

novoresume's

THE JOBSEEKER'S ODYSSEY

The guide to getting hired in 2020



JOB SEARCH IS HARD

Whether you just graduated university, or are a seasoned professional with 10+ years into your career, you probably stress out every time you have to find a new job.

And that's totally OK - we've all been there.

Job search is, inheritably, something you do very rarely (once every 2 - 5 years on average). So, most people never really get to master it. After all, you don't do it often enough to become an expert.

Which brings us to this book: through the Novoresume career blog, we've taught career skills to job seekers world-wide. And with this book, we're taking it to a whole new level. We're going to arm you with all the know-how you need to create a convincing resume, cover letter, AND ace that upcoming interview.

Want to take charge of your career and land that dream job?

Read on!



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Intro to Novoresume

We've noticed a very common problem in our network:

A lot of our talented, highly skilled, and motivated friends and acquaintances were having a very hard time finding the right job.

So, we decided to investigate and figure out "why?"

The answer wasn't too shocking: while most people are talented and highly capable, they have a hard time showing it on their resume. And so, our mission was set: to create a resume builder that's extremely easy to use, and helps present its writer in the best light possible.

To end galactic unemployment, however, a good resume (sometimes) is not enough. After all, it's only one part of your job search. There are a ton of other things you need to know to land that dream job you've always wanted. First, you need to know WHAT to write in your resume that will impress both HR and the Applicant Tracking System. Then, you need a cover letter to match. AND on top of that, your interview game has to be spot on.

Which brings us to this book! Our goal with this book:

To create the most comprehensive, useful guide to job search that's ever been published.

Also a special thanks to the contributors of this ebook: **Austin Belcak**, **Biron Clark**, **Debra Wheatman**, and **Farnoosh Brock**. Without further ado, let's get started.



CHAPTER 1

HOW TO

CREATE

A RESUME



Resumes 101

How HR evaluates your resume

A good resume can be a **game-changer**. Sure, you might be qualified for the job. Heck, you could even be THE best person they could ever hire. But how is the HR manager supposed to know this, unless your resume reflects your qualifications?

So, in chapter #1, we're going to teach you everything you need to know in order to make a winning resume. Now, before we even get started with your resume, let's cover some basics.

Let's start by explaining how an HR manager evaluates a resume. This will help you get in their head, and understand what makes for a good or bad resume. When reviewing your resume, the first thing HR looks at are basic qualifications. Is this person capable of doing the job at a basic level?

So, for about 6 seconds, they scan your resume and see if you match the basic qualifications list from the job ad. If you don't match the basic requirements, you're automatically disqualified.

The top 1/3 of the resume is prime real estate. This is the area where you should be delivering immediate value and sharing your unique value with a potential employer. Keep the section brief and ensure it delivers meaningful impact, which will keep the reader engaged and interested in learning more about you.

Debra Wheatman
Founder at [Careers Done Write](#)

Then, they look for any red flags:

- Do you have any gaps in your work experience (that isn't clearly explained in the resume)?
- Are there any inconsistencies in your background? Are there any blatant / obvious lies?
- Are you a job-hopper? (I.e, have you switched jobs frequently?)
- Are you overqualified / underqualified?

If the answer is "yes" to any of these, you're probably not going to make the cut.

Finally, the HR manager looks at the rest of the resumes for "preferred qualifications." From here on out, the HR manager makes a shortlist of 5 to 10 candidates to contact for an interview, starting with the ones that have both the basic and preferred qualifications.

On the following page, we asked Biron Clark, who is a former Executive Recruiter for more than 50 different employers – including Fortune 500 firms and venture-funded tech startups in the US and Europe to help you better understand how HR evaluates your job application.

Biron Clark

Job Search Expert & Founder @ Career Sidekick

In almost all cases, HR is considering you for a particular role or group in a company. You've either applied for a job, been contacted by a recruiter about a job, etc. So the first thing HR is doing is comparing your resume to the job description. They're looking for similarities and overlaps that demonstrate you'll be able to step into their specific job and succeed.

They want proof that you can handle the tasks, and the best way to prove this is to show them similar past work. Think of it like this: If you were hiring someone to paint your bedroom walls, wouldn't you want someone who has painted bedroom walls in the past? That's the first thing most people would want to see in someone's background.

You may not have every piece of experience that a job requires, but do your best to adjust your resume to show whatever you've done that's most similar. That's how to get more interviews. If the job involves leadership, emphasize any leadership you've done previously. If the job involves interaction with customers/clients, tweak your resume to demonstrate all of the instances you've worked with customers/clients in the past.

Along with this, HR is looking at your educational background (if some type of education is required for the job). They're also looking for results and accomplishments in past roles.

The more metrics and data you can put on your resume, the better. This helps your resume stand out visually and will grab the reader's attention.

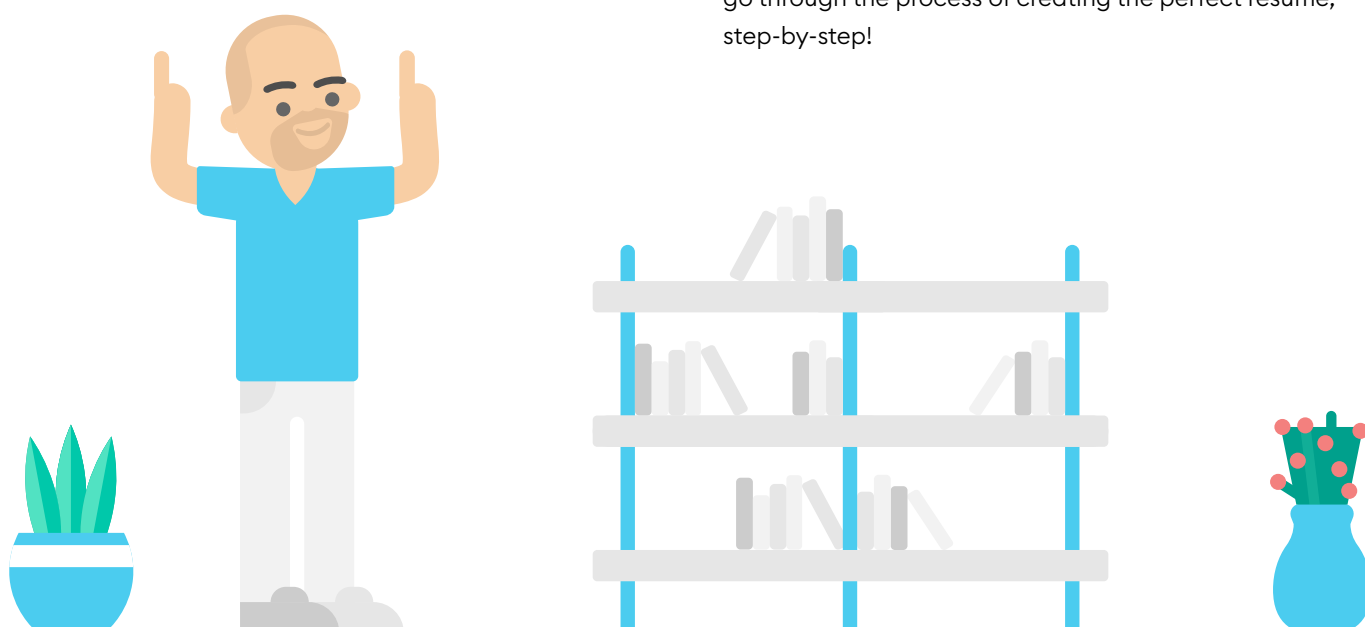
While most job seekers are putting resume bullets like, "Responsible for responding to customer service requests via phone and email," you should be writing, "Responded to 50 - 75 customer service requests per day via phone and email, with a 99.4% customer satisfaction rate." That's going to stand out and impress HR a lot more.

So to recap: HR (and recruiters/hiring managers, for that matter), and are going to be looking at your most recent work experience first and foremost. They'll also look at your education. If you're an entry-level job seeker with no internships or work experience whatsoever, then your education is your experience; try to show accomplishments and specific details about what you did and studied in that section of your resume.

Finally, HR may look at your "Skills" section, but most employers prefer to see where you used each skill (and when), which is why they look at your work history first and foremost.

Biron Clark - [Career Sidekick](#)

Simple, right? Now that we've got that out of the way, let's go through the process of creating the perfect resume, step-by-step!



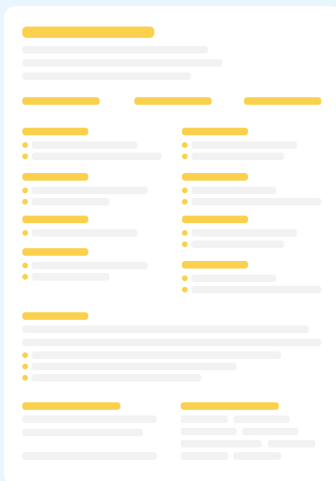
Step 1

Pick the right resume format

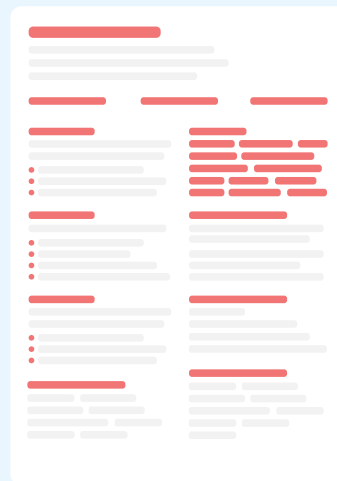
3 of the most popular resume formats are



Chronological



Functional



Combination

Here's what differentiates them

Resume type	Focus	Perfect for
Chronological Resume	Work Experience	Pretty much anyone
Functional Resume	Skills and Expertise	Job seekers with no work experience, career changers.
Combination Resume	Mix between work experience and skills	Career changers, senior professionals with a lot of work experience.

In **99% of cases**, you'd want to go for the chronological format (even if you're a student or a career changer). It's the most popular resume format in the world, and most recruiters are used to it.

So, in this chapter, we're specifically going to **focus on creating a chronological resume**.

If you want to learn more about the other formats, you can check out some of our dedicated guides on the [Novoresume blog!](#)

