

The Graduate Handbook

How to search for, find,
and land your first job

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It's time to land your dream job

Whether you're in your last few months of courses at university, have just finished your degree, or graduated recently, chances are you're on the hunt for your perfect job. Aren't we all!

Delving into the job hunt for the first time can be daunting. No matter what industry you're searching in or what role you're looking for, there is almost always intense competition from your peers - not to mention numerous other 'dos' and 'dont's' that come with how you handle your CV, networking, applying for jobs and taking an interview.

At Monster, we have a wealth of experience working with employers, recruiters and job seekers of all shapes and sizes. Through various initiatives and events we have kicked off - such as Monster College and the Virtual Career Fair - we have worked with hundreds of universities and tertiary establishments to discover what young graduates are looking for, and what employers are looking for in young graduates.

This e-book is structured into three segments to help take you step-by-step through certain considerations in your job search - from learning about how to search for roles, to writing the best CV, and finally how to completely nail the interview.

We hope you find this to be useful in the beginning stages of your career, and wish you all the best as you take the plunge into the working world!

Sanjay Modi

Managing Director

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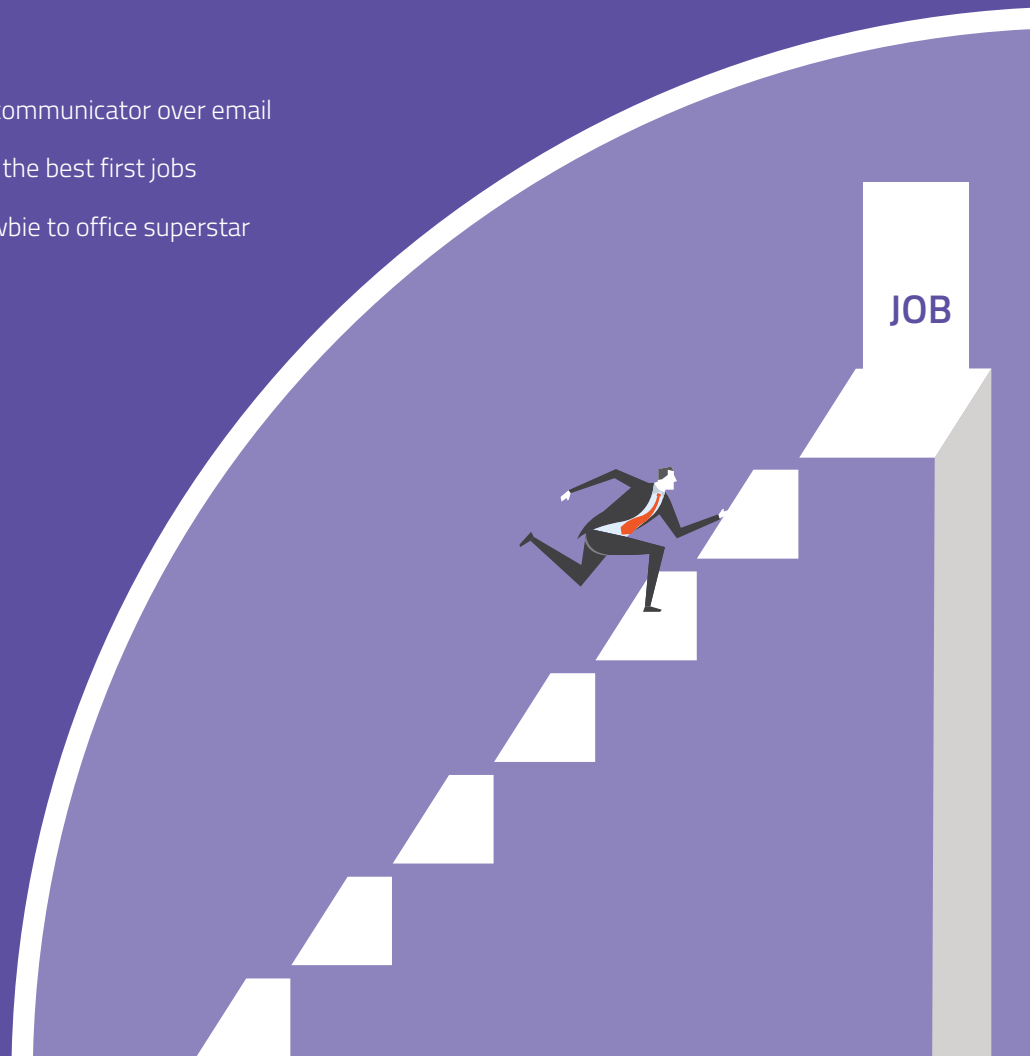
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STARTING YOUR JOB SEARCH



5 SIMPLE JOB SEARCH TIPS EVERYONE FORGETS ABOUT

At its core, applying for a job is relatively simple. Create a CV, do your groundwork, network, connect with potential employers through online portals and – hopefully – land an interview.

What makes it difficult are all the other factors in between. Is your CV as good as your colleagues'? Is your online profile full of spelling mistakes? Did you forget to get that guy's card at that networking event? Are you up against hundreds of similarly-skilled candidates for a total dream job?

While there are factors we sometimes can't control, what we can control are the very simple things.

In fact, these tips for job seekers are so simple that people often forget about them altogether.

Let us help refresh your memory and hopefully land that interview.

1

Match your language to their language

When you apply for a job online, chances are your resume will go through a bit of a screening process. This is often done via a tracking system, and then by a real life human. Because of this, if your resume doesn't match what the company is looking for, chances are you will get skipped over completely.

