interviewing process. Compare this information with your goals and priorities. If you believe you are a good fit for the position and the organization and that the organization is a good fit for your goals and priorities, accept the offer. If it’s not a good fit, then politely and professionally decline the offer. Declining may be difficult if you do not have another job lined up, but saying yes to the wrong job will be more difficult in the long run.
KEYS TO EXCELLENCE IN THE JOB-SEEKING PROCESS

At the beginning of this chapter, Haden (2016) offered several excellent examples of interview questions to help land a job. When examining the first key, *know yourself*, it is important to know exactly how you want to describe yourself as a valuable asset to an employer. Before you ask any of Haden’s sample questions, make sure to do a self-inventory to highlight your unique skills and motivations that set you apart from other applicants.

The next key, *evaluate the professional context*, would be an excellent time to ask Haden’s first question: What do you expect me to accomplish in the first 90 days? It gives you an excellent idea of what the employer is specifically looking for while also giving you an in-depth look at the character and context of the organization.

The third key, *your communication interaction*, would be the time to use other intelligent and relevant questions to bolster your interview credentials. Besides Haden’s examples, it is a good idea to develop your own thoughtful questions that can pertain specifically to the company or organization to which you are applying.

After the interview has concluded, it is time to *step back and reflect* over how your questions were received. Did the interviewer(s) respond positively to your inquiries? How useful were the answers you were given? Although no one wants to go through numerous interviews, over time this practice can give you some reliable and helpful information as to what companies are looking for. Asking specific questions allows you to show great interest in an organization, indicates that you have already done some work studying the organization, and emphasizes your drive to work there.

Now that you have finished reading this chapter, you should be able to identify the six stages of the job-seeking process:

- The exploring stage begins with you, the job seeker. During this stage, you will need to explore both yourself and potential careers (p. 67).
- The researching stage of the job-seeking process comprises two components: researching openings and researching potential employers (p. 68).
- Once you have researched a place you would like to consider for employment, it’s time to turn your attention to résumés and cover letters in the applying stage (p. 71).
- The interviewing stage involves using your work from the previous stages to project a professional and competent image of yourself to a potential employer (p. 82).
- Following up after the interview is the next stage. Delivering a handwritten thank-you card to the interviewer not only demonstrates professional excellence but also guarantees that the interviewer will think about you favorably after the interview (p. 91).
- Although it may seem at times that the job-seeking process will never end, it will—and it will end with you accepting an offer. Yet the sixth stage of the job-seeking process, negotiating, involves more than just saying yes (p. 92).
CHAPTER 4  RÉSUMÉS, INTERVIEWS, AND NEGOTIATION 95

Explain the important role of exploring and researching in the job-seeking process:

- Self-exploration is important; taking time to think about your goals and priorities is an important part of the job-seeking process—it will help you determine what type of career you wish to pursue and what types of organizations you wish to work for (p. 67).
- As you narrow down career opportunities, it’s important to develop a clear understanding of what each career entails. When you find a career that seems interesting, you need to do some career exploration (p. 67).
- You do not want to waste your valuable time and energy on positions and organizations that do not fit your desires, goals, and priorities. Think about this stage of the job-seeking process as job researching, not job searching. You are not simply searching for vacant positions; you are researching positions and companies to find the right fit between your skills and desires and their needs and opportunities (p. 68).

Develop a customized résumé and cover letter:

- There is no one standard form for a résumé—it’s not one size fits all. When selecting the format for your résumé, choose one that will highlight your strengths and downplay your weaknesses (p. 71).
- Cover letters accompany your résumé and serve to introduce you as a potential employee, highlight your résumé, and demonstrate your writing skills (p. 78).