Step 2

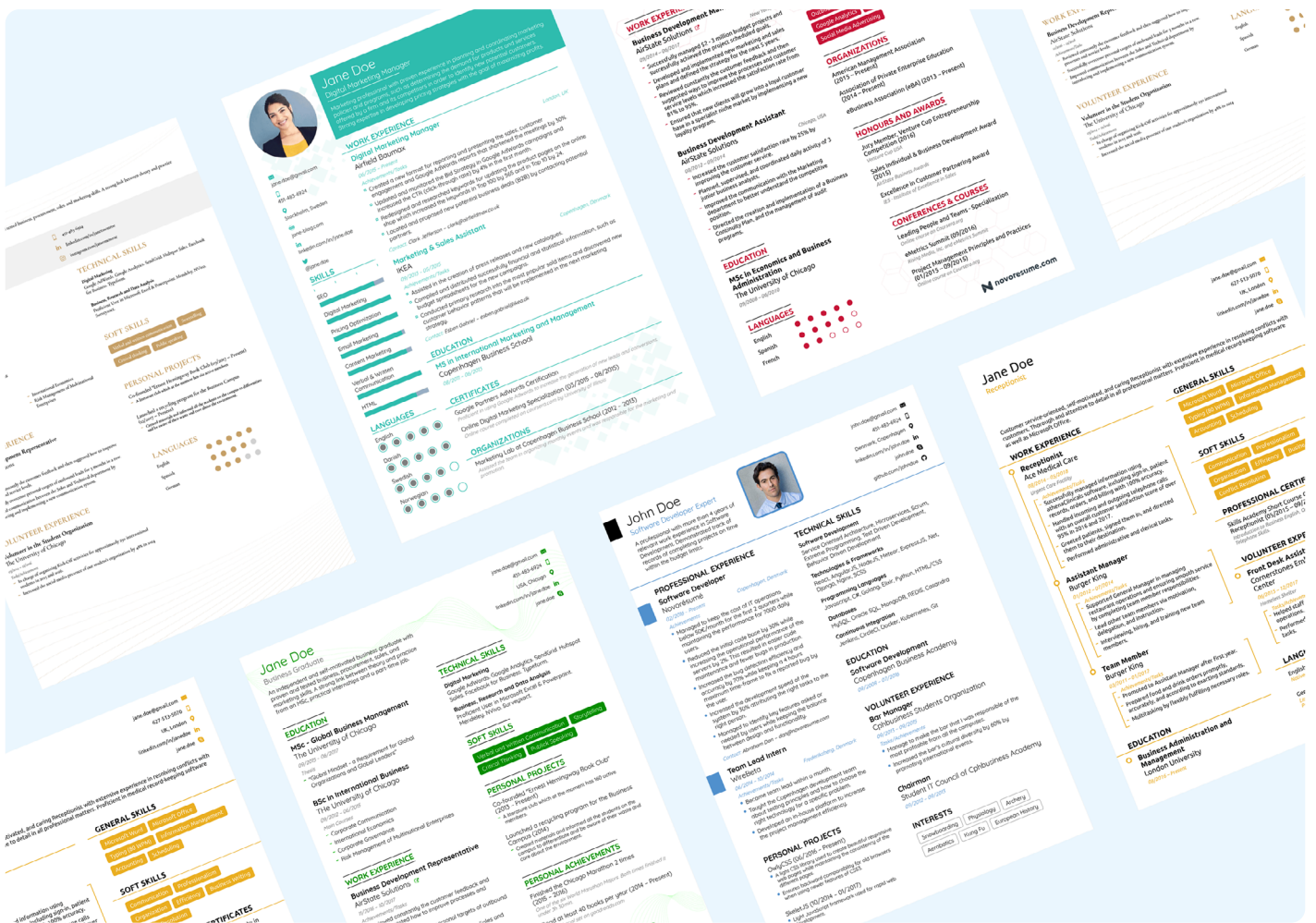
Pick a resume template

Sure, you could create your resume from scratch, but why put in all that effort when you can just use a tried-and-tested template? There are two common options here: using a Word resume template, or a resume builder.

If you've tried creating a resume with Word before, you probably know the hassle. You make a SINGLE change to your resume, and the entire layout gets busted! So, we might

be a bit biased, but we'd recommend going for a resume builder instead. Novoresume is a resume builder created with recruiters and HR managers in mind. Our templates are eye-catching, scannable by applicant tracking systems, and popular worldwide!

It takes under 10 minutes to create your resume from start to finish.



And the best part? You can get started for free.

All you have to do is head over to [Novoresume.com](https://www.novoresume.com), pick one of our resume templates, and create your resume on the go while you're reading this book!

FAQ // Should I go for a creative or a professional resume template?

We get a TON of such questions:

- “Is it OK to create a more creative resume?”
- “In which cases do I want to create a black and white resume?”
- “Will using a creative resume boost my chances of getting hired?”
- “What about infographic resumes? - Can I use those?”

So, here’s the answer: from our experience, **in 90%+ cases, you’d want to opt for a creative resume.** Sure, the black-and-white format is popular, but that’s not what’s going to make you stand out.

The recruiters are people too. They’re a lot more likely to be impressed by a well-designed, easy-to-read resume, than the all-too-common black and white one.

There are, however, two things you should keep in mind:

1. Don’t go overboard with the design. Your resume should be both creative AND professional. So, unless you’re a designer, you’ll want to ditch that infographic resume.
2. If you’re in a conservative industry (banking or legal, for example), you might want to stick to a traditional, black and white resume.

Resume template (Novoresume)

The creative resume for Robert Johnson features a clean, modern layout with a light blue and white color scheme. It includes a header with contact information, a summary paragraph, and sections for Work Experience, Skills, Marketing Skills, Languages, Certificates, Interests, and Education. The design uses rounded corners, subtle shadows, and a mix of font weights to create a professional yet approachable look.

Black and white resume template (Google Docs)

The black and white resume for Robert Johnson is a traditional, functional design. It uses a simple, sans-serif font and a clear, organized layout. The sections are clearly defined with bold headings, and the overall appearance is clean and professional, typical of a standard Google Docs template.

VS

Step 3

Resume Layout & Formatting

If you went for one of our templates in the previous section, the layout is done for you and you can just skip ahead!

If not, here's what you need to know about resume layout...

- **Margins** - A 1-inch margin on all four sides of the resume.
- **Font** - Go for something that's easy to read and a bit creative (but not too much!). We'd recommend fonts like Ubuntu, Roboto, or Overpass.
- **Font Size** - 11 - 12 pt for standard text and 14 - 16 pt for section headers.
- **Line Spacing** - Preferably, 1.15..
- **Entry Bullets** - When describing your work experience, don't go over 6 bullets per position.
- **File Type** - Save your resume in PDF format (this is the preferable option for recruiters). Have a Word version only if asked in the job ad. Most recruiters usually ask for one or the other (and both file types are readable by applicant tracking systems). You should, however, NEVER use a graphic resume (.jpg or .png).

FAQ // Can my resume be two+ pages?

In 90% of cases, the answer to this is very simple:

No.

Whether you're a student that just graduated or a skilled professional with a decade's worth of work experience, you STILL shouldn't go over the one-page limit.

See, the thing is, every resume should be tailored to the job. They shouldn't include everything you've ever done in your life.

Cutting it close? Here are some tips you can follow to trim your resume to just one page.

In some **rare cases**, you can actually go past the one-page limit.

1. If you're creating a resume for a job in academia (that's where you include EVERYTHING you've ever done).
2. If you're a senior executive with experience in several fields and industries, and you just can't fit all of that into one page.

Tips for Creating a One-Page Resume

1. In the "Work Experience" section, only mention the past 10 - 15 years. The recruiter doesn't care what you did a decade ago or about the first internship you ever did.
2. Keep your work experience tailored. Applying for a job as a Software Engineer? The recruiter doesn't need to know about that internship you did in marketing, or that part-time server gig during summer break at uni.
3. In the "Education" section, go for the 2 - 3 most recent education entries. Do you have a B.A.? The recruiter doesn't care about your high school degree.
4. Mention only the relevant skills. Applying for a job as an accountant? You don't need to mention your marketing skill set.

Step 4

Start with your contact info

The most “critical” section in your resume is your “Contact Information.” After all, even if you get the rest of the resume right, you’re not going to go far if HR can’t contact you because of a typo in your phone number.

Here’s what you should include in a well-written Contact Information section:

Must-Have Information

- **First Name / Phone Number**
- **Phone Number**
- **Email Address**
- **Location**

Optional Information

- **Title** - Your desired job title. We’d recommend using the title mentioned in the job ad you’re applying for. Avoid generic made-up titles as much as possible (Java Ninja, SEO Samurai, Marketing Guru , etc.)
- **LinkedIn URL** - Do you have an updated LinkedIn profile? Add a link!
- **Social Media** - Any social media profile that’s relevant to your career can go here. For example, if you’re a developer, you can link to your GitHub. Designer? Your portfolio on Behance.
- **Website / Blog** - Do you have a website that shows off your knowledge and expertise? Mention it in your contact section.




What NOT to Include

- **Date of Birth** - The employer doesn’t have to know how old you are. At best, your age doesn’t add any value. At worst, you might be discriminated against for being too old/too young.
- **Unprofessional Email Address** - Leave that email from 5th grade behind. Your email should be professional and concise. Think: [name] [last name]@gmail.com and not “johnnyboy94@gmail.com.”
- **Headshot** - Don’t include a headshot unless it has something to do with the job you’re applying for (acting, modeling). In fact, in some countries (UK, USA, Ireland), employers prefer that you don’t have a picture on your resume, so as to prove that their hiring process is free from discrimination or bias.
- **Address** - The HR manager doesn’t need to know exactly where you live. Back in the day, you’d receive your answer by post, so an address was important. These days, though, an email or a phone call gets the job done.



Step 5


Nail your Resume Summary/Objective



John Doe

Software Developer Expert

A professional with more than 4 years of relevant work experience in Software Development. Demonstrated track of records completing projects on time within the budget limits.



john.doe@gmail.com ✉
451-483-6924 📞
Denmark, Copenhagen 📍
linkedin.com/in/john.doe in
john.doe 📄
github.com/johndoe 🐙

You'd probably agree with us that first impressions matter. Whether it's at work, school, or personal life, your first impression is going to seriously impact how people perceive you. And this is even more so when it comes to your resume.

Think about the person you met at work. Even if you leave a bad first impression, they'll give you a second shot.

If the HR manager thinks you're not qualified, though, they'll just discard your resume and never look at it again. So, how do you show the recruiter that you're THE candidate in a single glance?

You need to use a convincing Resume Summary / Objective.

What's a Resume Summary and when to use it?

A Resume Summary is a 2 - 4 sentence snapshot of your career. It covers all of your top achievements, including:

- Your professional accomplishments
- Educational background
- Top skills and expertise

As the name suggests, a Resume Summary gives the reader a general idea of what's your resume is all about. It allows the recruiter to know whether you're relevant or not, in a single glance.

Here's what a well-written Resume Summary looks like...

Project Manager Resume Summary example

Project manager with a proven track record of working with agile and waterfall project management methodologies, seeking a position at Company X. Managed 5+ software projects over the past 3 years. Basic understanding of several programming languages, including Java, React, and NodeJS.

Now, creating a convincing Resume Summary is pretty straightforward. Most of them start with some variation of the following:

"[Your Title] professional with X+ years of experience in [Industry/field] seeking to become part of [Company] as a [Job Title]."

Or...

"[Your Title] professional with X+ years of experience in [Industry/field] seeking to help [Company] with [Company's goals]."

Then, you can mention the following (in no specific order):

- Your top achievements. (E.g., "Previous experience includes managing marketing budgets of up to \$50,000.")
- Your top skills and expertise. (E.g., "Highly skilled in C++, Javascript, and Ruby.")
- Desired goal. (E.g., "Seeking to help Novoresume create the best in class resume builder.")

What's a Resume Objective and when to use it

A Resume Objective is pretty much the same thing as a Resume Summary, with one key difference. Instead of focusing on your professional background/achievements, it's oriented more towards your goals.

It's meant for job seekers who:

- Don't have a lot of professional experience
- Students looking for an internship
- Recent graduates
- Career changers who have the right skills for the job, but not the experience

To give you a better idea about what's a Resume Objective, here's an example:

Executive Assistant Resume Objective example

Freelance virtual assistant looking to transition to the position of an Executive Assistant. Worked with 5+ online businesses, helping with everything from data entry to customer support. Excellent attention to detail and organizational skills. Proficient in Excel, Adobe Photoshop. Possesses intermediate copywriting skills.

As for how to write one, we'll cover two separate examples – one for a career changer, and another for a student.

How to write a career change Resume Objective

In a career change Resume Objective, you want to focus on your transferable skills, rather than on your work experience. Transferable skills are the type of skills you've got from your previous job or during your free time that will help you do the job you're applying for right now.

You're a project manager with 10+ years of experience seeking to transition into digital marketing.

The main focus of the Resume Objective should be how you're going to use your PM experience in digital marketing. For example:

"Professional project manager seeking to transition to the role of a digital marketer. Previous experience in creating a blog about project management and growing it to 10,000+ monthly organic traffic through SEO. Skilled in content writing and link-building."

Sure, you could go on and on about how you're an amazing project manager and how you've worked on 5+ projects, but that's not what the hiring manager cares about.

Instead, as with the example above, you focus on how your previous experience or skill set makes you a good candidate for the job.

Now, to write a convincing career change Resume Objective, use our template below:

[Your Title] seeking to transition to the role of a [Desired Title]. Previous experience includes [1 - 2 relevant experiences or achievements]. Skilled in [top 3 - 5 relevant skills].

How to write a student Resume Objective

Now in this case, you don't have ANY work experience to speak of. So, your main focus should be your education and skills:

Recent [Field of Study] graduate seeking to start my career in [Field]. Strong skills in [Relevant Skill #1], [Relevant Skill #2], [Relevant Skill #3]. Practical experience in [Something that you've done in your field] on a [internship/university project].

Now, let's fill it in like in the example below:

Recent Business Administration graduate seeking to start my career in advertising. Strong skills in graphic design and copywriting, coupled with a creative mind. Practical experience in social media marketing through several university projects, as well as a marketing internship at Company X.