Have a look at the job ad. What words do they use to describe who they are looking for and the competencies they need to have?

Use those exact same words in your resume, cover letter or introductory email you might be sending to an internal recruiter or HR. This will help get you through any screens and will also show that you have read and understood the job description, and why you are a suitable candidate.

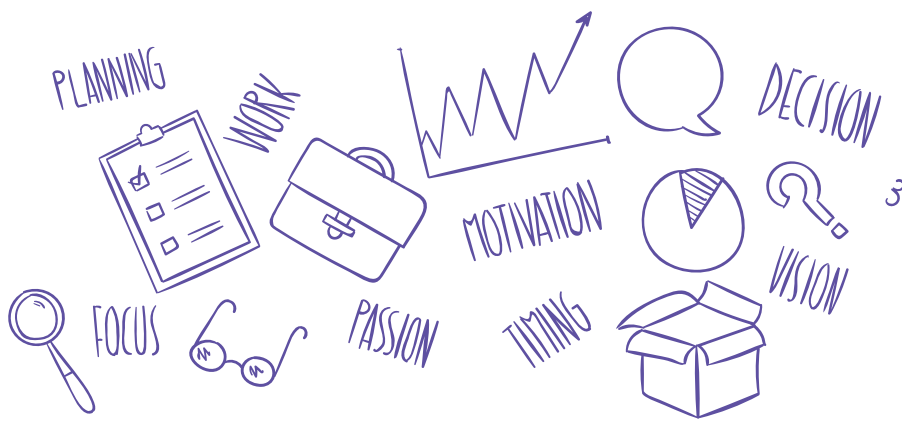
2

Change up your online profile regularly

So, you have a Monster.com profile – or any other online profile – great! Now, don't be afraid to change it. It's not set in stone – you can update, tweak and switch around the language to suit your current experience and the job you're looking for at the time.

If your online footprint remains stagnant, so will your job search. Remember that!





3

You can be professional, but don't be boring

Yeah, it's good to have a professional CV and keep a professional tone in your communications to potential employers, but it can also be a big snore-fest. How will you stand out if you're simply sending through the same, old boring resume that everyone else is?

Don't be afraid to be yourself. Inject some humour, personal anecdotes and language that will endear you to the hiring manager. Don't go way off the other end of the spectrum, but think about how you can move beyond your bog standard CV.

4

For goodness sake, get organised and stop making mistakes

There's nothing worse than that heart-stopping moment when you accidentally send an email meant for company A to company B.

It starts with, "I'd love to work at company A because..." and just gets worse from there. Company B isn't going to be too impressed.

Use some online organisational tools to help you manage your applications. We understand that during a job hunt you might be emailing 20-30 companies – so keep track of what you're doing! Personalise each and every piece of communication so you don't come across like a robot, and send any emails to a real person, not a "To whom it may concern".

5

Don't forget your manners

You'd be surprised how few candidates send thank you emails following an interview. It's a very small gesture, but it can go a long way to making you a memorable candidate, even if the job interview didn't go well. If that's the case, so be it, but at least a follow-up thank you email will show you care and are polite, and your name might crop up when a more suitable position comes up.

It takes about 10 minutes to craft a thoughtful, personal email simply thanking the interviewer for their time in meeting you. Why let 10 minutes be the difference between unemployment and gainfully employed?!

DON'T MAKE THESE EASY JOB SEARCH MISTAKES

You greet your familiar barista with a bright 'hello!', grab your latte, and sit down at your favourite seat by the window. It's on your agenda today to browse through Monster and send out at least five job applications.

Job seekers should be proactive and tenacious in their search. The process can be rather daunting, especially in today's tight job market, where landing yourself one requires time and effort.

From the application process up to after the interview, here are some tips on what NOT to do in order to stand out from the crowd.

Applying for everything and anything

I know, you want to send out five applications today. But if you're sending out resumes to every job opening available without understanding each job scope and requirements, well, you're wasting your time.

Instead, take some time to define your ideal job. Sharpen the focus of your job search and narrow down your options. Don't be picky, but don't cast such a wide net either. A resume that is goal-oriented will appeal more to employers.

Using a one-size-fits-all approach

You've heard this before: don't send the same resume and cover letter in all your applications! A generic resume and cover letter makes you seem insincere and uninterested in the job.

Even if you have specified your desired job scope, you should always tailor your resume according to the personality of each particular company you are applying to. Similarly, your cover letter should always mention the company's name – or better yet, a real person's name.

Going in unprepared

If you've landed the interview, you're already one step closer to that offer. Besides dressing appropriately for the interview, candidates are expected to answer a range of questions – about themselves, their experience, their goals and their competencies.

Start preparing by understanding the company and its operations: what industries do its clients come from? What's the latest news about the business? Who are its target audience, clients and other key stakeholders? These facts may seem trivial but knowing them shows how eager you are to know more about the company.

Making it all about you

Nothing shuts an interviewer down faster than hearing "I" and "me" repetitively. Sure, you're fluent in three languages and you can put together a gorgeous infographic in an hour. But that's all been said in your resume. Your resume was all about you – your interview shouldn't be.

You only have 10 to 15 minutes to with your interviewer and instead of repeating what you wrote in your resume, tell him or her how you can contribute to the company.

Forgetting to follow up

Many candidates underestimate the power of a follow-up email. Your interviewer probably met four other candidates that afternoon so in order to keep yourself fresh on his or her mind, it is important to send a brief thank-you note and reiterate your eagerness to be hired. If you do not hear from him or her within 10 days, send another follow-up email. Be polite and remember – don't call your interviewer every other day (it becomes harassment!)