Discuss examples of how to interview and negotiate successfully:

- To demonstrate professional excellence, you will need to prepare your message, anticipate the questions, script your answers, practice your answers, prepare your appearance, and reduce your nervousness before the interview (p. 82).
- During the interview, remember that you are being evaluated during every interaction with the organization, whether you’re interacting with the official interviewer or not. So treat everyone from the parking attendant to the receptionist to the CEO with the same level of professionalism and respect (p. 90).

Apply the KEYS approach to conduct yourself with professional excellence throughout the job-seeking process:

- Know yourself by capitalizing on your strengths and realizing your weaknesses (p. 94).
- Evaluate the professional context by searching for positions, researching each company, and then customizing your résumé and cover letter for each position (p. 94).
- Your communication interaction begins when your résumé and cover letter are reviewed, making it important to treat each step with care and diligence (p. 94).
- Step back and reflect. Your preparation and practice have served you well. If you do not land this position, you will continue to present the same level of professional excellence with other companies until you do land a job (p. 94).

EXPLORE

1. Visit a business news website (such as Forbes or a similar organization) and identify three types of employment advice it offers that you haven’t learned in class. Do you find this advice to be beneficial or possibly effective? How important is it to gain feedback from the business community to supplement your academic knowledge?

2. Watch a YouTube video (or some other type of multimedia example) that shows a realistic mock interview. Put yourself in the place of the interviewee and use the KEYS process to analyze his or her performance. What (if any) insight did this activity give you?
3. Visit your campus employment aid center. Many colleges and universities will offer to guide you in creating your résumé and cover letter, as well as do mock interviews. Take advantage of the advice they can give you, and also take the opportunity to create a professional connection if you can.

**REVIEW**

1. Identify the six stages of the job interview process.
2. ____________ requires you to research opportunities in your major that correspond with your goals and priorities.
3. A(n) ____________ provides a picture of who you are as an employee by highlighting your skill set.
4. A(n) ____________ is a one- or two-sentence declarative statement about your career goals.
5. A(n) ____________ accompanies your résumé and serves to introduce you as a potential employee, highlight your résumé, and demonstrate your writing skills.
6. ____________ explore how you have handled past situations, as well as asking you to respond to hypothetical situations.
7. A(n) ____________ is a discussion between two or more parties to reach an agreement that concludes some matter.
8. It is ____________ for an interviewer to ask an interviewee questions relating to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or age.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss the experiences you’ve had interviewing. How did the interviews go? Were you nervous? What will you strive to do differently in preparation for future interviews?
2. Take a moment to reflect on your dream job. Have you conducted an electronic search of the organization? What is it about the organization that makes you want to work there?
3. What are the qualities you’re looking for in an employer? Related to some of the information in this chapter, how could you retrieve information to see if those qualities exist?
4. Discuss the resources your campus has in place to support the job-seeking process. Do you plan to use these resources?
5. Take an inventory of your email address and any virtual networks such as Facebook or Instagram where you have a membership or maintain a profile. Is there any information an employer could retrieve from the internet that may be perceived as negative?

**TERMS TO REMEMBER**

Review key terms with eFlashcards: [http://edge.sagepub.com/quintanilla4e](http://edge.sagepub.com/quintanilla4e).

- awards and honors 76
- behavioral questions 83
- career exploration 67
- career planning centers 68
- classified/help-wanted ads 69
- contact information 72
- cover letters 78
- customized résumé 72
education 74
electronic résumé 78
employment experience 74
exploring stage 67
face-to-face interviews 85
generic résumé 72
hobbies and interests 76
illegal questions 91
internet 69
internship 67
job fairs 69
job seeker 67
job-seeking process 66
mock interviews 85
negotiation 93
objective 74
one-on-one interview 85
online application 78
panel interview 85
private employment agencies 69
professional associations 71
references 76
relevant experience 74
researching stage 68
résumé 71
scannable résumés 78
scripting answers 83
self-exploration 67
shadowing 67
skills 75
State employment service 69
summary 74
television interviews 85
traditional questions 83
videoconference 85
white space 77
word of mouth 69

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