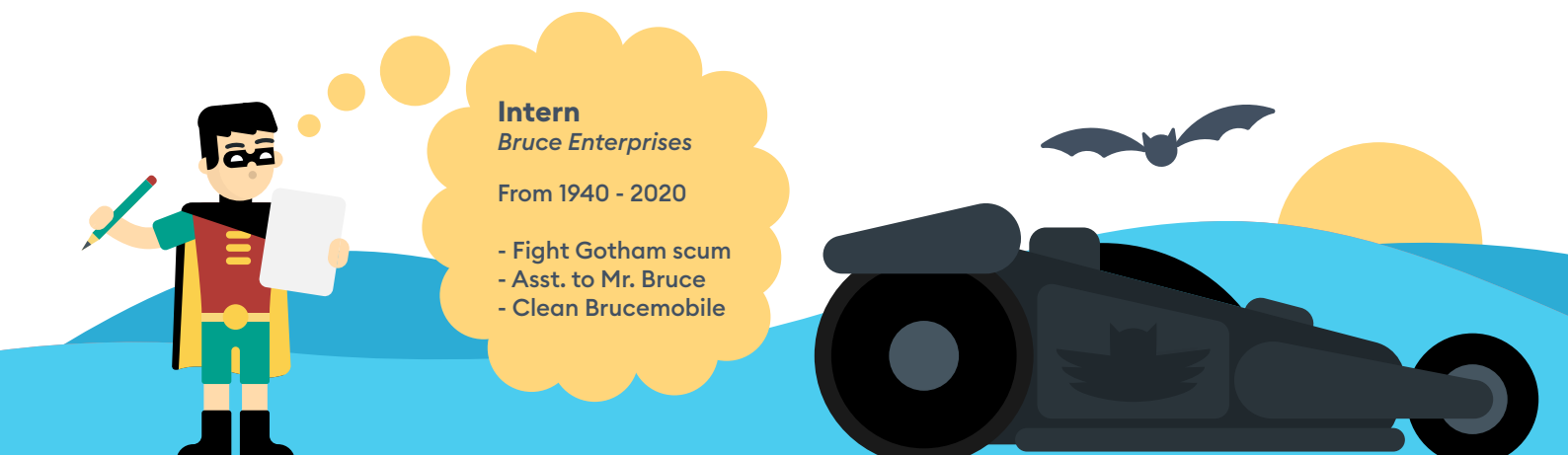
Step 6

Make your work experience stand out

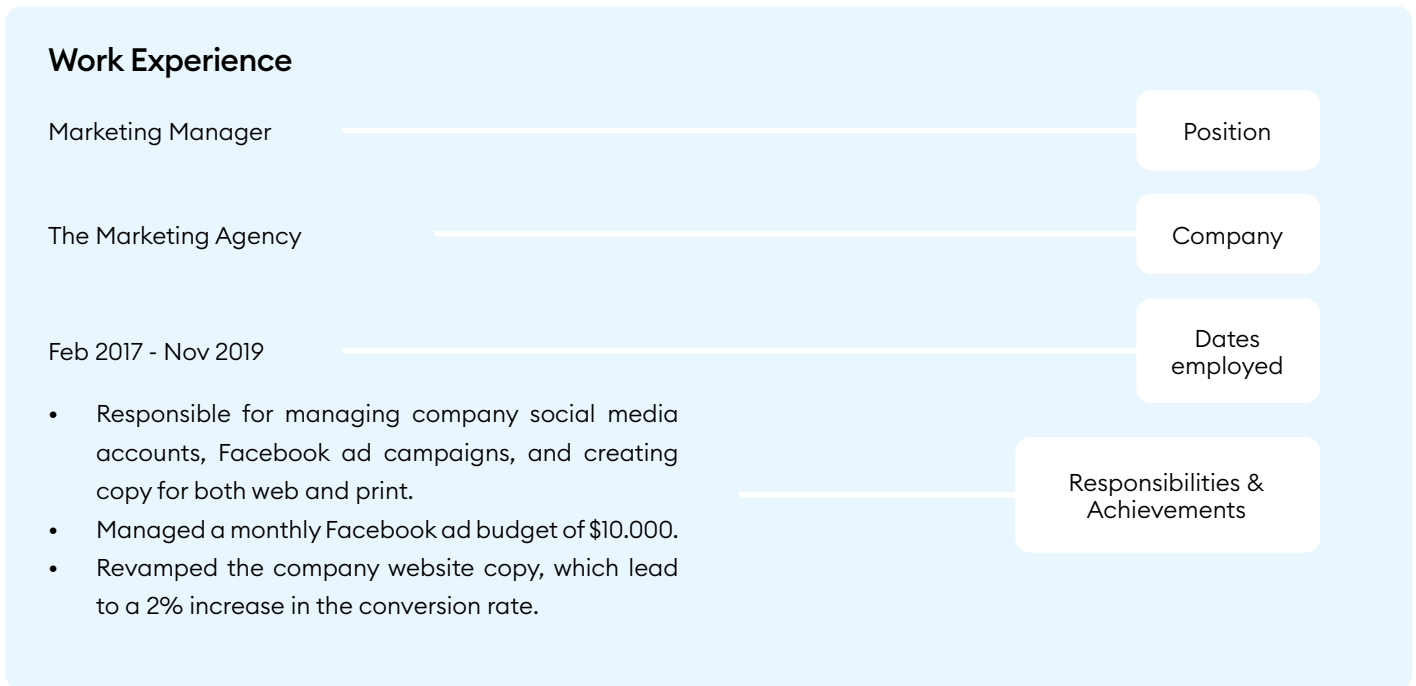
Are you a student without much work experience? Feel free to skip this section – you don't need ANY work experience to write a convincing student resume. The "Work Experience" section is the bread and butter of your resume.

After all, your experience is what you're being hired for. All the other sections act as a supplement. You start off by creating the Work Experience section and listing out the following for each entry:

- Position
- Company Name
- Dates Employed
- Responsibilities & Achievements (6 - 8 bullets per position)



This is how it looks in practice:



Pretty straightforward, right? Creating this section, however, is only the first step. What makes your Work Experience section good or bad is how you list your responsibilities and achievements. To really stand out, your work experience should be achievement-focused.

Focus on quantifiable achievements

When listing work experience entries, you want to focus more on achievements than on responsibilities. Let's say you're a Facebook advertiser. The hiring manager already knows what your responsibilities were...

- Managing ads
- Tracking and optimizing ad campaigns
- Coming up with new ad creatives

And that's exactly what most of your competitors applying for the job would list on their resume. To stand out, you want to focus on achievements instead. Not just any achievements, though. They should be based on data and facts.

Here's exactly what we mean:

[Correct Example]

Managed ad accounts for 5+ companies with a monthly budget of over \$50,000 for 2+ years.

This entry is both specific and data-driven. The reader knows exactly what you're capable of.

Now, let's compare it to...

[Incorrect Example]

Managed ad accounts for clients.

This example, on the other hand, doesn't say anything at all. Sure, you managed ads for clients, but how many? Is it 5? 3? Or, just 1? What was the ad spend? There's a huge difference between a \$50,000 monthly ad spend, and a \$50 one.

What if my job doesn't have a lot of opportunities to stand out?

In that case, listing responsibilities is totally OK. Not every field has the opportunity to stand out or excel. Let's say, for example, you're a warehouse worker. You can't just say that you:

[Incorrect Example]

Lifted and relocated 56+ heavy objects on a daily basis

That just sounds weird. In this case, you just stick to your responsibilities.

[Correct Example]

- Loading, unloading and setting up equipment
- Packaging and shipping products
- Opening and closing the warehouse



FAQ // Work Experience

Q: What if I don't have any work experience?

A: In that case, you have two options: skip Work Experience and focus on the other sections, or list other types of experiences that you've had.

For example, volunteering, internships, summer jobs, etc. We're going to deep dive on how you can list these sections a bit further down the line.

Q: Do I list irrelevant jobs on my resume?

A: If you have any relevant experience, then, no. (E.g, If you've done an internship in marketing, and worked two different jobs as a server.) In this case, you just mention the marketing internship.

If you don't have the right experience, though (i.e, you're switching careers or are a recent graduate), you should list ANY experience that you have. It's always better to have some work experience rather than none.

Q: How much work experience do I include on my resume?

A: Past 10 - 15 years of experience is the standard. In some cases, you could go beyond that and list more (as long as the experience is still relevant).

Q: What do I do if I have a gap in my work experience?

A: If you have a reason for the gap, you want to mention it in your Work Experience section:

2018 Jun - 2019 Sep

Took some time off my career, as I had to take care of an ill family member.

Some potential reasons you could include are the following:

- You started a business but it failed.
- Someone close to you fell ill, and you had to take care of them.
- Family reasons – you started a family, went through a divorce, etc.
- Education break – you took a break in your career to pursue a degree or vocational training.
- You had an accident and had to take some time off to recover.

Step 7

List Your Education

The next section we're going to cover is "Education." This one's pretty straightforward. Here's everything you can mention in an education entry.

- **Program Name** - E.g., "B.A. in Marketing"
- **University** - E.g., "Boston State University"
- **Years Attended** - E.g., "09/01/2015 - 06/15/2019"
- **(Optional) GPA** - E.g., "3.7 GPA"
- **(Optional) Honors** - E.g., Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude, Summa Cum Laude.
- **(Optional) Achievements** - Did you win any awards during university? Did any of your papers featured in a journal? You can mention these as part of your education entry. E.g., "Paper on Cybernetics published in the journal of Cool Futuristic Tech."
- **(Optional) Minors** - E.g., "Minor in Philosophy"
- **(Optional) Courses Attended** - If you're a recent graduate with little practical work experience, you can mention the courses you've taken in university. E.g., "C++ 101, Introduction to Software Engineering, Calculus 3."

And here's what an education section looks like on a resume

EDUCATION

MS in International Marketing and Management

The University of Chicago

06/2017 – 06/2019

Master Thesis:

- "How Packaging Attributes Affect Purchase Decisions: An Exploratory Study of Modern Consumers"

BA in Brand and Communications Management

Copenhagen Business School

08/2014 – 06/2017

Main Courses

- Perspectives in Strategic Brand Management
- Marketing Accounting and Brand Performance
- Applied Strategic Brand Management
- Neuroscience of Branding

FAQ // Education section

Q: Should I mention my GPA?

A: Only if you had an impressive academic career (i.e., 3.5 GPA and above) and if you've only recently graduated (if you went to school 20 years ago, no one cares about your GPA).

Q: Does the Education section go on top of work experience, or underneath?

A: If you have any relevant work experience, then your Work Experience section goes on top. If you don't, then your Education section does.

Q: Do I mention my high school degree?

A: Skip your high school degree if you have any higher degree (i.e., B.A., M.A., etc.).

Q: Do I list my ongoing degree?

A: Of course! As an end-date, mention the expected year of graduation, or “Ongoing.”

Q: Do I still mention my degree if I dropped out?

A: Yep. An unfinished degree is still better than no degree. If you’re listing university, simply mention the years you attended, and the credits you earned.

Step 8

Show off your skill set

Another must-have section for any resume is the “Skills” section. There are two types of skills you can mention on your resume...

- **Soft Skills** - Personal skills. E.g., leadership, communication, critical thinking.
- **Hard Skills** - Measurable / practical skills. E.g., copywriting, operating machinery, C++.

Full-Stack Developer

Requirements:

- Five+ years of experience as a full-stack developer
- **Self-reliant** and comfortable working with no hand-holding
- **Good communication skills** and ability to work in a team
- Strong knowledge of **Java (Spring Framework)**, **React**, and **Node.js**
- Expertise in **Relational** or **NoSQL Databases**

A good resume has a mix of both. You shouldn’t just list ANY skills, though. The Skills section should be tailored to each job you apply for.

Let’s say you’re applying for this job ad:

The soft skills they’re looking include the following:

- Self-reliant
- Good communication
- Team work

And the hard skills include the following:

- Java Spring Framework
- React
- Node.js
- Relational or NoSQL Databases

So, you mention all of them in your Skills section

SKILLS

Self-reliant Communication Team work
Java Spring Framework React Node.js
Relational Databases

Then, you want to divide each of these by skill level.