Despite possessing invaluable skill sets and vast experiences in the industry, job seekers may still lose the opportunity to secure their desired jobs. Minimise your chances of being overlooked by a potential employer by avoiding these mistakes.



WRITING THE PERFECT CV



WHERE TO START?

YOUR FIRST PROFESSIONAL CV AND COVER LETTER

Think about how many cover letters and resumes you've written throughout the course of your job-seeking days. Whether that number is one or 100, your priority should be thinking hard about what the person reading your CV or cover letter *actually* wants to know about you.

You want your reader (the recruiter or hiring manager) to WANT you. Do away with the gimmicks and chattiness and focus on what matters.

Here are the basics you should look out for:

- I **Clarity** – Straight to the point, please
- I **Grammar** – You don't need to be perfect, but at least complete your sentence
- I **Spelling** – Nothing looks worse than forgetting to spellcheck your document

So that's basics, checked. What's next?

Think about your role as an author and write your resume and cover letter from these perspectives.

The Applicant

Describe your previous work or volunteer experience and how you approached that role. What was your working style? Were you more of a follower or a leader? If you encountered any scenarios that you think would impress your recruiter, tell him or her about it in your cover letter or resume. Were your methods of handling things better than others?

Most importantly, write about the legacy you left behind in your previous job. You want to let the recruiter know more about yourself and what you have achieved so far.

The Recruiter

Here's what they want to hear: what you can do for the company; how hiring you will add value, and why they should hire you over the other outstanding candidates who've sent their resumes in, too. Writing your resume or cover letter from this perspective goes beyond what you want, what you have done and what you're good at. It's almost like marketing yourself from a different angle: what are your goals and what will you do to achieve them?

Remember to align the interests of the company with your own. Are you doing enough to convince the recruiter? You want to place yourself in a position that interests the recruiter and makes him or her more inclined to call you in for an interview.



The Text

This perspective is little more... vague, and flexible. What context are you writing in? Don't regurgitate anything and everything. Look at the job description. Keep in mind the industry and the position you are applying for when you're writing your resume or cover letter.

What information should you leave out? A lengthy resume or cover letter is usually thrown into the trash, but something too short isn't going to showcase enough about you. Don't include things that have little or no relevance to the position you want to take on. In addition, take into account the implications of the facts you've written about yourself. Are they suited for this particular role?

Choose the right fonts!

Keep clear of boring, outdated serif fonts like Times New Roman. Use sans serif options like Verdana or Tahoma for a more modern feel.

AVOID	USE
Times New Roman	Garamond
Futura	Gills Sans
Arial	Cambria
Courier	Calibri
<i>Brush Script</i>	Constantia
Comic Sans	Helvetica

BONUS TIP! Design your resume or cover letter to suit the role! They will be impressed. If you're applying for a design role, your resume shouldn't be a PDF decorated with boring ol' words.

Basics checked? Perspectives checked? Great! Now you're a true communicator. Remember to keep these in mind when you're writing your resume and cover letter for your next job application!



SAY MORE WITH LESS: 4 STEPS TO A VISUAL CV

Thousands of CVs pour into the inbox of a recruiter each day. To get through them all, a hiring manager probably spends no longer than six seconds scanning each one. If your CV doesn't make it into the recruiter's consideration pile, it probably never will get seen by anyone else.

To convey the most information in the shortest amount of time, jobseekers are slowly visualising their CVs, presenting their credentials in formats other than words.

Putting things into perspective, think of your CV as your personal marketing tool designed to:

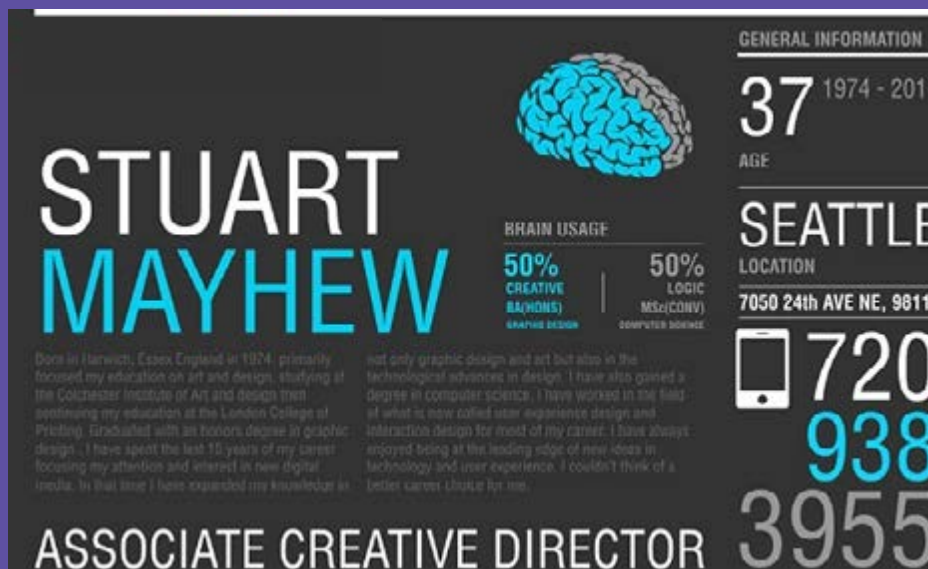
- 1 Break out of the CV clutter
- 2 Convey information about yourself
- 3 Grab a potential employer's attention
- 4 Help you land that desired job interview

It may seem daunting to step out of what is considered the "norm" for CV writing, but it doesn't have to be. Let us show you how to say more, with less:

Keep it easy on the eyes

Extensive paragraphs of text can be a strain on the eyes of a recruiter, as they attempt to zoom in on vital details about you.

