



RNAO

Registered Nurses
Association
of Ontario

L'Association des infirmières
et infirmiers autorisés de
l'Ontario

**Centre for Professional
Nursing Excellence**

The Job Process: Cover Letters, Resumes, Interviews and Online Applications



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Writing a Cover Letter



The cover letter is perhaps the trickiest element to put together when you are preparing your application package. In your letter, you must highlight the specifics on your resume that are relevant to the job at hand, communicate your most important skills, and show your potential employer how well you can express yourself on the page. Resumes often follow a standard form, but the cover letter is different. To make matters more complicated, you should write a new cover letter for every job to which you apply. It is very important to target your cover letter to the company, and to link your unique interests and skills to the specific job opportunity. The thought of writing a new letter for every position may be daunting, but it is one of the most important rules in writing your cover letter.

The secret for constructing a successful cover letter is outlined

below. If you follow this paragraph-by-paragraph guide, you will have a great advantage when your application package lands on the desk of a company's human resource department.

First Paragraph

The first paragraph of your letter should identify the job you are applying for and how you learned about it. Indicate that you have attached enclosures with the letter (i.e. resume and portfolio). This paragraph should be brief; no more than two or three sentences.

Second Paragraph

The second paragraph should state your qualifications for the position. Deconstruct the job description and list the required skills, duties, and responsibilities. Focus on relevant qualifications listed in your resume and discuss them in detail, demonstrating how your background and experience qualify you for the job.

Be as specific as possible, and refer the reader to your resume for additional details. Stick to the facts about your competency, skills, and attitude. Never dismiss the skills of others.

Third Paragraph

In the third paragraph of your letter, refer to research you have done about the company and how it relates to your interests. This is a good place to illustrate your knowledge about the employer, key projects they have underway, their corporate culture, or any unique working conditions. Be sure to indicate your willingness to meet for an interview. Remember: the goal of the cover letter is to secure an interview. An excellent cover letter will ensure you get the interview and identify key themes you'd like to discuss - themes that are at the heart of the employer's enterprise.

Fourth Paragraph

Close with a one- or two-sentence paragraph thanking your reader for his or her time and consideration. Also state why you want the position and that you would be available for an interview.

End the letter with "Sincerely" or "Yours truly" with your name signed with initials (i.e. R.N.)

Remember that your cover letter is your personal ambassador. It reflects your personality, your attention to detail, your communication skills, your enthusiasm, and your intellect. An employer will decide whether or not you will reach the next phase in the employment process - the interview - based on the information in your application package.

Sample Cover Letters

Sample Cover Letter #1 - Experienced Nurse

Jane Smith
#11-125th Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
B1Z 5A6

Date

Nurse Recruiter
Health Sciences Centre
Employment Office
60 Pearl Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
B3E 1X2

Dear Ms. Kellas,

I am applying for the position of Assistant Head Nurse for H3 of the General Centre, as advertised in the Globe & Mail.

I am currently employed as a Registered Nurse on H3 (please see attached resume). In my seven years in the nursing profession, I have enhanced my communication skills by direct consultation with doctors, patients and their families and other para-professionals. Other assets I believe would be important in this position is my experience of resource nurse and the development of staff teaching packages.

I am currently enrolled in a management program (see attached resume) and hope to continue my education in the lines of Business Management. I understand that this position can prove to be difficult and stressful at times, however, I feel that I am prepared for this. I feel that these skills, plus the knowledge gained in my training and experience would be an asset and would make a positive contribution in the position of Assistant Head Nurse.

May I please have the opportunity to discuss my qualifications for the above position during an interview at a time convenient with you?

Sincerely yours,

Jane Smith, RN

Sample Cover Letters

Sample Cover Letter #2 - New Graduate

Jane Smith
#11-125th Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
B1Z 5A6

Date

Jane Doe
Program Director
Maternal-Newborn Program
General Health Centre
Best City, Ontario, L1L 1L1

Dear Ms. Smith,

I am writing in response to the advertisement posted in the Toronto Star on date for the position of registered nurse maternal-newborn program.