After all, without that, the recruiter can't tell whether you're a master at something, or just getting started. We'd recommend dividing skills by the following levels:

- **Beginner** - You have a basic understanding and experience of the skill. You've used it in the past in an educational setting.
- **Intermediate** - You have a good grasp of the skill and have used it in a professional environment.
- **Advanced** - You have a fundamental understanding of the skill and a lot of experience using it in a professional environment.

Step 9

Six other essential sections you can add

Do you still have some extra space to fill on your resume?

Some other popular sections you could include are:

1. Languages
2. Hobbies & Interests
3. Volunteering Experience
4. Certifications & Awards
5. Publications
6. Projects

As a given, these sections usually aren't a game-changer. If your work experience is lacking, for example, knowing French won't make up for it.

If the rest of your resume is well-written, however, these sections can give you the boost you need in order to get the job.

Languages

Are you bi-lingual? Or better still – multilingual? The recruiter would love to know all about that! Even if the job you're applying for doesn't have anything to do with a foreign language, it can still boost your application. Listing languages is pretty easy. All you have to do is create the relevant section, and list out your language skills, like in the example below:

You can divide the languages by the following levels:

- Native
- Fluent
- Proficient (i.e., you know the language well enough to use it professionally)
- Intermediate
- Basic



Obviously, you shouldn't lie about your level of fluency. Checking language skills is the easiest thing in the world, and the last thing you want to do is be caught in a lie.

Hobbies & Interests

Want to add some personality to your resume? Use a “Hobbies & Interests” section! Keep in mind, though, that this isn’t something game-changing or significantly impactful. The fact that you like snowboarding on weekends is NOT going to be what gets you hired.

Hobbies and interests, however, can help you in these three ways:

1. Establish rapport with the interviewer. Who knows, maybe you have the same pasttimes?
2. Show yourself as a person, not just a resume. For a lot of jobs, what gets your foot in the door is your skill set. What gets you hired, though, is your personality. A hobbies section can add some color and personality to your resume.
3. Show that you don’t just work your job – you LOVE it. What we mean by this is, let’s say you’re applying for a copywriting position. You could mention “Creative Writing” as a hobby. What this shows is that you love writing, and hence, that you probably enjoy your job because of this.

Certifications & Awards

Do you have a lot of certifications in your field? Or maybe, you’ve won some awards in your industry? In that case, you need a “Certifications & Awards” section on your resume. Simply create the section, and list out your accolades.

CERTIFICATES

Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Certification (4)
(02/2015 – 02/2016)

Corporate Finance Institute

- Portfolio Management & Investment Analysis.
- Ethical and Professional Standards, Quantitative Methods, Economics, Financial Reporting and Analysis, Corporate Finance, Equity, Fixed Income, Derivatives, Alternative Investments.

Volunteering Experience

According to research done by the Corporation for National and Community Service, volunteering experience can lead to around a 27% higher chance of being hired. So, if you have any volunteering experience, make sure to mention it on your resume in this section! Volunteering goes on a resume just like work experience:

Volunteering Experience

Volunteer

Position

Boston Foodbank

Company

12/14/2019 - 5/9/2020

Dates employed

- Volunteered at the Boston Foodbank as a warehouse worker
- Sorting and weighting stock
- Delivering food parcels

Responsibilities

Projects

Side-projects are an amazing way to show off your skills (even if you have zero practical work experience). In this section, you can include any type of project you've ever worked on:

- A mock product you created in Entrepreneurship 101
- A Marketing strategy you made for a real-life company as part of your marketing class in university
- A Part-time arts and crafts store you created on Etsy
- A Single-player game you wrote in Python.
- A Website you developed using HTML5
- And just about anything else!

Structure-wise, here's what the "Project" section looks like:

Projects

Tom's Techpire

Oct 2017 - Ongoing

Created a personal blog reviewing tech gadgets

Drove 5,000+ steady monthly traffic

Generated up to \$300 monthly revenue from sponsored blog posts

Listing projects can especially be useful if you're a recent graduate. They help you fill up more space on your resume, AND show that you have the right skills, even if you lack the relevant work experience.

Publications

If you're a writer or an academic, a "Publications" section is a must-have on your resume.

Create a new section, name it Publications, and populate it by adding:

- The name of your article, paper, essay, etc., in quotation marks
- Name of the publication
- Year of publishing
- (Optional) Page. If your work is published in a journal, you also include the page number
- (Optional) Link

So for example:

Publications

- "How to Write a Resume," *Novoresume*, 2020
<https://novoresume.com/career-blog/how-to-write-a-resume-guide>
- "How AI and machine learning is changing the job market," *Journal for Labor Market Research* volume 50, 103 - 132.



Step 10

How to beat the ATS with resume tailoring

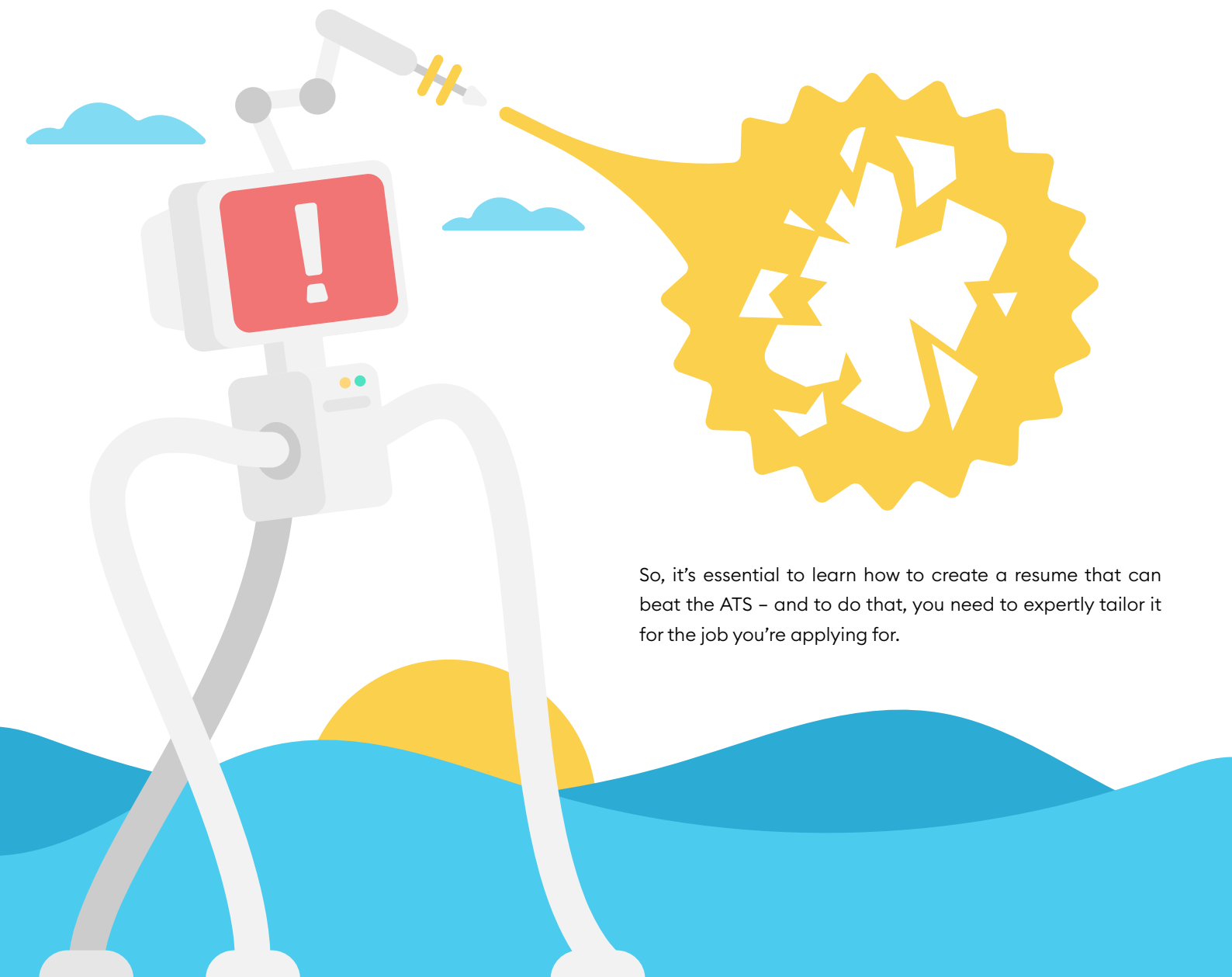
At this point, you might be tempted to wrap it all up and move forward with your application. We're not done just yet, though. Once you're finished with your resume, it's time to tailor it to the job you're applying for.

If you skip this step, there's a chance that the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) will automatically discard it. See, before the recruiter even gets to look at your resume, it first has to go through an ATS.

The ATS scans the resume and depending on your contents, decides whether or not it's relevant for the job. If the system doesn't like your resume, it gets automatically discarded (even if you're the most qualified person in the world!)

And Applicant Tracking Systems aren't something so rare. To make things worse, around.

70% of all applicants worldwide are disqualified by an ATS.



So, it's essential to learn how to create a resume that can beat the ATS – and to do that, you need to expertly tailor it for the job you're applying for.

For every job ad, the HR manager inputs the required and optional filter keywords into an ATS.

For example, if you're applying for a marketing job, the keywords could be the following:

Required: 5+ years of experience

- Required: Marketing
- Required: Facebook ads
- Optional: Copywriting
- Optional: Communication

Then, for every resume that comes in, the ATS scans it and sees whether it has the required and optional keywords.

The **"required"** keywords are qualifiers: if you don't have them mentioned, your resume automatically gets cut.

The **"optional ones,"** on the other hand, are for sorting. The more skills you match with, the higher up you come up on the recruiter's dashboard.

So, how do you do the tailoring? The first step is to scan the job ad and identify which keywords could be used by the ATS.

Let's say you're applying for this job:

Social Media Specialist

Responsibilities:

- Create and publish social media content on a daily basis
- Manage all the main social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit
- Conduct online reputation management

Requirements:

- 2+ years of experience as a social media specialist
- B.A. in Business or Marketing
- Working proficiency with Adobe Illustrator
- Knowledge of analytics platforms (HootSuite, Google Analytics, Facebook Insights)

The important keywords would be "social media content," "Facebook," "Twitter," and so on (as we've highlighted above). Now, you have to mention these keywords in different sections of your resume. For example:

Title

Social Media Specialist

Resume Summary

"Social media specialist with 3+ years of experience"

Education

B.A. in Marketing

Skills

Social media marketing with Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Adobe Illustrator, HootSuite, Google Analytics, Facebook Insights

And you're pretty much good to go!



Before you go!

The perfect resume checklist

Before you send off that resume, you want to make sure that it's as good as it can be. Go through our free checklist and see how YOURS stands up!

Resume checklist

1. Does your Contact Information section have all the must-have information?
 - **Name**
 - **Phone Number**
 - **Email**
 - **Social Profiles**
2. Is your contact email professional?
E.g., firstnamelastname@email.com
3. Are you using the right resume format? Hint: In most cases, it should be reverse-chronological.
4. Does your resume fit the one-page standard?
5. Did you include all the must-have sections in your resume? That's...
 - **Contact Information**
 - **Work Experience**
 - **Education**
 - **Skills**
6. Did you include a Resume Summary/Objective? While it's not mandatory, it can really help!
7. Did you list only the most relevant work experiences? (I.e., Applying for a job in finance? Your experience should be about finance.)
8. Did you list achievements instead of responsibilities?
9. Did you tailor your resume to the job ad you're applying for? Did you mention all the essential keywords?
10. Did you mention the right amount of work experience in your resume? (I.e., 10 - 15 years of experience max.)
11. Did you list all the right skills for the position you're applying for?
12. Did you add any of the optional sections to your resume?
13. And finally, did you proofread your resume? We'd recommend asking a friend or using software like Grammarly.

CHAPTER 2

MATCH YOUR RESUME WITH A COVER LETTER



Cover letters get a bad rep

Most people put all their effort into their resume, and then just kinda wing the cover letter, hoping no one actually reads it. That, however, couldn't be further from the truth. A good cover letter is as important as a resume – in some cases, even more important!

It can help a mediocre resume shine, or, it can turn a good resume into a guaranteed hire. In this chapter, we're going to teach you everything you need to know about cover letters.

Cover Letters 101

What are they for?

