

## Resume Don'ts

- **Never offer an “objective.”**  
Your objective is to get the job you're applying for; or a job you didn't even know existed at that company. If you state that your objective is to “obtain an entry-level job in the marketing industry” and I have a job beyond entry level for which you might be qualified, I have every right to toss your resume. Save the space for listing your experiences and achievements.
- **Do not include your GPA or SAT score.** If someone wants to know, let him ask—then look for another job. What does your GPA really say about you? If you were a high academic achiever, you probably won awards; if your GPA is low or middle-of-the-road, it will only diminish your other achievements. A focus on grades will reveal only that you're stuck in a high school mentality. One exception: for academic job or graduate school application, a GPA is meaningful and may even be required.
- **Do not say “references available upon request.”** Is there really another option? References not available upon request?
- **Do not include “leadership” as a category.** Though employers always look for self-starters, for many entry-level jobs the ability to follow and take direction is just as important. The term “leadership” may also appear juvenile; your position as captain of the squash team or chair of the student affairs committee will speak for itself.
- **Do not abuse the “action verb.”** Don't use “performed” unless what you were performing was a play. You don't need to “perform research” or “perform light office duties.” Just do them. Don't write “served as assistant to the director.” Just be the assistant! Sure, you should try to use the most precise and active language you can, but not to the point of absurdity.

- **Do not quantify if you don't really have enough to quantify.** If you have a specific number for an amount of money you helped raise or subscriptions you sold, fine—use the numbers. But don't write “published one poem in school literary magazine.” “Poetry published in school literary magazine” is fine—or better yet, add a publications section and list the name of the poem and date of publication.
- **Do not reveal height, weight, date of birth, health, or marital status.** Do not attach a photograph unless you're applying for a modeling or acting job and need to submit headshots.
- **Do not use acronyms unless they are well known.** Explain all insider terms. Avoid abbreviations (with the exception of state names) if possible.
- **Show, don't tell.** Do not use adjectives describing your own achievements (dynamic, efficient). The employer (and your references) will be the judge of that! If you “increased circulation from 10,000 to

100,000 subscriptions,” we assume you're dynamic and efficient. If you “proofread copy to meet weekly deadlines,” we understand that you can work under pressure. If you were a “waitress in a 500-seat seaside tourist restaurant at high season,” this tells us more than if you write “efficient server at busy restaurant.”

- **Do not list Web addresses on your resume.** I'm not looking—unless you're a Web designer or wrote content and are applying for a job where that's relevant.
- **Don't leave too much white space.** Add and reorganize material or use a slightly larger font and wider margin to make sure the page looks filled.

# Bring It to the Interview

Don't shoot yourself in the foot by showing up to the interview empty-handed. You can't be too prepared, which is why you'll need a number of essential supplementary materials:

- Three copies of your resume and cover letter—one for you to refer to, one for the interviewer, who may have misplaced his copy, and one in case someone else shows up for the meeting. Make the interview as easy as possible for them, and it's certain to be easier for you.
- The address where you're going, along with a map if you need one.
- The names and positions of those who will be interviewing you.
- A pen and small notebook. Whether or not you decide you want to take notes, you'll need to be prepared: the interviewer might assign you some homework or mention another job lead for you. After the interview, once you're somewhere private, you'll want to jot down your impressions and any information you want to follow up on. If you feel you didn't answer a question completely, for instance, you may want to revisit the topic in your thank-you note.
- A cell phone and the interviewer's contact information. If anything causes you to run late, you want to be able to call. (You should have factored in plenty of time for traffic jams and transportation breakdowns, but you never know.)
- Your ID. You may need it for building security or HR.
- Your list of references. You may be asked for them on the spot; ideally, though, you'll be able to provide your references after the interview, which will give you time to tailor them in light of what you've just learned.
- Your portfolio, if applicable. Depending on the industry, you may be required to present a selection of relevant professional materials you've created in the past: writing samples, press releases, or design samples.
- An umbrella, depending on the weather.
- Personal grooming items, breath mints, hairbrush, deodorant, safety pins, makeup, extra pair of nylons.
- A snack/protein bar. If you are prone to low blood sugar, be prepared.

- A small bottle of water. Nervousness can make you dry-mouthed, and you don't want your tongue sticking to the roof of your mouth during the interview.

Carry everything in a professional-looking briefcase or handbag, not a shopping bag, backpack, or fanny pack. Have papers in easy-access manila folders that you're willing to leave behind (no only-copies of anything), neatly labeled with your name and contact info. Make sure everything is well-organized. You don't want to be fumbling through your bag looking for things during the interview, or you'll create the impression that you don't have your act together.

## What NOT to Bring

- A buddy. It should go without saying, but...go in alone! I've heard of people bringing along their best friend or family members, whether for moral support or because they're planning to have lunch with them afterward. Huge no-no—it's unprofessional and Mickey Mouse, and believe me, receptionists will talk.
- Non-interview-related stuff. Do not show up with things you need before or after the interview: shopping bags ("but the office is next to the mall!"), sports equipment (yes, it's good to exercise before an interview so you feel less tense, but not right before), your groceries. While you might think you're being efficient, you're simply being unprofessional. Schedule the interview so that you can appear unencumbered.