I am a new graduate from School of Nursing. I have completed a large component of my clinical nursing placements at your facility. I am excited about the opportunity to work as a part of the maternal-newborn team. As a student, I was able to work in all areas of the maternal-newborn program and enjoyed working with new families. As part of my clinical placement I developed breastfeeding fact sheet to give to new parents. Patients found it quite helpful in providing quick answers to common breast feeding questions. My enclosed resume provides more details about my qualifications, skills and accomplishments.

I would be delighted to discuss my potential contribution to your maternal-newborn team and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith, RN

Resume Tips

This article will describe some of the basic principles to be used when putting your resume together. These are general guidelines to follow and can be individualized to meet your specific needs.

What is the purpose of a resume?

A resume is a marketing tool to promote your knowledge, skills and talents. It provides the reader with an immediate sense of who you are and what you can do for them (Pearlman, 1998). A resume creates a first impression and its main purpose is to get you an interview.

What is the difference between a resume and a curriculum vitae (CV)?

The terms resume and CV are often used interchangeably however, they are actually two different documents. A resume is a summary document, usually 1 to 3 pages in length, which highlights your education, professional background and accomplishments. A curriculum vitae is a more detailed and lengthier document which describes your professional and academic interests and accomplishments (Pearlman, 1998). A formal CV is generally used to apply for grants, scholarships, awards and academic appointments. When applying for a job and you are unsure as to which document the employer is looking for, you can always call to clarify.

Before constructing a resume, it is important to think about a number of things. First, what type of work are you looking for? Are you interested in a specific area of nursing or are you interested in a variety of areas? What skills and knowledge have you acquired that meet the job requirements? How do you describe your most significant accomplishments to this point in your career? All of these questions are important in determining what information you will include on your resume. Knowing yourself well and identifying career goals can assist

you in developing your resume and the job search process.

How do I put a resume together?

First of all, you need to choose a format that fits with your personal style and career goals. There are two basic resume styles, the chronological and the functional styles. The chronological format is the most common and more traditional type of nursing resume. In a chronological resume, work history and education are described in reverse chronological order with the most recent experiences appearing first. Chronological resumes highlight dates, position titles, responsibilities, and the names and locations of employing organizations (Pearlman, 1998). This style is most often used to indicate career advancement by showing positions of increased responsibility or preparation. Chronological resumes may include headings such as:

- career objective
- education
- employment history
- professional memberships
- publications
- continuing education or professional development
- community activities or other interests

A functional resume highlights an individual's skills and accomplishments using various categories. This format is often used when making career changes or if there are large gaps in employment history. This format allows the opportunity to emphasize transferable skills. Less emphasis is on the positions held and more on the skills acquired. Headings for a functional resume may include:

- career objective
- achievements/key competencies/skills
- work experience
- education
- professional memberships

- publications
- continuing education or professional development
- community activities or other interests

Choosing a format is important as your resume will reflect who you are. It is important to think about how you want to market yourself to potential employers and also to choose a style that you feel comfortable with. In other words, how do you want to present yourself to potential employers? Sample resumes are available in many career planning books. Remember that samples are only guidelines and you can modify components to fit with your individual needs and preferences.

Can I send out the same resume to 20 different employers?

The simple answer is yes, however, you will likely have more success if you tailor/customize your resume for each position applied for. Mass mailing resumes is an ineffective job search strategy (Hacker, 1999).

References:

Hacker, C. (1999). *Job Hunting in the 21st Century: Exploding the Myths, Exploring the Realities*. Washington: St. Lucie Press.

Pearlman, L. (1998). Using self-marketing strategies to achieve your career goals. In G. Donner and M. Wheeler (Eds.). *Taking Control of Your Career and Your Future: For Nurses by Nurses*. (pp 73-95). Ottawa: The Canadian Nurses Association.

The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO) offers career counseling services to registered nurses and nursing students at no cost. For individual assistance, contact RNAO's Nurse Career Counsellor at (416) 599-1925 ext. 216 or 1-800-268-7199.