At this point, you might be tempted to wrap it all up and move forward with your application. We're not done just yet, though. Once you're finished with your resume, it's time to tailor it to the job you're applying for.

If you skip this step, there's a chance that the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) will automatically discard it. See, before the recruiter even gets to look at your resume, it first has to go through an ATS.

The ATS scans the resume and depending on your contents, decides whether or not it's relevant for the job. If the system doesn't like your resume, it gets automatically discarded (even if you're the most qualified person in the world!). And Applicant Tracking Systems aren't something so rare.



Structure of a Cover Letter

1. Contact Details

2. The Hiring Manager / Department Information

3. Opening Paragraph

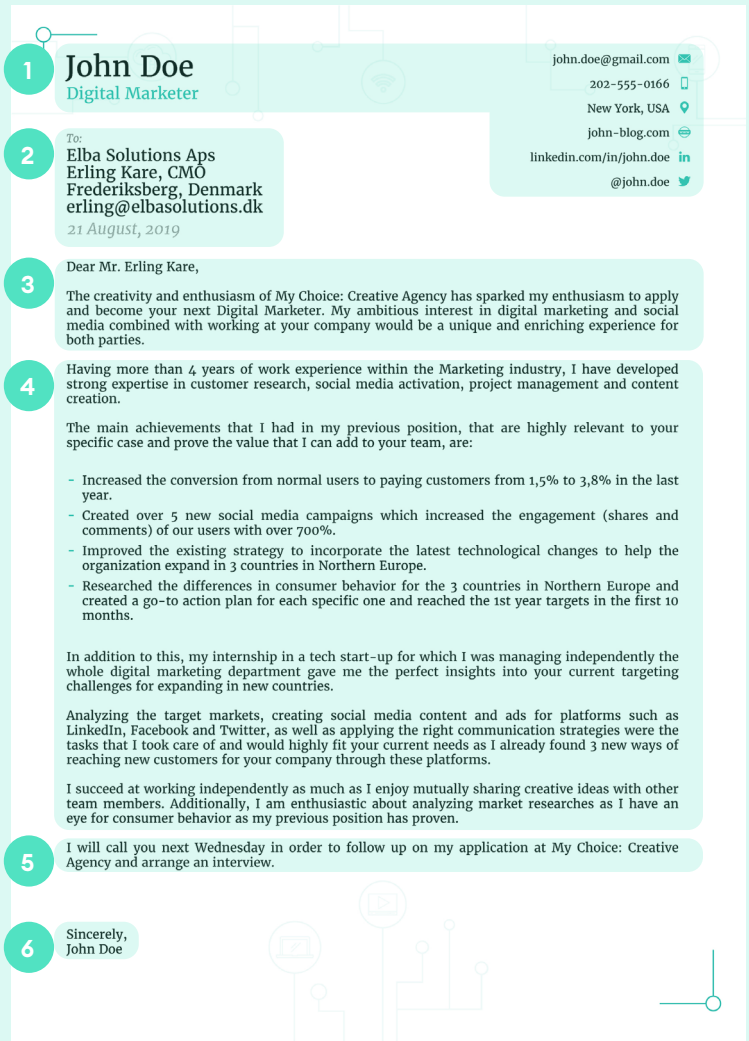
- Make it personal and tailor it for each job application to grab the reader's attention.

4. The Body

- Describe what are your major achievements and how will you help them solve their current challenges. Mention why you are the right person for the job.

5. Closing Paragraph

6. Formal Salutation



Step 1 Create a cover letter header

The first thing that goes on your cover letter is the header. Here, you want to include **your own contact information**.

- Full Name
- Phone Number
- Email
- (Optional) Social Media Profiles - Do you have a social media profile that's relevant to your job? Include a link!
- (Optional) Personal Website - If you have a website that's relevant to your field, mention that too. E.g., if you're a content writer, you can mention your personal blog.

And the "To" section – that's the employer's contact information.

- Hiring Manager Name
- Position
- Company Name
- Location
- Date - The date you sent in the cover letter.

Step 2

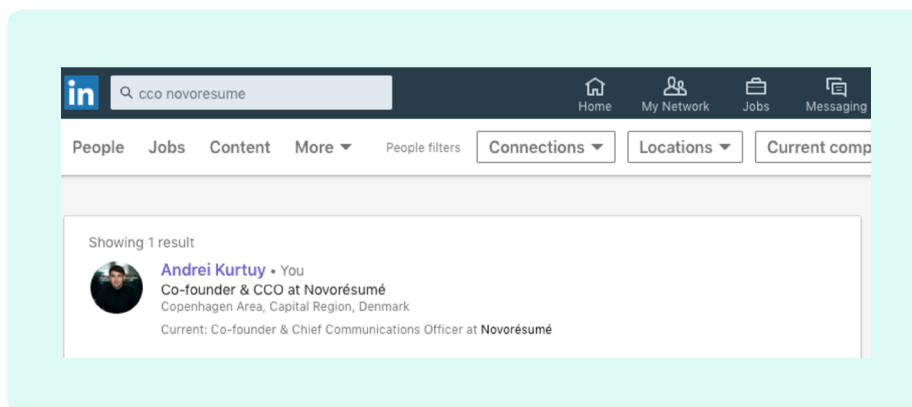
Greet the hiring manager

Want to impress the hiring manager? Ditch the usual “Dear Sir or Madam” and refer to them by their name instead.



This shows that you care about this specific company you’re applying for – you’re not just applying for a dozen jobs blindly. You actually did your research! So, all you have to do is figure out who’s the hiring manager for the job you’re applying for.

In most cases, that’s going to be the department lead. Applying for a job in Marketing & Communication? The hiring manager is probably the CMO, CCO or Head of Marketing/Communication. So, head over to LinkedIn and do a quick search:



Pro Tip

Applying for a job in a very small business? They probably don’t have a hiring manager. In that case, you should address the company owner or manager instead.

Step 3

Grab the recruiter's attention with your introduction

A good cover letter introduction should include information on the following:

- Your goal. (I.e., "I want to help company X with Y.")
- Your profession and years of experience
- Your top 1 - 2 achievements

Or, here's what that looks like in practice:

Cover Letter Introduction Example

Dear Sarah Wilson,
My name's Josh Spencer and I'd like to help Company X with their expansion to the UK. I have over 6 years of experience as a Business Developer Manager, having previously worked at Company X and Company Y. I've helped Company X open a new office in Berlin, Germany, and established partnerships with X+ local distribution centers.

Step 4

Show them you are the right person

The body section is the most important part of your cover letter. You wrote a good introduction and managed to get HR's attention. Now, you have to show them what you've got to give. The body section is usually divided into two parts:

1. First, you talk about how you're a good skill-fit. (I.e., how you're going to use your skill set and experience to help the company accomplish its goals.)
2. Then, you mention why you want to work for this company, specifically. What do you like about them? Is it their mission? The product or service? Culture?

The key to doing this right is research: you want to really understand what the company and the job are all about. Most people mess up here – they do minimal research and write something extremely generic:

[Incorrect Example]

Dear Sir or Madam,
My name's Josh and I'd love to join your delightful organization. As a project manager, I can help ensure that Company X carries out its projects from start to finish with minimal issues along the way.

I really like Company X's product line, and believe that it's very groundbreaking and innovative. I'd love to be part of a company that has such a large focus on innovation and improvement.

See what's wrong? This cover letter applies to every single project management job in every single company, ever.

It's not special at all, and the writer probably took like 5 minutes MAX to write it. The key here is to do your research. First, go through the job ad, and identify the following:

- What's the job? What will your day-to-day work look like?
- Which team/department are you going to be part of?
- What's your #1 responsibility for the role?
- Which of your top skills are you going to use for this position?
- Which technologies/software are you going to use?

Then, go through the company website, and identify:

- What's the company size? Is it a small startup? Multinational corporation? Something in-between?
- Is the company local or international? Which regions do they operate in?
- Is it a service or product company? What's the service/product they're offering?
- What kind of culture does the company have? Is it formal/serious? Lax/casual?

Once you know what company you're applying at, and what's the job you'll be doing, you're ready to write a killer cover letter. And don't worry – all this info ain't going to waste. Whatever you learn here will also come in handy during the interview phase!

So now, you can get to writing the body section of your cover letter. A good body section of a cover letter should include the following:

- Your main job responsibility for the role
- Your top achievement
- Your top skills
- Why you want to work for the company you're applying for

Or, you can just follow our simple template:

Cover Letter Body Example

In my previous role as a [Job] I handled [Main Responsibility]. Over the X years there, I managed to [Top Achievement (s)]. Some of my top skills and expertise includes.

Skill #1 - [Experience with the Skill].

Skill #2 - [Experience with the Skill].

Skill #3 - [Experience with the Skill]

I believe that my previous work experience and skills set would help me become a valuable member within [the company], as well as [any other specific reasons]

Depending on the job you're applying for, you'd customize the skills and top achievement accordingly. You'd also customize the [Reasons] based on what you've learned about the company. Make sure to be authentic, though. "I've always wanted to work in a [Company Trait] company" isn't fooling anyone.

Talk about what, exactly, you like about their organization, and why you want to be a part of it. Now, let's cover a practical example. Let's say you wanted to apply to Novoresume for a job as a marketer.

Here's what you'd have to write to impress us:

Novoresume Cover Letter Example

Dear Stefan,

My name is John Doe and I'd like to join Novoresume as a Digital Marketing Specialist. I've been in marketing for 5+ years now, and have previously worked at Software Company X and Agency Y. Below, you can find a brief summary of my qualifications and resume attached.

In my previous role as a Digital Marketer at Agency Y, I handled all things related to online marketing.

Over the 2 years there, I worked with 8+ different client accounts, three of which were SaaS companies. I've managed \$50,000+ ad spend per month over several advertising platforms, as well as created and promoted content for Agency Y. Some of my top skills and expertise include Facebook Ads, copywriting, and Google Search Ads

I really like Novoresume's product, and I'd love to help you guys 10x your marketing. I love how your format is a lot more visual than the bland, conventional black-and-white resume.

As mentioned before, I've previously worked with SaaS companies, so it shouldn't take me long to learn the ropes.

Looking forward to hearing back from you!

Best,
John Doe



Step 5

Wrap up your cover letter

Finally, you can finish up your cover letter. In the last paragraph, you should include the following:

- Summarize your main points. E.g., “So in short, I believe that my skills as a project manager could really help company X with.”
- Finish the cover letter with a call to action. E.g., “If you think we’re a good match, I’d love to discuss how I can help!”

And of course, end your cover letter with a formal closing. For example:

- Best regards
- All the best
- Sincerely
- Thank you
- Yours truly

Before you go!

Perfect your cover letter checklist

Not sure how your cover letter is holding up? Here’s a free checklist to make sure it’s as good as it can be!

Cover letter Checklist

1. Does your cover letter heading include all the essential information?
 - **Full Name**
 - **Professional Email**
 - **Phone Number**
 - **Date**
 - **Relevant Social Media Profiles**
2. Are you addressing the right person? (I.e., the hiring manager in the company/your future direct supervisor.)
3. Does your introductory paragraph grab the reader’s attention?
 - Did you mention 2 - 3 of your top achievements?
 - Did you use numbers and facts to back up your experience?
4. Do you successfully convey that you’re the right professional for the job?
 - Did you identify the core requirements?
 - Did you successfully convey how your experience helps you fit the requirements perfectly?
5. Do you successfully convince the hiring manager that you’re passionate about the company you’re applying to?
 - Did you identify the top three things that you like about the company?
 - Did you avoid generic reasons for explaining your interest in the company?
6. Did you finalize the conclusion with a call to action?
7. Did you use the right formal closure for the cover letter?

CHAPTER 3

HOW TO

ACE YOUR

INTERVIEW



Interviews can be a very scary experience

Even if you're the most extroverted person in the world. You sit there in an isolated room, while HR and the hiring manager ask you question after question.