Play around with your font sizes, kerning and styles to bring attention to what's crucial on your CV. This can include details like strengths, your past clients and work experience. To be on the safe side, we recommend choosing one universal font family that works across different operating systems and recruitment tracking software, so your fonts and format do not mess up.



Inject personality into your CV

Showing a hiring manager who you are through design can definitely play a role in helping land an interview. That touch of personality gives recruiters a sense of how you fit within the organisation, putting you ahead of others in the consideration process. If you're lucky, you might even make your recruiter's day - just like the ones below!

Creatively break down information

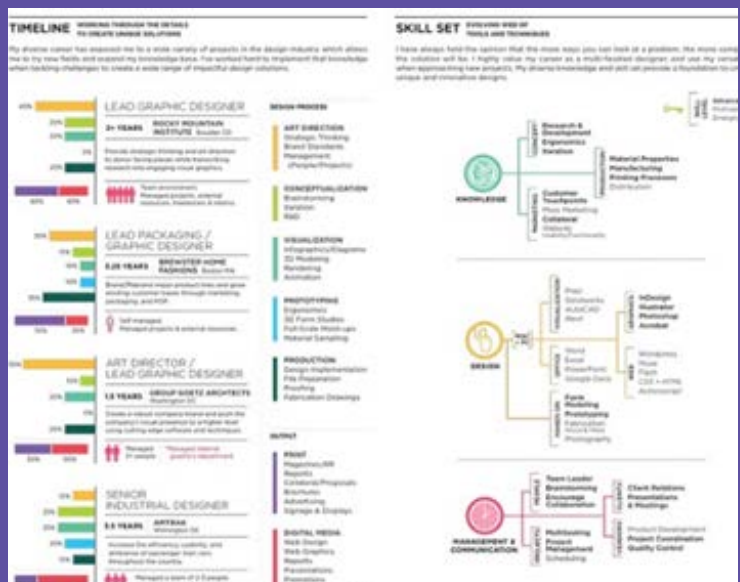
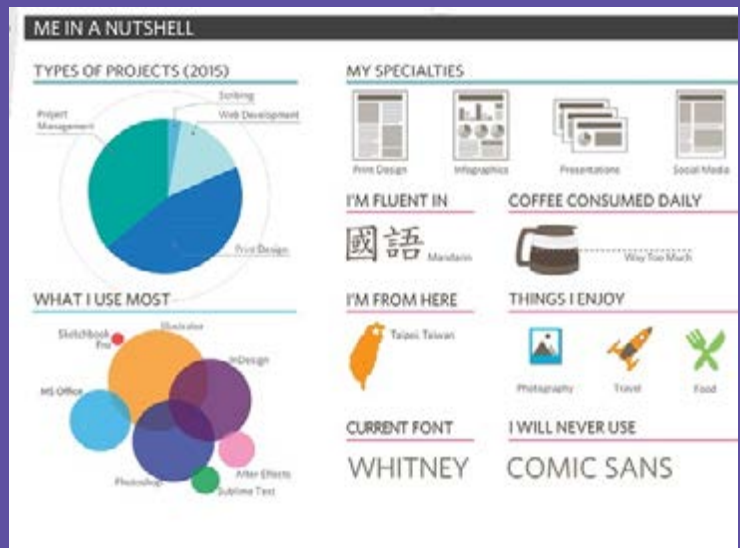
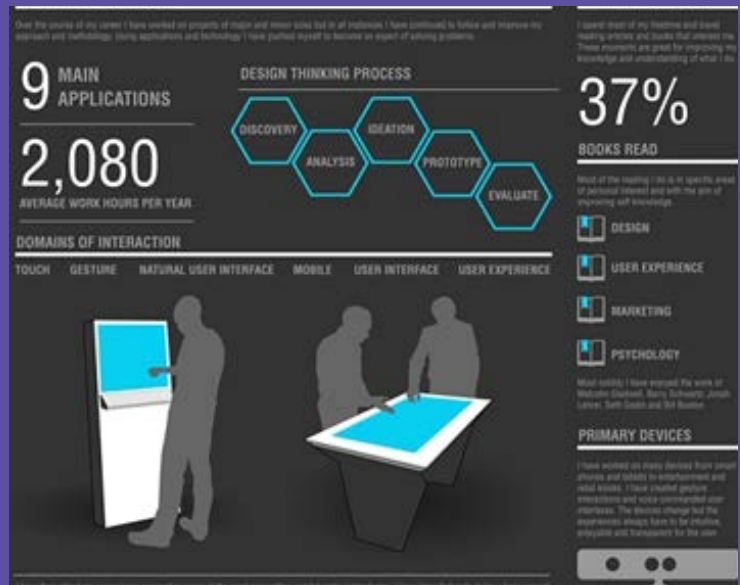
Cut down on the text in your CV and lay your information out in a meaningful and organised fashion. This can be done through the use of tables, charts and graphs, giving recruiters an overview of your skills and other information in a quick glance.

Other considerations

At the end of the day, it's the substance of your CV that will give you that edge over others vying for the same role. If that pretty CV comes at the expense of important information that cannot be compressed, drop the idea. While you're at it, remember to keep your information concise, presentable and preferably no longer than one page.