Resume Do's and Don'ts

Keep the resume brief, clear and concise. Employers may only take 30 seconds to determine from your resume whether or not they will give you an interview. You want them to see right away that you are qualified for the position. Your goal is to make the reader interested enough to want to talk to you in person.

Include a header on each page. This should include your name and contact information. The employer shouldn't have to search for this information in order to contact you.

Always put work history and education in chronological order, starting with the most recent. Your most recent experience is always the most important.

Be sure there are absolutely no spelling or grammar mistakes. Proofread your resume numerous times. Use the spell-checker on your computer, but don't rely on that alone: get someone else to read it over too. One mistake could give a potential employer the wrong impression.

Try to limit your resume to two pages. They don't need your life story. Include only experiences and information that are crucial to the position.

Use strong action verbs and do not use the word "I". Under each heading use bullet form to outline your responsibilities and experiences.

Tailor the resume to suit the position you are applying for. If you are applying for a position in accounting, you need not mention in detail your background as a classical pianist.

Include a section on relevant skills. This may include computer and typing skills, languages and proficiency.

Be honest. Don't lie about your past experiences or exaggerate about your involvement.

Do not state you reasons for leaving another position. This looks very unprofessional.

Do not include personal information such as age, weight, social insurance number or religion. Your interviewer may make a subconscious judgment that could affect your chances of getting the position.

Include references or state "references available upon request". Make sure your references are aware you are using them so they're prepared to talk about you. Share a copy of your resume with them. Try to find references with credentials - past employers, teachers and professors as opposed to friends and neighbours.

Where possible, use exact dates. Simply saying that you worked for a company in a certain year is not enough; it could mean that you worked there for the entire year or that you worked there for only a day in that year.

Avoid listing unnecessary information. If you've graduated from university, you do not need to mention your high school. The same is true for employment experience; you don't necessarily need to go all the way back to your days as a babysitter.

Always save your resume for future use. Although you may

want to change it

to suit different positions, many aspects of your resume will remain the same. Keep a copy or save it on your computer.

Be formal. Use formal language and avoid contradictions (can't, doesn't, it's) and abbreviations. Do not use slang.

Pick out key words from the job description and repeat them in your resume. If specific skills are mentioned, you want the employer to know you have them.

Use a standard font and keep it neat and uncluttered. Your resume should be easy to read. Choose a font that looks professional and keep it at 10 to 12-point type.

Use your own words. Do not try to sound smarter or older than you are, this will be immediately obvious to the person reading your resume. It is better to use simple and plain language.

Use word processors for formatting. Many word processors have layouts already set up for you - all you need to do is fill in the blanks.

Adapted from Canada Prospects at www.canadapropects.com.

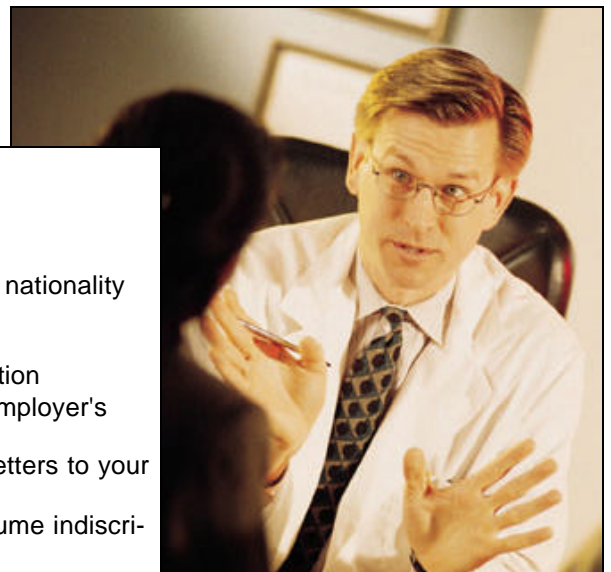
Quick Do's and Don'ts

Resume Do's

- Print on good quality paper using a laser printer
- Preferred colours of paper - ivory, white or pale gray
- Font size 10 or 12 point
- Times New Roman or Arial
- 2 - 3 pages in length
- Always send a cover letter on the same paper
- If faxing, always send a hard copy
- Customize for each position you are applying for