But here's the thing – if you know what you're doing, interviews stop being all that scary. We already taught you how simple it can be to create a resume and a cover letter. Now, we'll teach you how to ace the interview and land that job! In this chapter, we'll cover:

- **The Job Interview 101 - Interviews Aren't That Scary.** We'll teach you how, exactly, interviewers evaluate you, and what they consider when deciding if they like you or not.
- **Prepping for the Interview - All You Need to Know.** We'll cover all the important things you need to do before you even head in for the interview.
- **Six Most Common Job Interview Questions** - Most employers ask the same job interview questions. So, if you know what they are and you rehearse them a couple of times, you'll be prepared for whatever they throw at you!
- **How to Answer Behavioral Interview Questions** and Seven behavioral interview questions.
- Finally, we'll give you **Eight Essential Tips on How to Ace the Interview.**

Now, let's get started!



Job Interviews 101

Interviews aren't that scary

Before we get down to the nitty-gritty of interviewing, let's get into the head of the HR manager. If you understand what exactly they're evaluating you for, you're a lot more likely to answer the right way. When interviewing you, any HR manager is usually looking for these 5 things:

Skill-Fit - Can you do the job, and can you do it well? This is the qualifier - they're not going to hire someone that can't do the job right.

Culture-Fit - Are you a good fit for the company? (I.e., are you going to perform well in that specific work environment.) To give you a good idea of how this works, look at it this way: let's say candidate A and Candidate B are both applying for the same corporate accounting job.

Candidate A has, in so far, only worked with small businesses as either a solo practitioner or as part of an agency. Candidate B, on the other hand, worked in corporate for most of his life. In this case, Candidate B is probably a better culture-fit.

Reliability - Is the person going to be responsible and do the job well (in the long-term)? They weed out anyone that demonstrates the following:

- Is in it for the short-term as an in-between job.
- Hops between jobs frequently and quits whenever they have a better offer.
- Is generally irresponsible and unreliable.

Soft Skills - Do you have the right soft skills for the job? (I.e., communication skills, leadership, drive, initiative, etc.) This is more relevant for some jobs more than others. For example, a waiter HAS to have good soft skills (communication skills, people skills). That's 99% of the job - they don't need to know how to operate machinery or write code in C-sharp.

For most jobs, however, the soft skills are more of an add-on to hard skills. Knowing the right hard skills is the qualifier - they won't even consider you for the position if you don't have the technical know-how to get the job done. Soft skills, on the other hand, help the hiring manager make their decision. If five people have the right hard skills, but two also have the optional soft skills, they're more likely to hire from those two.

Likability - Does the hiring manager like you as a person? At the end of the day, you wouldn't hire someone you couldn't stand to work with. Keep in mind, though, this isn't as tough as the other factors. HR isn't trying to figure out if they want to marry you or not. They just want to see if you're a pleasant enough person to work with or not.



Prepping for the interview

All you need to know

Heard the famous saying, “Every battle is won before it’s ever fought?” Well, the same applies to the interview process. The right preparation is half the battle.

Before every interview, we recommend doing the following:

Pre-Interview Checklist

Go through the most common job interview questions and come up with potential answers.

Read up on the company/job you’re applying for. Learn about the following:

- What’s their main product or service?
- Which countries do they operate in?
- What does the job involve? What makes you an excellent candidate?
- What’s the company culture like? Would you enjoy working there? Why?

Figure out what you want to learn about the company and formulate the questions you want to ask the HR manager.

Rehearse with a friend. Do a mock interview 2 - 3 times, and you’ll feel a LOT more confident and relaxed on the actual interview by practicing your interview skills beforehand

Decide what to wear on the interview.

- Are you applying for a job at an office? Go for business casual. Think, shirt, tie, pants, blazer, or skirt, nice shirt, blazer.
- Joining a law firm? Go for a full suit.
- Trendy startup? Go for something more casual (but don’t overdo it!).

Six most common job interview questions

And how to answer them

Fun fact - for most job interviews you're going to attend, you'll get almost the same questions.

Q1: Tell Me About Yourself.

How to answer: This question is pretty self-explanatory: the HR wants a brief rundown on your career/background from you, in your own words.

So, when answering:

- **Introduce yourself.** What's your name? Field? How many years of work experience do you have?
- **Briefly go through your career.** How did you get into the field? What's your career progression? Where are you now? If you have a lot of work experience, you can just skip ahead and outline what you've done in the past 5 - 10 years.
- **Talk about your last job.** What are your top achievements and responsibilities?
- **Explain why you're applying for the job.** Why is this THE job that's right for you at this stage of your career.

Sample answer:

Hey! So, my name is John Doe and I'm a business analyst. I've been in the field for 5+ years so far, and I've worked at Company X and Company Y. I have some background in data analysis, having studied Information Systems at [Name] University.

Throughout my career, I've done some pretty impressive stuff (if I do say so myself, haha). For example, at Company X, I led a project for migrating all operations data to a new data warehousing system to cut down on costs. The new solution was a much better fit for our business, which eventually led to savings of up to \$200,000 annually.

Q2: Why did you apply for this position?

How to answer: This one's pretty straightforward. The interviewer wants to learn why you think that this position is the right one for you at this current stage of your career. The answer should be about how you're going to use and further develop your skill set. For example:

Sample answer:

Well, in my next role, I'd like to focus more on managing an internal product as opposed to working with clients. My last 2 - 3 roles involved managing projects for several software companies. Now, I want a job that involves owning a single product and developing it from start to finish.

Q3: What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

How to answer: With this question, the recruiter wants to learn:

- Are you aware of your top strengths? Are they something that can help you do the job well? When answering, make sure your answer is relevant. E.g., applying for a job in finance? Talk about how you're good with numbers and have good attention to detail.
- Are you aware of your weaknesses? **DON'T** say something along the lines of "Oh, I have no weaknesses" or "My weakness is that I'm too much of a perfectionist." Also make sure not to say something that makes you incapable of doing the job. E.g., you can't say you're bad with numbers if you're applying for a job as an accountant.
- What have you done to improve your weaknesses?
- How have you used your strengths to your (professional) benefit? Give the recruiter an example of how you've used your strengths.

Sample answer:

My biggest strength is that I'm good at picking up new skills. I've worked a variety of different odd jobs – things like working as a waiter, housekeeper, cook, and a lot more (as you've probably seen on my resume). For most of those jobs, I ended up picking up all the needed skills within 1 or 2 weeks (with basically no previous experience).

So, I'm pretty sure while I don't have any experience as a bartender, I'll get the hang of it very fast. I already have experience making most of the basic cocktails during my free time. As for my weakness, I'd say that I'm a bit too direct. When giving feedback, I tend to be blunt without sugar-coating the truth. While some people appreciate this, others tend to react negatively.

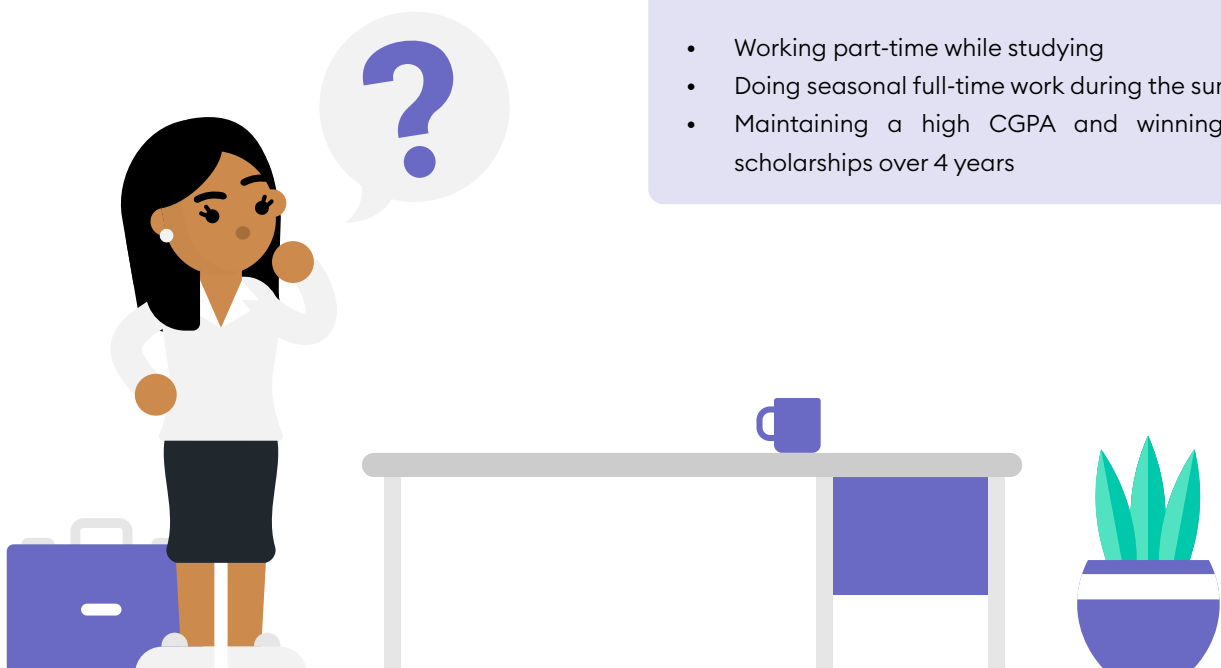
Q4: What is your #1 professional achievement?

How to Answer: This one's pretty straightforward – just talk about your #1 achievement related to your job. Keep in mind, though, that you want to be as matter-of-factly as possible. Don't brag and go on and on about how you're so amazing for 20 minutes. Recap your top achievement in less than 3 minutes. Be specific – use facts and numbers. What did you do? What kind of results did you drive?

Sample Answer:

My greatest achievement so far is graduating from [University X] within 4 years, with a GPA of 3.9. My family was unable to support me financially, so I had to take care of all the university bills on my own. Through hard work and dedication, I ended up graduating with almost no student loans. I managed this through a combination of:

- Working part-time while studying
- Doing seasonal full-time work during the summer
- Maintaining a high CGPA and winning two scholarships over 4 years



Q5: Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

How to Answer: The interviewer wants to see if you have ambition and drive (but not too much). The ideal answer here is a reasonable progression. E.g., applying for a job as a Sales Manager? You could say that you want to become a Sales Lead. What you **SHOULDN'T** say is “Oh, I want to save up, quit, start my own business and get rich.”

Sample Answer:

Within the next 5 years, I'd like to reach the position of a Senior Business Consultant. During this time period, I would like to accomplish the following:

- Help 20+ organizations improve their business.
- Create a personal network of highly specialized professionals.
- Learn as much as I can about optimizing and improving clients' businesses, as well as the essentials of operating a company.

Q6: Do you have any questions for us?

How to Answer: The interviewer wants to learn how passionate you are about the company / the job. So, the answer sure as hell isn't:

“Nah, I'm good! Byeee!”

Instead, this is where you ask any reasonable question you might have about the job.

Sample Answer:

1. What does a regular day in this company look like?
2. What's the best thing about working for the company?
3. What's the worst thing about working for the company?
4. What would you say are the biggest challenges a person in this position might face?
5. What are the most important skills and qualities one must have to succeed in this position?
6. What are the most pressing issues and projects that need to be addressed?
7. Do you have training programs available to employees?
8. What sort of budget is there for my department?
9. Why kind of opportunities do you have for future development?
10. What are the performance expectations for someone in this position?
11. Do departments usually collaborate with one another?
12. Do you celebrate birthdays or retirements in the office?
13. Do employees usually hang out with each other outside of work?
14. Is there anything else I can help you with at this stage?
15. What is the next step in the hiring process?

While the questions we just covered are the most common ones, they're not 100% comprehensive. If you want the full list of ALL 35+ questions, look up our guide on [Interview Questions and Answers](#). Just hit the link if you're reading this e-book, or if you're reading a physical print, just Google the following: “*job interview questions and answers novoresume*” and click on our guide!

How to answer behavioral interview questions with the STAR Method

Behavioral interview questions are more about your experiences, rather than you as a person. For example, the interviewer could ask you to be following:

Q: “Tell me about a time where you resolved a conflict at the workplace.”

The goal of this type of interview questions is to determine how you respond to specific issues or problems. Anyone can say that they excel in a stressful environment. Not everyone, however, can back it up with a story or an experience. The simplest way to approach behavioral interview questions is the STAR method

- **(S) Situation** - Describe the situation in which the event took place.
- **(T) Task** - Talk about the tasks you had to complete in order to solve the problem.
- **(A) Action** - Explain the actions you took to complete the aforementioned tasks.
- **(R) Results** - Explain what kind of results you achieved. When possible, mention numbers and quantifiable facts (“This improved sales” VS. “This improved cold lead response rates by 20%”).