CVs riddled with mistakes shout sloppiness and do not sit well with recruiters. Proofread several times for spelling, grammatical and other formatting errors. A fresh pair of eyes can be helpful for spotting these mistakes you might have missed!

Want professional help in creating a job winning resume? Click here!



Acing the interview



A MOCK INTERVIEW TO HELP YOU LAND YOUR DREAM JOB

We can't emphasise the importance of a practice interview. Being well-prepared isn't about crafting scripted answers, it's about adapting them to the job requirements with confidence.

Here are some common questions and what you should consider when formulating your responses. Work through each potential question, thinking about how your previous experiences have brought you to these conclusions. It's easy to talk about certain qualities, but you're also going to have to show how you gained these experiences.

Tip: Sit face-to-face with a friend or relative at the kitchen table and ask them to role play an actual interview, it will help you think on the spot.

QUESTION: Tell me about a time you faced an ethical dilemma.

Intent: The interviewer is looking for evidence of your high ethical standards and honesty.

Context: You might want to say you haven't had any ethical challenges, but be honest, we have all had our ethics tested at some point. For example:

- I You discovered a wrongdoing, or someone asked you to engage in a cover-up.
- I Your employer failed to deliver the full value and quality on products or services paid for by a client.
- I A colleague cut corners on a project.

Response: Without naming names, describe the situation and how you dealt with it. The response may focus on you, or it may involve other people. Remember, your political acumen is being tested - sometimes the best action isn't blowing the whistle, but taking care of the problem yourself.

QUESTION: Can you tell me about a time when you failed?

Intent: No one wins all the time, so the key here is to forthrightly discuss what you learned from a situation that went awry. The interviewer also may want to hear how you handled any resulting fallout.

Context: Failure comes in different forms: taking the wrong action, omission, or not doing enough or taking action soon enough. Some failures are big; most are small. Tell a story that isn't a career killer but shows you learned something substantial.

Response: Perhaps you failed to trust your gut on a hire and the person didn't work out, or you didn't intervene early enough with a problem employee. Talk about the lesson you learned from the mistake.

QUESTION: What is a project you worked on that required heavy analytical thinking?

Intent: This is a competency and behavioural question. The interviewer is asking you to demonstrate what you know and how you applied that knowledge to your work.

Context: The only way an interviewer can determine if you have enough analytical horsepower is to hear an example of how you used your analytical skills to achieve a goal: What formal and informal analysis did you do? How did you structure the project? What obstacles did you run into, and how did you overcome them?

Response: "In 2015, I was given project X with a 10-day deadline and goal Y. The goal was clear, but I didn't have enough time." Then, take the interviewer down your timeline: "So here is what I did [analysis/decisions/actions.] The end result was _____."

QUESTION: Why do you want to leave your current position?

Intent: The interviewer wants to make sure you won't walk out after six months and that you'll be satisfied in your new position.

Context: You have greater market value when you are looking on your own terms. Prepare a positive response you are very comfortable with. Refer to fit, personality issues or new directions. Your goals and readiness for a new kind of role are generally safe terrain. Just be careful to emphasise benefits to the employer, not your personal aspirations.

Response: Tread carefully. You don't want to badmouth your current employer or put yourself in a weaker negotiating position. You could say, "Actually, I'm happy doing what I am doing now. But recently I have been keeping my eyes open for other opportunities. I would like a new challenge and a fresh opportunity to make my mark and learn something new."

QUESTION: Why should we hire you?

Intent: The interviewer wants you to look inwardly and self-assess your skills, competencies and cultural fit for the role. They want to see whether you can accurately align yourself to their company.

Context: This is a chance for you to really state why you are better than other potential candidates. It's not about arrogantly explaining how awesome you are, but it is about ensuring you confidently get your best attributes across.

Response: Do your research on the business, review the job description so you know exactly what they're looking for, and focus on providing hypothetical solutions to hypothetical problems.

10 words you should never use in an interview

You submitted your resume to your dream company three weeks ago and they finally got back to you to schedule an interview! You're excited because you've been given a chance to impress them face-to-face and you want to make sure you get this right.

Besides a resume filled with spelling errors and grammatical mistakes, you can botch a job opportunity if you say the wrong thing once you sit down for an interview.

Take note of these no-nos when it comes to landing a job:

"Like" and "Ummm"

Example: *"In my old job, I used to, like, um... manage a team of five."*

Avoid fillers at all costs. They make you seem as though you're not sure what to say next. It reflects unpreparedness, which might leave a lasting impression on your interviewer, but definitely not a good one. Other examples of fillers include "y'know", "umm", "whatnot" and "et cetera". Instead, if you need time to think, just pause, and continue.

Curse words

An example isn't necessary here - curse words are a huge no-no! To the interviewer, you sound impolite and uncouth, and the last thing you want is to come across as unprofessional to your future employer.

"No."

That means no use of the word no, full stop! Never answer a question with a "no" and stop there without elaboration. In fact, never reply with a one-word answer. Instead, impress your interviewer by explaining yourself and giving some context to your answer.

"Sorry"

Example: *"I'm sorry, but I don't understand the question. Sorry. Again, I'm so sorry."*

Nothing wrong with not understanding a question, but don't apologise for it! Too many people overapologise for things they don't need to and it can reflect a serious lack of confidence. You may use the word in the attempt to show how humble and down-to-earth you are, but apologising every two minutes makes you look indecisive and passive. The only time sorry is acceptable is if you are running late – and even then you should have called ahead to apologise and warn them, not simply turn up 10 minutes late!