Resume Don'ts

- Do not enclose a photo
- Do not include birth date, nationality or religious affiliations
- Do not mention salary
- Do not repeat job description
- Do not send on current employer's letterhead
- Do not attach reference letters to your resume
- Do not send out your resume indiscriminately



Suggested Resume Outline/Headings

1. Career Objective or Summary

- What type of position are you looking for? Be specific.
- Summary for experienced nurses -- include strengths, accomplishments, expertise and career interests.

2. Education

- Include all diplomas, degrees and certificates.

3. Honours and Awards

- Include honours/awards from your workplace, academic institution, professional association or volunteer work.

4. Work/Clinical Experience

- Highlight your skills and accomplishments from your work or student clinical experiences.
- Accomplishments are activities when you went above and beyond what you were hired to do, or what the expectations were. Situations where you identified a challenge, used a specific approach and had a successful outcome. Describe how you made a difference (Donner, 1998).
- Less focus on technical skills -- *i.e.* IV, medication administration, etc.

5. Professional Memberships and Affiliations

- Involvement in professional associations -- *i.e.* RNAO, RPNAO, CNSA, etc.

6. Publications and Presentations

- Any written publications you have authored, newsletters, patient education materials, professional articles.

7. Community/Volunteer Experience

- Include experiences that may be relevant for the type of work you are pursuing.

8. References

- Do not include references on your resume. You may include them on a separate piece of paper when requested by the employer.

Further Reading:

Donner, G. and Wheeler, M. (1998). Taking Control of your Career and Your Future: For Nurses by Nurses.

Ottawa: The Canadian Nurses Association.

Enelow, W. (2002). 101 Ways to REcession-Proof Your Career.

Toronto: McGraw-Hill.

Hacker, C. (1999). Job Hunting in the 21st Century: Exploding the Myths, Exploring the Reality. New York: St. Lucie Press.

Tips for Resume Writing

If you need support in preparing your resume, typing services are listed in the Yellow Pages or in the classified section of newspapers.

Length: 3 pages

Paper:

1. 20-60 bond
2. Use plain white paper or an attractive colour (pastel) with or without your letterhead.

Appearance:

1. Paper should be clean and neat.
2. Resume should be typed.
3. Typing should be free of errors.
4. Errors should be corrected neatly.

Dear Joyce: I was one of two finalists for a position I really wanted. The other candidate won it. A screening committee member, knowing my disappointment, told me off the record that my references were fine, but that the other candidate's references were outstanding. Urge your job seeking readers to encourage reference givers to pay attention to what they write. -- F.F.



“Never Take Reference Letters for Granted”

A number of factors influence a "hiring decision but references certainly are persuasive. Here's a handy checklist you can clip and give reference writers. It's from Ralph Brigham, director of career services at Montana State University-Bozeman.

- **BE PUNCTUAL.** Please provide the reference promptly because a job may be lost if you are late.
- **INCLUDE RELATIONSHIP.** Were you a supervisor, company president, advisor, professor--what? A professor may see academic skills while a supervisor may identify work habits.
- **BE FACTUAL.** If you do not know the person well enough to give a reference, decline rather than be vague.
- **USE A RESUME.** Work from a list of the candidate's accomplishments, organizations and other relevant information. It will jog your memory, plus put your experience in perspective.
- **GET EXAMPLES.** As well as performance within your organization, categorize several different aspects of the candidate, identifying skills, attitudes, personal characteristics and growth. Instead of just saying the candidate is "responsible," give brief, concrete illustrations.
- **PRESENT A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE.** Type the reference neatly. If you are filling out an evaluation form, do not restrict your reference to a small box. Use additional pages as needed. Your answer should not leave open to misinterpretation any questions.
- **AVOID DISCRIMINATION DATA.** Do not make reference to characteristics that can be the basis of discrimination, such as race, color, nationality, gender, religion, age, appearance, disability, marital or parental status, or political views.