Behavioral Interview Question:

Q: “Can you tell us about a time when you performed well under pressure?”

Sample Answer:

Situation - “Well, my last role was that of a manager at a seasonal restaurant in Nantucket. Out of the 4 months I spent there, three were a total nightmare. The restaurant was completely packed 90%+ of the time, and we barely had any breathing room.”

Task - “We had to be very efficient at work to make sure that we wouldn’t get overwhelmed.”

Action - “The most important part of making this work was being proactive. If we had just rolled with the punches and focused on putting out fires, the whole thing would’ve turned into a mess real fast. At the beginning of the summer, I created a very strict shift schedule, which we adhered to 100%. I also started a reward system – if someone called in sick, you’d get rewarded if you filled in for them. In case no one was available, I personally filled in for them.”

Results - “Overall, the summer went pretty well with minimal incidents. Over 99%+ of our customers were happy, and we didn’t receive a single bad review.”

So, all you have to do is apply this exact format to any question you’ll get asked, and you’re good. Want to prepare? Here are some of the most common behavioral interview questions.

Seven behavioral job interview questions

Unlike with the standard job interview questions, we won't cover sample answers here, since it's more personal / differs case-by-case. Just follow the STAR method and you'll do just fine!

Q1: Tell me about a time you had a conflict at work. How did you solve it?

What They're Really Asking: Are you the type to get into arguments a lot? Can you understand someone else's point of view? Are you willing to fight for your opinion without hurting someone's feelings?

Q2: Tell me about a time when you had to work with someone whose personality was very different from yours.

What They're Really Asking: Are you emotionally intelligent? Can you get along with people you don't like?

Q3: Describe a situation where you went above and beyond the line of duty. What did you do?

What They're Really Asking: Do you show initiative? Are you willing to work hard when needed?

Q4: Give us an example of a mistake you made at work. How did you solve it?

What They're Really Asking: Do you own up to your mistakes and solve the problems you caused (even if it means being blamed for it)? Or, do you pretend it never happened and hope that no one catches the mistake?

Q5: Tell me about a time when you performed well under pressure.

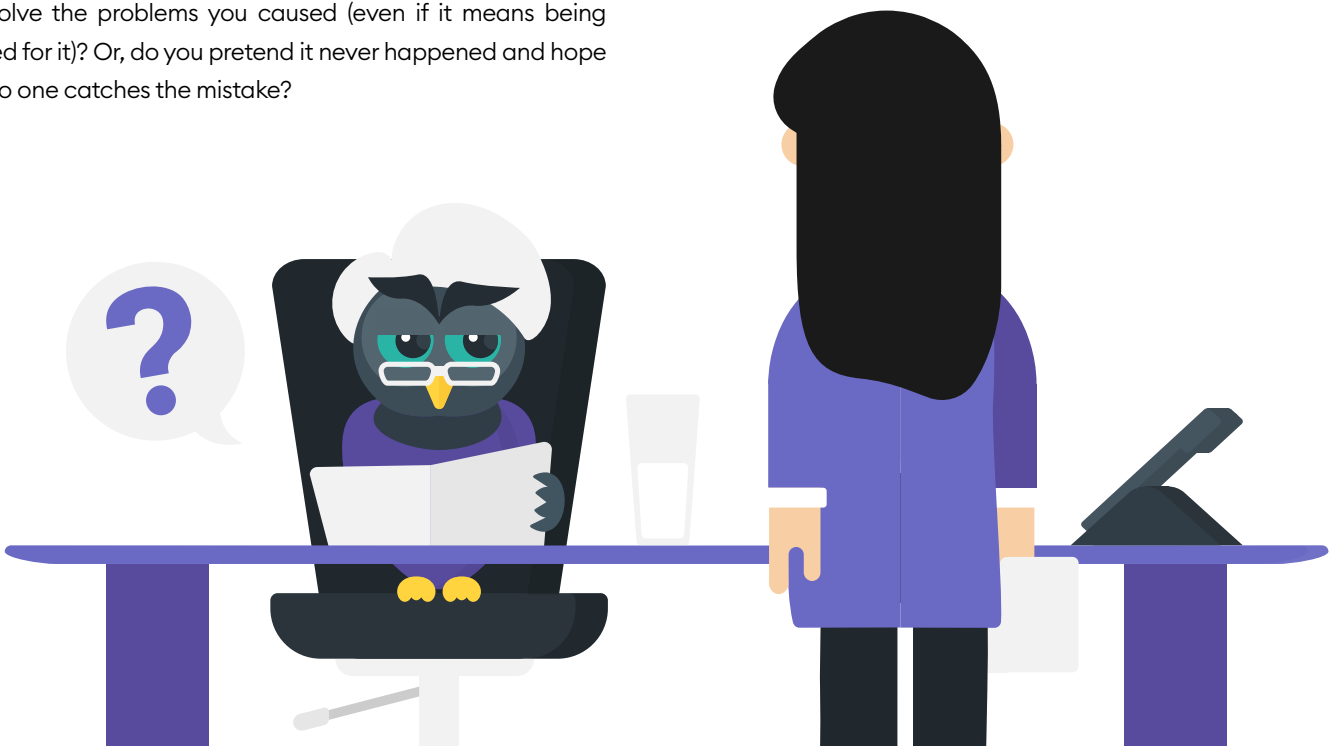
What They're Really Asking: Can you work under a stressful environment? If the position you're applying for is high-stress / fast-paced, answering this question right is very important.

Q6: Tell me about a time you had to think on your feet in order to solve a problem at work.

What They're Really Asking: Are you the type that shows initiative? Can you work with minimal supervision?

Q7: Tell me about a time you failed at a task. What happened, and what did you do to rectify the situation?

What They're Really Asking: Can you own up to your mistakes? Did you fix the situation, or did you sweep it under the rug? You should not, however, talk about a mistake that pretty much disqualifies you as a candidate.



Eight essential tips on how to ace the interview

1. Don't be late

Nothing says "I'll be regularly late for work" than showing up late for the interview. Make sure to look up where the office is a day before the interview, as well as the most efficient way to get there. Leave 20 - 30 minutes earlier to make sure that nothing goes wrong on the way (traffic, bus canceled, etc.).

2. Remember the interviewer's name

One of the best ways to build rapport with someone is to remember their name. Because, well, most people don't. If we had a penny for each time someone said:

"Oh my god, I'm just so bad at remembering people's names! It just goes in one ear, and leaves from the next!"

Well, we'd have a literal TON of pennies. When someone makes the effort of remembering your name (and addressing you with it, instead of "mister/miss," you can't help but like them. It makes you feel valued and respected, making you like the person a lot more.

Pro tip - need help remembering people's names? Repeat it in your head five times after they mention it!

3. Don't trash-talk your previous employers

Your last boss might have been the worst person in the world. They could have been a (literal) slave driver: overworking you, underpaying you, and overall being an awful human being. You STILL wouldn't want to trash talk them during an interview (even if they ask you "why did you quit your last job?").

Because at the end of the day, the interviewer can't know to what extent any of this is true. Who knows, maybe you'll be trash-talking THEM on the next interview? At worst, they could also reach out to your previous employer for a reference, who, if as bad as you say they are, wouldn't be too helpful for your cause.

4. Don't brag

There's a fine line between being proud of one's accomplishments, and talking about it for hours and hours and hours. When asked about your experiences/achievements, be humble and matter-of-factly. Limit yourself to 1 - 3 minutes to describe each experience, and don't go overboard.

5. Don't memorize interview answers

It's very easy to spot someone that's trying to recite something from memory. Chances are, you'll mess up. Instead, remember the main concepts you want to convey with your answers and be genuine.

6. Not sure how to answer a question? Take your time

The interviewer doesn't expect you to have ALL the answers. Feel free to take your time and think about the question before giving an answer. Just say that you need a minute - the interviewer is going to be understanding. Obviously, this doesn't refer to the routine questions:

Q: What's your name?

A: Hmm, let me think... Just gimme a minute.

7. Act appropriately

Applying for a job in a bank? You want to be formal, courteous, and professional. If you're applying for a job at a restaurant, though, or anywhere with a more relaxed environment, you can get away with acting more casual.

8. Don't overdose on coffee

Nervous about the upcoming interview? You might be tempted to drink a ton of coffee to take that edge off and get more energy. More often than not, though, that's a bad idea. If you overdo it on caffeine, you'll get super jittery, even more anxious, and potentially mess things up.

If you really need that sweet cup of coffee, you can just have a single drink 30 minutes to 1 hour before the interview. Single drink as in one shot, not double, triple, or quadruple! Alternatively, you could go for green tea instead. It can get you hyped up without any of the jitteriness!

Austin Belcak

Founder @ Cultivated Culture

Following, we asked Austin Belcak, the founder of Cultivated Culture, to offer us his insights regarding everything you need to know about job interview preparation from a different perspective, as he developed numerous unconventional strategies people are using to land their dream jobs:

When it comes to converting more interviews into job offers, 80% of the success lies in how you prepare.

The two biggest issues I see with job seekers who struggle with the interview process are:

1. They don't do a great job of illustrating their value in a clear and concise manner.
2. They don't tie their answers and their interview strategy back to the company and its needs.

The good news is that both of these are easy to fix with one super simple strategy:

Prepare And Rehearse Your Answers Ahead Of Time

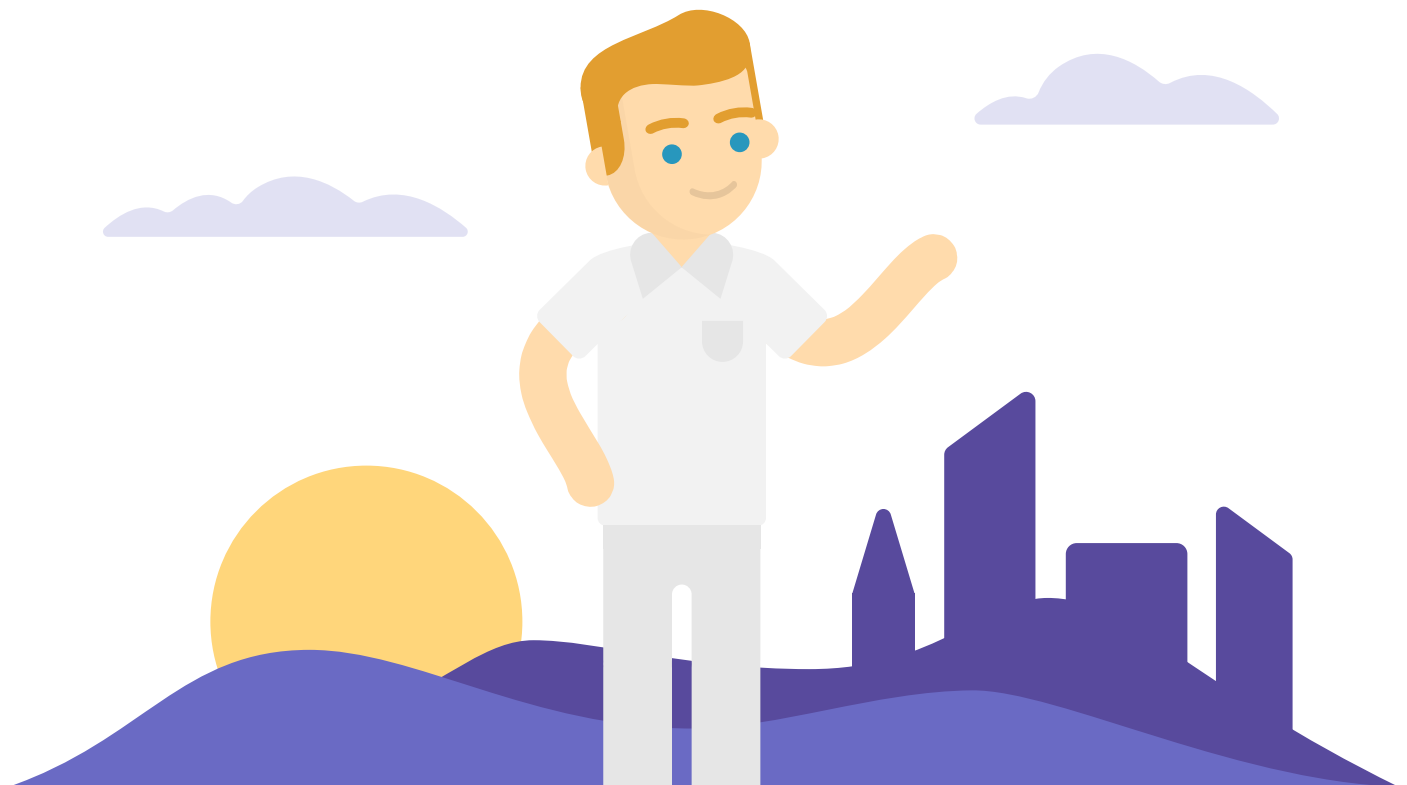
During my job search, I interviewed at 50+ companies with hundreds of different people. As I went on more interviews, I began to notice that most of them boiled down to variations

of the same set of questions. I began writing down the questions I was asked in my interviews and distilled them into a list of eight topics/questions that covered 90% of what I was being asked by potential employers:

Why do you want to work for us?