"Hate"

Example: *"Leading a team? Oh no, I hate taking on too much responsibility."*

You shouldn't be too passive, but avoid being aggressive as well. Skip the negative language during your interview and don't say that you "hate" doing something. Instead, explain your strengths in other areas where you shine, and how that could benefit this employer. Also, it should go without saying, that you should never, ever criticise your current or previous job and employer. Telling an interviewer how much you hate your current boss isn't exactly going to fill them with glee or give them a sense they can trust you.

"Stuff"

Example: *"I organised events and stuff" or "I'm good at managing and stuff like that".*

Too casual. Give them context! Give them specifics. What other 'stuff' are you talking about? The interviewer would definitely like you to elaborate on that in detail.

“Dedicated” or “Passionate”

Example: *“I am totally dedicated to helping my team reach their goals. I am so passionate about sales!”*

Well, yeah, who isn't dedicated? It feels like every person in the world is passionate! These words are so sorely overused that they are no longer a differentiating factor. Skip the resume-fluff. Demonstrate your dedication by talking about your achievements instead, and explaining why and how you achieved them.

“Whatever”

Example: *“I wasn't really 100% happy with the outcome of that project, but whatever, it was fine.”*

It makes you sound like a 15-year-old, apathetic teenager. It also reflects your unprofessionalism because it's usually used to communicate that you've given up, or really just can't be bothered.

“I need”

Example: *“I need to have a standing desk” / “I need flexible hours” / “I need a 20% bump in salary”*

You, you, you. Talking about your wants and needs isn't exactly what the interviewer wants to hear in the first interview. They want to know what *you* can do for *them*. Instead of telling them what you need to be happy, you should be telling your interviewer how you can contribute and fulfil the company's needs. The other details of your needs or desires can be discussed later.

“Perks”

Don't bring up employee-benefits when the interviewer asks what you like about the company. Again, it shows how you're only in it for the perks and fails to reflect your ability in contributing to the company.

You probably won't destroy your chances of getting the job if you use one of the above words during the interview, but overusing them might not leave a great impression on your interviewer. Avoid these words and your communication skills may improve by leaps and bounds.



Dress your best for that interview

It's the time of the year again when thousands of college freshies are swarming to try their luck landing their dream jobs. After four years in college, you would think at least one professor would teach you how to properly dress once you get out into the "real world".

Instead you're probably wondering "How exactly am I supposed to dress for my interview?"

Amy Glass, an expert on presentation skills, business etiquette, professional presence and interpersonal communication once said: "In an interview situation, you're marketing yourself as a product, and so you want and need to have the best image possible."

With that in mind, let this article help you look your best when attending an interview.

Comfort comes first

Too-warm blazers, tight-fitting skirts or pants, and killer heels that hurt you are not necessary. There's no real need to sacrifice comfort just to look good. Sure, it's not appropriate to dress down too much (which is easy to do, given it's almost always hot where we live in Southeast Asia) but it's also not too hard to put together an ensemble that's comfortable and suitable for an interview/work.

A slightly more unconventional way of dressing for an interview is somewhat acceptable these days. You can ditch the uncomfortable coats, blazers, dress shirts, ties and heels. For the girls, you can opt for a nice dress and thin blazer paired with an inch or two high heels. As for the guys, you could never go wrong with a tucked-in long-sleeved shirt, a good pair of pants and some comfy boat shoes. This, of course, depends on the level of the role you're going for and the industry, so do your research!

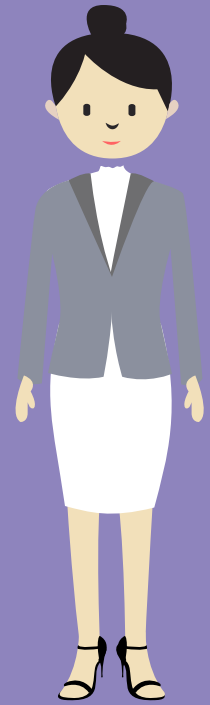
No matter what, make sure you are presentable. No crumpled clothes and dirty items you just picked up off your "floor-drobe". This is the real world!

High price tags aren't always necessary

You don't need to have a Louis Vuitton handbag and Prada shoes to complete your outfit. While it's nice to shop for branded items, it's not something an interviewer will be checking out (unless, perhaps, you work in fashion.)

If you're keen to have a designer look, there are plenty of options for clothing of a similar quality, but cheaper. You'll find a wider selection of clothing at a department store, meaning you can save money for other things like bags, shoes and other accessories to complete your get-up.

An additional tip! Some might think it's a no-no, but if you really are into signature things, you can always hunt any thrift shops around. A good chunk of their items tend to be branded and in good condition. This way, it's a win-win situation.



Don't stress! You don't need a whole new wardrobe

Unless, of course, all you own are shorts and flip flops.

Try googling "clothing essentials for women/men at work". You might be surprised to find out you don't need every colour available of those pants that you've been eyeing. The secret is to be smart and creative. Mix and match your old and new clothes, play with colors and patterns, and try grabbing some stuff from your sibling or friend's closet. Your white blouse doesn't always have to go with your brown pants.

At the end of the day, you can invest in one nice item - like a black work dress or a good suit - and then focus on changing your shirt, jewellery or scarf instead.

Accessorise like a pro

Don't neglect the power of the small trinkets. Get those shoes shined. Dust your leather bag. Use that vintage watch your parents gave you on your 18th birthday. These simple pieces will add on to your professional look. Some even say that adding accents to your clothing is a sign of confidence.