- **CHOOSE WORDS CAREFULLY.** Avoid bland language, such as: nice, reasonable, good, decent, fairly and satisfactory. Use power words, such as: articulate, expressive, cooperative, dependable, effective, observant, creative, imaginative, significant, efficient and innovative.

Favorable attributes identified by the College Placement Council include: ability to communicate, intelligence, self-confidence, willingness to accept responsibility, initiative, leadership, energy level, imagination, flexibility, interpersonal skills, self-knowledge, ability to handle conflict, goal achievement, competitiveness, appropriate vocational skills and focus on direction.

Heed Ralph Brigham's tips: Giving a reference in this super competitive era is not a task to be taken lightly.

To those of you who are too busy to do the quality of reference writing that will set a candidate apart from the crowd, remember the folktale describing three generations of a farming family in a time long ago.

When grandfather was too old and racked with arthritis to work the fields and earn his keep, his son decided to shed his burden by tying him up in a large basket and lowering him into the river to drown. On the way to the river the grandson encountered his father and asked, "Where are you taking my dear grandfather?"

The son explained that he had no more time to work extra to make up for his father's missing share. He intended to end his father's suffering and lighten the family's load. The grandson listened, then nodded and said, "Be sure to bring the basket back. I'll need it for you one day."

adapted from D JOYCE LAIN KENNEDY 1995 Sun Features Inc.

So You Have an Interview - Now What?

By Sue-Bookey Bassett RN, BScN, MEd

In today's world of work, the interview is a crucial step in landing a new job. In all fields of work the interview process has become more complex than it once was. Not so long ago, many nurses were offered jobs before they even finished their education programs. Today, nurses looking for work are sure to encounter at least one interview as part of the job search process. Interviewing can be a scary process if you have never had to participate in one before. Nurses are often faced with various types of interviews and need to be prepared to sell themselves and their skills. Developing strong interview skills is essential for your career success!

The Purpose of the Interview

The interview is the most important component in the job search process. Getting an interview is a general sign that the employer thinks you have the qualifications for the job. It's up to you to sell yourself to the potential employer during the interview.

The Employer's Perspective

The interview allows the employer the opportunity to meet you and assess your fit with the organization. Do you have the right qualifications, abilities, and style for the particular job being offered? Besides the qualifications, the employer uses the interview time to explore your ability to think on your feet and to determine your understanding of the position and the organization. It is also an opportunity for an employer to compare you with other applicants who are also being interviewed.

Your Perspective

The main objective of the interview is to use this opportunity to present yourself as the best candidate for the job. You must convince the employer that there is a strong fit between your skills and knowledge, and the position. You must be able to clearly articulate what skills you have to offer,

how you have developed those skills and how you have been able to demonstrate those skills through past experience. It is also an opportunity for you to find out more about the organization and the job for which you are applying.

Types of Interviews

As indicated earlier, the interview process has become more complex for all types of work. Nurses looking for work should familiarize themselves with the various types of interviews which they might encounter. As the position becomes more advanced or management oriented, the interview process generally becomes more involved. It is important to note that nurses at all levels need to be aware of the different types of interviews and learn how to prepare for them.

Single Interviewer

At one time, this would have been the most common type of interview for staff nurses to face. It seems this is not as common a practice by most large employers today. If you are faced with a single interviewer, it may be with the immediate hiring manager (nurse manager) for the unit to which you are applying. In other cases the applicant may be interviewed by a human resources staff member prior to being interviewed by the nurse manager.

Group or Panel Interview

Group interviews may be conducted by two or more individuals. It is not uncommon for nurses applying for staff nurse positions to be faced with a small panel of three to four people. Generally the panel would consist of resources staff person, a potential co-worker (staff nurse from the unit to which you are applying), and in some cases, a physician for the respective service or program. In this type of interview, the group often decides ahead of time what questions will be asked and which member of the panel

will ask them. When answering questions in a panel interview, always direct your answer to the person who asked the question.