# Interview Don'ts

It's scary but true: Even the smallest mistake can throw an interview. Hiring is a big decision, one that has to be made with relatively little information.

Consequently, employers scrutinize everything you do as a sign of larger patterns. Control what you can in order to create the best impression. So:

- Do not eat, chew gum, or pop mints
- Never look at your watch or the clock as if you need to be somewhere else. You should have left adequate time before your next appointment
- Do not leave your cell phone on. Do not answer a call. The interviewer shouldn't either, but if she does, wait politely, look elsewhere, and use the time to take notes or write down new questions.
- Do not recline in your chair, even if the interviewer does. The interviewer may be casual, but do not follow suit; remain professional at all times.
- Do not let your guard down if your interviewer happens to be young. Even if you're dealing with a peer, the interviewer is in a position of authority, and you must act accordingly.
- Do not bring up actual weaknesses if you're asked to list your strengths and weaknesses.
- Do not let the interview go off track for too long. If the interviewer starts asking a zillion questions about your semester in New Zealand because he's about to go there on vacation, answer politely; but if you think you're running out of time, say "I'd love to tell you more; do we have time now?" Or ask a question about the job to shift focus.

## Questions You Should Ask During an Interview

- What is a typical day or week at the office like?
- What are some of the first projects I would be involved in?
- Can you tell me about some new company initiatives you're excited about?
- What have you liked best about working here?
- How would you describe the ideal candidate? ( take notes here—you'll use them for your closing argument and in your thank-you note)
- How does this job/department fit into the work of the company overall?

# Negotiation 101

Some people are natural negotiators; others dread the very idea. No matter what your personality, you can stack the odds in your favor by understanding five key points:

1. The salary you accept is the starting point for future raises and salary at your next job.
2. The lowest number you state during a negotiation may be your salary. If you can't live with it or on it, don't put it out there, secretly hoping to make yourself an attractive candidate by looking inexpensive at first and then convincing the employer you're worth more.
3. The low end of your range should be higher than the lowest salary you would actually accept. That way, you leave yourself room to negotiate. (But don't overdo it at the top of your range; you don't want to appear uniformed or arrogant.)
4. The employer's job is to lowball you and pay you as little as possible; your job is to get as much as you can. This holds true especially for entry-level positions, as employers are apt to take advantage of your inexperience. It's not evil, it's just business. Companies are always looking for ways to cut costs.
5. Your lifestyle choices, debts, or financial issues are not the employer's problem. Never discuss your needs during negotiation; couch the discussion in terms of industry standards and what your skills and experiences are worth.

When it comes to negotiation, mind-set is key. You need to understand and express confidence in your own worth and value. That should be easier once you've actually got an offer, because the company has shown it wants you. What could be more confidence-building than that?

Communicate that you really want the job. You will be able to create a win-win situation. Since some degree of compromise is likely, know exactly what you are willing to compromise on.

Negotiate based on concrete factors of value such as education, experience, skills, reputation, and contacts—"As you know, I just completed a six-week training course in the field; I hope that will move me to the high end of the posted salary range." The employer will negotiate based on how eager he is to fill the position (how long it's been open, how essential it is to the company), the company's financial state, and how sure he is about his number-two candidate.

# Negotiation Don'ts

Sometimes what you don't say is as important as the information you do volunteer. Be especially on your guard while you're negotiating the terms of an offer:

- **Don't get specific until the time is right.** Only at second interviews or when the offer is presented should you inquire about benefits, vacation, typical length of tenure for the job, and the review process.
- **Don't confuse a perk and a benefit, and don't bring up perks during negotiation.** A perk is something like a health club membership; it's not considered a negotiable benefit, but rather an extra bonus offered to all employees. Wait until you're on the job to look into it.
- **Don't price yourself out of a job.** An employer is not going to pay an entry-level person \$100,000 a year if the average base entry-level salary is \$30,000. Be realistic and do your homework so you're familiar with industry and regional standards.
- **Be positive, not adversarial.** You don't want to warp a

relationship with a potential employer during the negotiation.

- **Don't lie about a previous salary in the hopes of making yourself look expensive.** The information is easily verifiable. Don't volunteer your previous salary, but be honest if asked; be sure to factor in any bonuses and benefits.
- **Don't undersell yourself.** The biggest regrets I hear are from candidates who simply accept an offer on the spot without negotiation and later find out others hired at the same time and level have higher salaries and better benefits—because they negotiated.
- **Don't have anyone call to discuss benefits or salary or to negotiate on your behalf.** This is beyond unprofessional and I've heard of it happening—candidates actually having their parents call their employers. You should certainly ask mentors or parents for help and advice, but they should not be involved in your relationship with your employer.