If all else fails, just ask!

In many traditional industries, like finance or accounting, business professional dress will be appropriate. This means a more conservative suit, shirt and tie if you're a man, or a professional dress or suit if you're a woman. You can show your individuality through accessories.

In other industries like advertising or public relations, for example, you might be able to get away with a more casual look. But it can be difficult to know exactly what to wear, especially if some days you are behind a desk - but others you are client-facing.

The solution is simple - just ask the company about their dress code. Do this when you are contacted at the interview stage so that you have a good idea of what to wear. But when in doubt, always overdress, rather than underdress. So, with the effort and expense you have put into your professional image, will it make any difference? Absolutely! Your image matters because it shows your attentiveness to detail and gives recruiters an idea of how you'll represent their company to clients, both internally and externally.

Essentially, the message you send visually makes a big difference in how people view you, and can ultimately make or break whether you get the job.



Fresh grads, this is how to negotiate your first salary

Becoming a master of negotiation is a lifelong journey. Unfortunately, you are at the beginning of yours, eagerly hoping to land your first job and praying you get the compensation you desire. Sometimes what you want will be reasonable, other times you might need to fight for what you believe you're owed.

But there's a difference between coming off as entitled and ensuring you get paid a fair salary for your first job.

How can you make sure you get what you want?

Do your homework

Before you set foot in any job interview, do your homework. It is glaringly obvious to any employer when a fresh grad turns up, only having vaguely Googled their business. You should know the background to the company for context, who their clients are, any big projects they've worked on, and who the CEO is.

Be sure to check the news if they're a big name company. Have they hit the headlines for any reason – good or bad – recently? You'll want to have that conversation in your back pocket, as it shows you have been following what the company has been doing.

Beyond this, you need to do your homework about salaries in your industry. Is the current hiring environment an employer's market or talent's market (i.e. who's got the upper hand?) Find salary surveys that give you an indication of what you should be earning in your role and with your level of experience and qualifications. Ask around and meet people in the industry and get their advice. You can never do too much prep work.

Know these 3 things before you enter the job interview

- 1 The general range of salary for your job (which you will now know if you have done your homework)
- 2 What the potential employer's biggest issues are
- 3 How you, with your experience and passion, can help them solve these challenges

These points are essentially what any employer wants to know when deciding on a candidate. They're not looking to hire just anyone – they want someone who understands their business objectives and how their key skills can help the company reach its goals.

Think about more than just wage

Your negotiation doesn't have to be about cash, especially for a first job. As a grad, you have less leverage than someone with a couple years' experience, but you might be able to make up for a lower wage by negotiating a few perks. This could be anything from flexible hours to taking part in various development and learning programmes. If the job requires travel, negotiate a travel budget, or if you'll be making loads of calls from your cellphone, check to see whether they can supply you with a paid-for work phone.



Display competence

A jittery, sweaty, stammering interviewee is less likely to get the job over a confident, well-spoken candidate. Why? Because the latter comes across as a solid investment.

Don't underestimate the power of how you dress, speak and conduct yourself in the interview. Even if the company is a jeans-and-t-shirt place, don't show up looking scruffy in your faded denims. Speak slowly, with a smile, and maintain appropriate eye contact.

Get comfortable with talking about money

Eventually, in a second or third interview, you will likely be asked what your asking salary is. You should have a reasonable number in mind now – and the reasons to back up why you are asking for this – but don't be afraid to ask them what they're willing to pay.

Think of this discussion as more of a collaboration than a battle you have to fight. At the end of the day, an employer wants to pay someone well who can do the job well.

If your ideal salary is slightly above what they're willing to offer, acknowledge this and explain why you deserve it. You still may not get what you want, but it puts you on the table as a confident go-getter who is willing to work hard for what they want.

Go the extra mile and have a plan

So, you're asking for X dollars per year. But why should they pay you that amount when you've got little experience? It's time for you to *show* them.

If you really want to wow an employer, come up with a plan for what you'd like to achieve in your first 30, 60 and 90 days on the job. Remember, you have to prove yourself before you can ask for more money – and by showing them you have a plan to better your own professional development, you're showing dedication to the job that many other candidates might not.

Know your plan if they say “no”

Although this can be where the real negotiation starts, it also might be where the conversation ends. If they say they can't do that, don't have the budget, it's not in the plan, etc, know how you will respond.

In some situations it might suit you to keep negotiating and arguing your point, but you want to avoid coming off as pushy and entitled. Know your limit and when to walk away.

Even if this job doesn't work out, always follow up with a thank you email after the interview process and remain on good terms with the business. You never know when they might want you back...



Food for Thought



Becoming a better communicator over e-mail

There's so much potential for things to go wrong when writing an email. Because you're not face to face with the person you are communicating with, the room for error and misunderstandings is enormous.

Have they misread your tone? Did that quip you meant as a joke get taken seriously and offend someone? Are your emails too short, or do they drag on and on and on....?

While email is a valuable and necessary tool for communicating, it's also very easy to slip up on your email etiquette.

You want your emails to be understood clearly, especially when you're writing to a stranger. Sometimes picking up the phone is easier, but when things need to be sent via email or you need to ensure there's a paper trail, you might have no other option. Essentially, your emails should deliver the results (or replies) that you want.

Here are some tips you may find useful as you get to grips with the big bad world of professional emailing:

Subject lines

Ever skimmed through the newspaper and found yourself only reading the headlines? If you don't have a compelling email subject line, chances are your intended recipient will do the same – delete, and onto the next email.