Behavioral Interviews

This type of interview is used to assess how much you would react to various situations. You are presented with questions that relate to potential situations that you may face on the job. The main goal in behavioral interviews is to determine how well you think on your feet, how you relate experience to situation, and problem solve. Questions may relate to specific clinical situations, conflict management, or working as part of a team. In some cases you may be asked to role play a part of the job.

Your answers will provide the interviewer(s) with some insight regarding your knowledge of the clinical setting and how you might handle the situation on the job. Behavioral interviews are being used more commonly by nursing employers for staff nurse positions as well as advanced positions.

Subsequent or Serial Interviews

This refers to the process of having more than one interview before the job is offered and is the case for many jobs today. A second or third interview is often conducted to determine the fit between you and the position. In nursing, this type of interview is more common for management or specialized roles such as clinical nurse specialist, nurse practitioner, nurse manager or educator.

Telephone Interviews

Nursing employers in Canada and the United States may use a telephone interview as a method of conducting an initial interview. This method is used when distance between the candidate and the employer may be an issue. Telephone interviews offer advantages and disadvantages to both the employer and the applicant.



They require the same level of preparation as does a person to person interview. If you are invited to be interviewed by telephone, ensure that you prepare for it and be sure to ask how many people will be listening at the other end. You may find yourself on speaker phone to a panel of individuals.

As you can see, there are many types of interview that you may experience as you search for your first job and as you progress through your career. It is important to be aware of the different types of interviews and to learn how to prepare for them accordingly.

Preparation is Essential

Contrary to some beliefs - we can no longer "wing it" Interviewing is a serious process and those who are successful at interviews generally undergo some preparation before walking into the interview. If you are called for an interview, here are some tips to help you prepare.

1. Find out what type of interview to expect. How many people will be interviewing you? Confirm the date, time and location of the interview. This is particularly important because some employers may have more than one site (e.g. hospital mergers).

2. Do some research about the organization/hospital. What is their mission, values and philosophy? What is the strategic plan?

3. Know yourself well! Review your skills, experience and accomplishments. Study the position description and note how your knowledge and expertise meet the positions requirements. Think about which skills you want to highlight in the interview.

4. Anticipate potential questions that you may be asked during the interview and prepare answers to those questions. Writing out the answers may be helpful.

5. Practice interviewing with a friend, colleague, mentor, instructor or career counselor. Ask for feedback and suggestions as to how you can strengthen your presentation.

6. Make sure you know how to get to the site of the interview. Allow extra time to ensure you are on time.

7. Bring extra copies of your resume to the interview. There may be someone at the interview who requires a copy or you may be asked questions about specific aspects of your resume, in which case, you will want a copy to refer to.

8. Be friendly to everyone in the organization. Secretaries and receptionists may play an informal role in the hiring process.

9. Prepare some questions to ask the interviewer(s). Include questions that will allow you to learn more about the

organization and the position itself. Some questions might include:

- Will there be an orientation period?
- What is your nurse/patient ratio?
- Do you have 8/10/12 hours shifts?
- Do you have self-scheduling or how is the scheduling done on the unit?
- What are the key responsibilities of this position?
- What would be my primary challenges if I were selected for this position?
- What are your expectations of me as a staff member?
- Does your organization offer continuing education incentives?
- When will I know about the successful applicant for the job and when will the job start?

What Will They Ask Me?

There are all kind so books and resources that give sample questions during interviews. For most interviews, you will be asked some general questions about yourself along with other questions related to the specific job to which you have applied. Some common examples are:

- Tell us about yourself, career history
- What words best describe you? How would others describe you?
- What are your strengths? Areas for development?
- How do you handle stress?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- Why do you want to work for this organization?
- How can you contribute to our organization?
- What is the most difficult work situation you have had and how did you handle it?
- Describe a conflict resolution scenario.
- How do you stay current in your practice?
- What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Do not ask about salary and benefits until you are offered the job.

What to Do After the Interview?