- Tell me about yourself?
- Tell me about a time you exhibited leadership.
- Tell me about a time you failed.
- Tell me about a time you had to work as a team.
- Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult person or client.
- Tell me about a time where you overcame an obstacle.
- Tell me about a time where you landed a big win.

I realized that if I prepared answers to these questions ahead of time, I could walk into most interviews feeling confident (even on short notice). That preparation also allowed me to spend more time doing deep research on the company so I could tailor my answers, rather than starting from scratch with each new role.



Finally, having my answers memorized helped me overcome my nerves because I could deliver my answers automatically despite how I was feeling. As I got more comfortable in the interview room, the memorization cleared up my mental bandwidth that allowed me to assess and gameplan on the fly, instead of wondering what my next sentence would be. This strategy is a huge reason I was able to consistently make it to final round interviews and land offers from places like Microsoft, Google, and Twitter. Here are the steps you can take to replicate those results:

First, copy and paste all of those questions into a Google Doc and then block out a few hours to do a full brain dump. Get all of your answers and ideas on paper, don't worry about refining or editing yet. When you're done, put your doc away for 24 hours.

Come back the next day and work through each of your answers. Edit them, revise them, refine them, and rehearse them. Repeat this step every day for the next 5 days. By the end, your answers should be much more concise than they were when you started and you should have them mostly memorized.

Next, fire up a video recorder and record yourself delivering each answer as if you were in the room on the big day. When you're done, watch and analyze each recording. Pay attention to your tone of voice, how you emphasize certain aspects of your answer, and your body language. This is what the interviewer will see and it's how they will perceive you and your value. When you're happy with your delivery, you can scale back your practice.

This strategy is most effective when you start it in advance of your first interviews. If you wait until that first company calls you back, you're going to be facing a time crunch and it will be hard to truly refine and memorize your answers.

If you start ahead of your interviews, you're going to significantly cut down the amount of stressful preparation you have to do and you can focus your time on company research and tailoring your answers!

Austin Belcak - Founder @ [Cultivated Culture](#)



BONUS SECTION

HOW TO HACK YOUR JOB SEARCH IN 2020



While a big focus of this book is the standard job search process (resumes, cover letters, interviews), we decided to throw extra: 3 cool hacks you can use to super-charge your job search in 2020.

In this bonus chapter, we're going to teach you:

- How to track your emails. Using this hack, you'll know when HR opens your email, reads your cover letter or sees your resume.
- Know how, exactly, HR managers interact with your resume through DocSend.
- Learn about Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and how to change the direction of your next interview conversation by using USP.

Hack #1

Use mail tracking tools

Picture this:

You spend days perfecting your resume and cover letter.

You apply for new jobs every single day. And then a week passes. Two. Maybe three. But you're still not getting any replies. So, you start doubting yourself.

“Maybe I’m just not that qualified?”

“Maybe my cover letter is awful?”

“Or could it be my resume?”

Pretty hard to tell where you're going wrong when you're getting basically zero feedback from the HR manager. But hey – here's some good news: there IS a way to tell where you're going wrong. You can use email tracking tools to see how, exactly, HR managers engage with your application.

Email tracking tools are, well, exactly what the name suggests. It's a tool that shows you when your email is opened (and how many times), and if any of the links is clicked. There are a LOT of different tools on the market (Snov.io, Mailspring, etc.), but for

the purpose of this guide, we're going to cover something very simple – Bananatag. All you have to do is install this Chrome Gmail extension, and it's going to email you a notification whenever:

- Someone opens your email
- Someone clicks one of the links mentioned in your email

And here's how you can use the tool:

- Did the manager NOT open your email at all (and it's been 5+ days)? Send them a follow-up, your application probably got lost in their inbox.
- Upload your resume on Google Drive and link to it (instead of attaching it to your resume). Did the hiring manager open your email, but not your resume? They probably weren't too impressed with your cover letter. This step, unfortunately, won't work with big companies that have their own application portals.
- Did HR open the email, click the link (multiple times), and still didn't reply? That means that you might want to improve your resume.

Hack #2

Resume performance with DocSend

Is your resume letting you down? Or maybe you're just not applying to the right jobs? Want to know which is the case? You can use DocSend for that!

The way this works is, you upload a document on DocSend (in our case, that's your resume), and it gives you a detailed run-down on how long the viewer looks at it.

DocSend

My Content





DocSend Intro 👁️ ▶️ ⋮ [Create link](#)

📄 Add a note to this document

👤 Last updated 2mo ago

Recent Activity Performance

All Visits

 Mac visitor Testing · 4min ago	🔗 Testing	📄 00:06	🔄	📊
 Danny Demo ACME Corp · 2mo ago	🔗 ACME Corp	📄 01:50	🟢	📊
 Julia Demo ACME Corp · 2mo ago	🔗 ACME Corp	01:05	🟢	📊
 Charles Demo ACME Corp · 2mo ago	🔗 ACME Corp	00:13	🟢	📊

[Click here](#) to use DocSend

With this awesome feature, you can know EXACTLY how your resume performs:

- Did the recruiter look at your resume for less than 6 seconds? That means that you're underqualified, overqualified, or your resume doesn't accurately reflect your skillset.
- If, on the other hand, HR looks at your resume for 20 - 30 seconds, that means that the recruiter considered your application, but there were more qualified candidates.
- Finally, if the recruiter looks at your resume for a minute plus, that means your resume is strong / you're applying for the right jobs, so all you have to do is keep going!

Hack #3

Take advantage of your USP

USP = Unique Serving Proposition

It is so common to think “years of experience” when you are preparing for a job interview and yet this is the most ineffective way to start a conversation with an interviewer.

First, this approach implies that you are a commodity to be considered merely based on that fact. Second, you subconsciously disqualify yourself from other candidates who have “more” experience. Stop disqualifying yourself. We both know years of experience alone speak little to how well-seasoned and savvy a professional is.

Did you ever know anyone at the office who had 23 odd years of experience, had plateaued in the last 10 years and even forgotten to do the basics on occasion? In other words, they had stopped growing. Years of experience is a meaningless way to measure up! Experience can only be relevant if you know how to process, internalize, re-apply, leverage and capitalize on it.

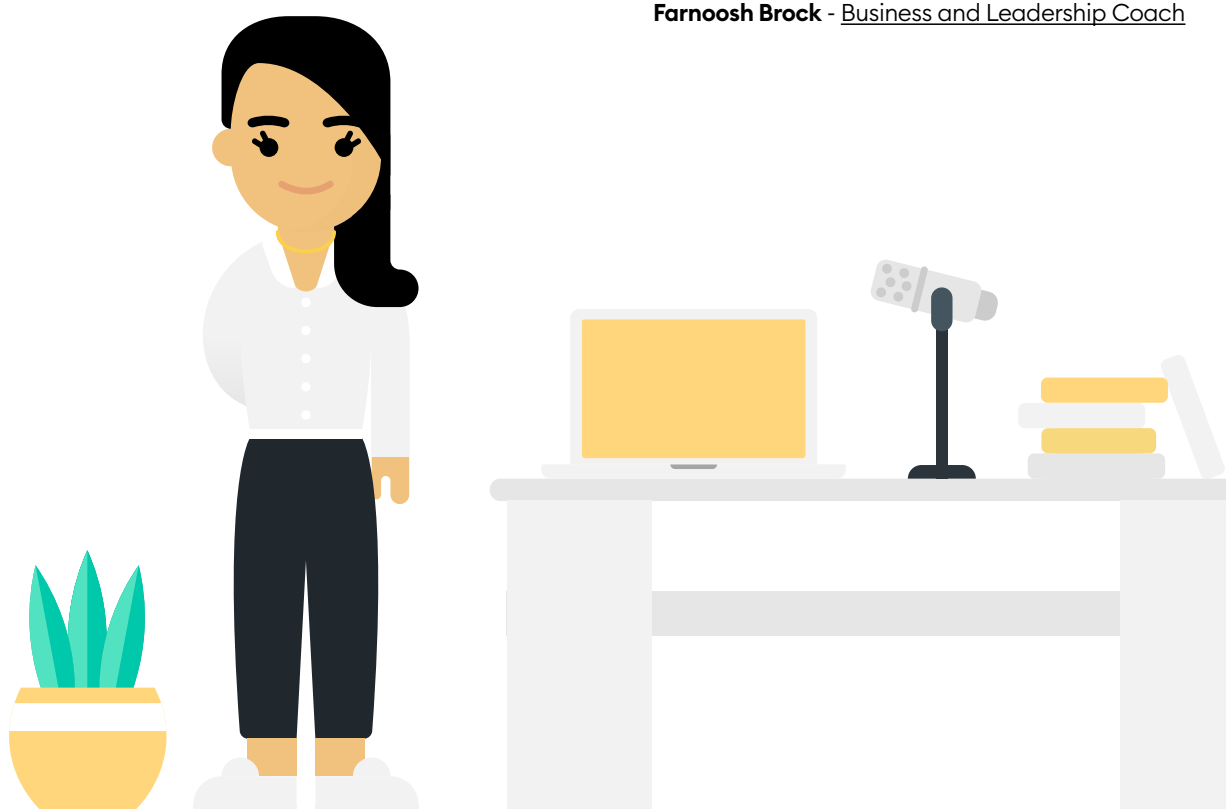
At the end of the day, all that the interviewer wants to know is “Are you the right person for the job?” To answer that question (without being asked it), begin to focus on how you are uniquely

positioned to serve them powerfully. Think about why and how you alone with your distinctive combination of skills, strengths, expertise, and experience can be the ideal candidate.

To do this, learn what is of most value to the potential employer – do your research – and then decide how you can make the relevant contributions toward that value within that role. Connect the dots from yourself to their bottom-line needs and desires. When you can resolve this in your own mind and articulate it in a succinct, confident and professional way – think bullet form in a conversational tone – in 20 seconds, you will have crafted yourself the best competitive advantage and you will be able to steer the conversation in a direction that serves both you and your interviewer.

I call this exercise your Unique Serving Proposition (USP for short) and the immediate shifts that this tool can provide for you is far better use of your time than sending your resume into a hundred black holes. The concept is based on my book [The Serving Mindset](#) and has helped many professionals change those interview conversations from selling themselves to achieving their goals by serving powerfully. It’s your turn. Change that next conversation with your powerful USP!

Farnoosh Brock - [Business and Leadership Coach](#)



CONGRATULATIONS YOU MADE IT THROUGH



Conclusion

If you read this guide from start to finish, you should have a black-belt in job search by now. Now, all that's left is to apply everything you've learned. Before we leave you to it, let's do a quick recap of what you have to do now:

Start with your resume - Create your new resume on [Novoresume.com](https://www.novoresume.com) and use our step-by-step guide to walk you through it. Make sure to tailor it to the job you're applying for!

Match it with a cover letter - Supplement your resume with a cover letter. Use it to explain how the skills / experiences from your resume match the job you're applying for.

Prep for the interview - Take your time and rehearse for the interview. The checklist we mentioned in the interview section should help.

Learn how to answer the most common interview questions - Memorize some of the interview questions we covered in this e-book and learn how to answer them.

And finally, go forth and **start applying!**

P.S. For more industry-leading career advice, don't forget to follow the [Novoresume blog!](#)



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