You need to interest someone into clicking on your email. Your subject line should convey the main point of your message just enough to get them to click and find out more. If your message is time-sensitive, include a date or an indication that it requires an immediate response, such as "Invitation to Ramadan Banquet: Reply by 9 July".

Be direct

Always assume the recipient gets a TON of e-mails everyday, and yours is just another one adding to their overflowing inbox. Like lengthy resumes, wordy emails have a higher chance of going into the trash. Your reader wants to know what you need from him or her. Be clear, concise and get to the point soon after your greeting or introduction. Ensure the content of your e-mail is informative but direct.

Maintain your tone

Writing is tricky because when you talk to someone face-to-face, you use body language and facial expressions on top of vocal tone to convey your message. Similarly, you assess how someone feels using the same method. Emails, however, hide all of that, which makes it slightly more intimidating. You're most probably unable to tell if your reader has misunderstood your message due to the lack of visual and auditory cues.

Pick your words wisely! The use of punctuation and capitalisation can make a big difference to the tone of your email.

Proofread

Nothing spells unprofessional more than poorly structured sentences. Make sure all the necessary information is included in your message without it being too lengthy. Read it aloud if you need to (it's the best way to catch any awkward phrasing).



Don't over-communicate online

Have you ever had messages going back and forth and ended up having your main message wedged somewhere in that thread? The large volume of emails people receive daily is a big enough reason for you to ask if writing that email is *really* necessary. If you predict the email will lead to a discussion, pick up the phone instead!

There's also the option of using instant messaging (via Skype, Whatsapp, WeChat and Viber) to communicate your message and answer any queries directly. In the case of sending condolences or delivering bad news, do it in person to convey your empathy and compassion.

Writing emails may seem like a simple aspect of business, but getting your message across without being able to express yourself through vocal tone or facial expressions can make it difficult for your reader to understand your message.



Why startups make the best first workplace

Where you have your first job isn't as big of a deal as you think. The first few years of your career are about getting experience and exposure to find out what you're good at before your big break.

Many fresh grads have their eyes set on working for big sexy brands, but they should consider getting their hands dirty in a no-name startup first.

A mid-stage startup where you're the sixth or seventh hire is ideal, as the company structure is starting to take form. Aim for a company that already has momentum with a product on the ground and at least a few hundred loyal users.

Room for innovation

In the age of innovation, employers are looking to hire people who can think outside of the box. Immersing in an open environment that encourages you to pitch ideas internally can set you up for success as a leader in the future. In a startup environment, the teams are often smaller, which means potentially more face time with founders. At a large corporation, it might take weeks or months to pitch your idea to someone who might take it up to head office.

It's not uncommon for a startup to Google their way through road blocks. This kind of problem solving is increasingly the norm as technology and social platforms are evolving rapidly. The on-demand generation is all about learning on-the-go and being open to experimentation.

Less bureaucracy

Top-down hierarchies are considered old school in most startup environments that encourage a lateral office structure. Reporting systems should be designed to streamline workflow and maintain order - not to split up teams.

Less bureaucracy also means it's easier to get diverse experience and cross-collaborate across departments. The ability to work with several teams will prepare you for a management role in a larger company.

Mobility

Have you noticed that the staff at successful companies around the world are getting younger and younger? With more founders building their own startups and hiring young professionals, there's less competition to climb to the top compared to heavily structure companies.

Technology is changing so fast that soft skills - like a willingness to learn quickly - are becoming increasingly more valuable. As everything moves to the cloud and platforms are becoming more user-friendly, versatility will be increasingly more valued.



How to go from 'newbie' to office SUPERSTAR

Congratulations! You're officially employed. The first few weeks in a new job are all about learning, and it's alright to make mistakes.

Once all the training is done, your performance will determine whether you stay in that junior position forever or move up. It's simple how an employer decides your future: If you perform at expectation, you will be the one who reliably does the job he was given to do, and you'll stay in that junior position.

If you do everything with enthusiasm, creativity, and curiosity, you'll be given more responsibility quicker. That extra 10% of effort makes all the difference.

What recruiters want in 2016 is different from what they wanted in 2006. With the digital transformation in nearly every industry, employers value people who can learn quickly and are eager to do so.

So to be the office superstar, here are some cheats from us:

1

Ask smart questions. When it comes to work processes and things unique to a company such as 'Do I send it to Kelvin or Nurul first?' there are no stupid questions. But if there is ever a question you can just Google, do that first before asking someone about it.

By asking questions that can easily be Googled, you will seem eager to please, but not eager to excel.



2

Always be hungry. No, not for chips. We mean be hungry for more work. Always ask to learn something new, or ask about the company's bigger picture. If you're just finishing a project, always ask how else you can help, or learn a software that you haven't used yet.

If someone asks you, "What are you working on right now?" Make sure the answer isn't 'nothing' or you'll be getting the work from the bottom of the barrel.

3

Don't stay late. In Asian culture it is really important to 'show face', and juniors often express their dedication to the job by staying late. What few interns and junior staff realise is that staying late means you haven't used your work hours wisely. It's called 'presenteeism', and it's not a good thing.

You have 8-9 hours a day to complete a series of tasks, and we have a wide variety of productivity tools available to us, so there's no reason why you should be staying till the wee hours of the evening.

Here's one last piece of advice: **Learn to do everything.** Your first few weeks of work aren't about being a specialist - they are about gaining the confidence to take on new challenges in the future.