Take a few minutes to reflect on how well you did. What questions did you feel you answered well? What would you do differently next time? Were you adequately prepared? Follow up with a thank you letter. Address the letter to the person who called you for the interview. Thank the person for their time and restate your interest in the position (if you do in fact want the position). Also include any points you want the interviewer to remember that sets you apart from the other candidates.

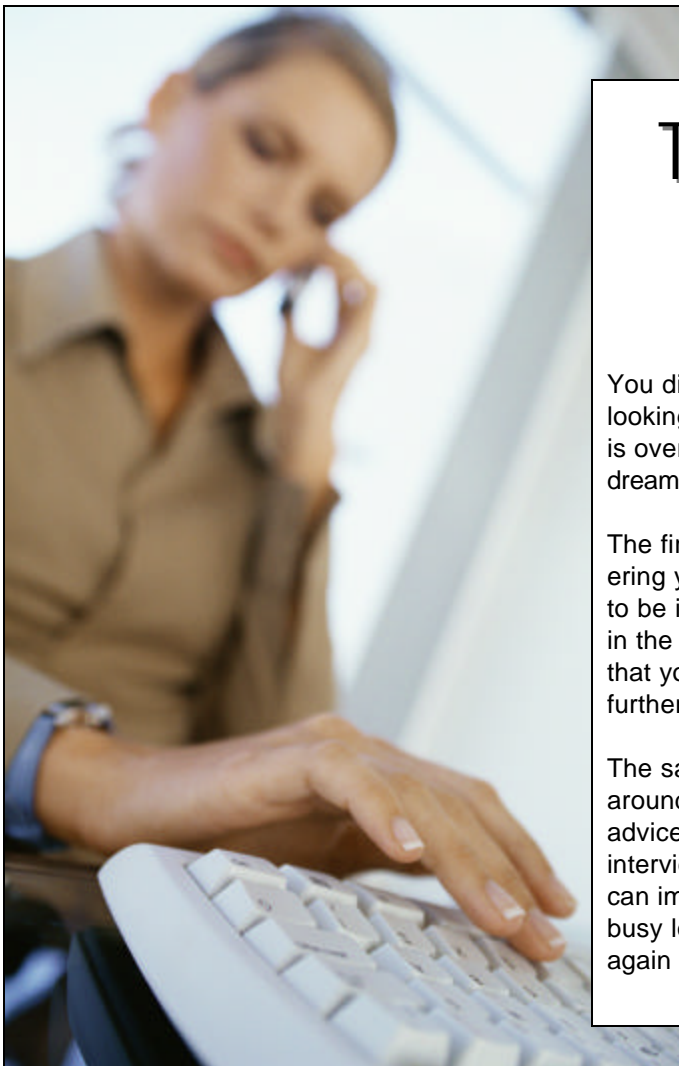
Think about how you will respond if you are offered the position. Do you want to do the type of work if the job is offered to you? Are the mission and values of the employer compatible with your own work values and professional goals? Will this job allow

you to build existing skills and experience to further enhance your career? These are important questions to think about before making the choice to accept a position.

Successful interviewing requires developing the ability to sell your skills and abilities. To do this means knowing yourself well. Preparing for interviews means investing some time and effort. Taking the time to prepare can result in a successful interview and ultimately the job offer. If you weren't successful in getting the job, contact the employer for feedback. Ask for feedback in a non-threatening manner and use the information to help you prepare for your next interview. Each interview can be a learning opportunity. Practice and preparation will help you succeed at interviewing. Remember practice makes perfect!

References:

- Case, B. (1997). Career Planning for nurses. Toronto: Delmar.
- Donner, G., & Wheeler. M. (1998). Taking control of your career and your future: For nurses by nurses. Ottawa: The Canadian Nurses Association.
- Henderson. F.. & McGettigan. B. (1994). Managing your career in nursing. (2nd ed.) New York: National League for Nursing Press.
- University of Pennsylvania Nursing Job Search Handbook. .' <http://dolphin.upenn.edu/-nursinglcpps/cppjob.html>
- Van Norman. M. (1995). Making it work: Career management for the new workplace. Toronto: Burgher Books.



Tips for After the Interview

You didn't wait around for the phone to ring when you went looking for a job. Don't start now just because the interview is over. There's still a lot more you can do to make that dream job a reality.

The first thing you can do is thank the employer for considering your application and providing an opportunity for you to be interviewed. Emphasize the good things that came up in the interview, especially those areas where it was clear that your skills were ideal for the job. Offer to provide any further information they might need.

The same is true if you don't actually get the job this time around. Employers are usually more than willing to offer advice on how to improve your resume or critique your interview. Ask if they can suggest other ways in which you can improve your presentation. And - just before you get busy looking for the next career opportunity - thank them again for their help.

Sample Thank You Letter

Jane Smith
#11-125th Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
B1Z 5A6

Date

Nurse Recruiter
Health Sciences Centre
Employment Office
60 Pearl Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
B3E 1X2

Dear Ms. Kellas,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on Thursday. I appreciated the opportunity to learn more about your organization and to share some of my experiences and thoughts about the position of a Registered Nurse. I can understand why so many talented people seek employment with your organization. You clearly promote a positive working environment.

As I said at our meeting, I am confident that my knowledge and experience would be of great benefit to (organization name). I look forward to hearing from you. In the meantime, if you need any more information to help you make a decision, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Jane Smith, RN



Interview Do's and Don'ts

weaknesses and strongest accomplishments. Think about why you should be hired over someone else.

- **Come prepared.** Bring extra copies of your resume and references.
- **Offer a solid handshake.** Firm and dry (no sweaty palms!)
- **Do not get thrown off by odd questions.** Some companies may ask you a questions like, "If you were a car, what kind of car would you be?" Always consider the possible significance and answer as honestly as possible.
- **If the question is unclear, don't be afraid to clarify.** You don't want to waste your time and the employer's time answering a question that you aren't clear on.
- **Understand the job description before the interview.** Know what will be expected of you so that you can relate examples and skills specifically to the position.
- **Look at the interviewer in the eye.** Eyes can often say as much as words, if not more. If you look at the floor, you may look like you have something to hide. Avoiding eye contact also shows a lack of confidence.
- **Be aware of your body language.** Remember to smile. Consider how you are sitting or standing. Avoid crossing your arms.
- **Answer questions as accurately and efficiently as possible.** Remember not to ramble and answer only the question that is being asked with the most thorough answer possible.
- **Be professional.** Do not address the interviewer by their first name unless you are instructed to do so. Always shake hands with the interviewer at the beginning and the end of the interview.
- **Be honest.** Do not lie about your experiences or misrepresent yourself.
- **Be prepared to relate your personal experience to the position.** Consider ahead of time your previous experiences and how they may relate to the position you are applying for.
- **Listen.** Take notes if it helps.
- **Be polite.** Do not interrupt the interviewer and do not chew gum.
- **Make sure the interviewer feels he or she is in control.** Do not start directing the interview yourself by asking questions too early or going off topic. At the same time, if the interviewer is not driving the interview forward, take some initiative and help move the interview along.
- **Do not talk negatively about your current employer.** This comes across as very unprofessional.
- **Be ready to ask questions if necessary.** Many employers will end an interview by asking if you have any questions. Don't be afraid to ask questions about the position or the company.
- **Find out when a response is expected.** Do not be afraid to ask about the next step. You can also ask that they call even if you do not get the position.
- **If it is a phone interview, remember the interviewer can't see you so your tone of voice is extremely important.** Try to smile because this, as corny as it may seem, will make your voice sound happier.
- **Be sure to send out a thank you letter within a couple of days of the interview.** Ask the interviewer for a business card in order to get his/her address.
- **Rehearse.** Practice in front a mirror or your parents. Now that you've made it this far, you want to ensure your best chances for a successful interview.
- **Be punctual.** It's better to arrive early than to arrive late. Take traffic and parking into consideration and be sure to leave yourself lots of extra time. First impressions are very important.
- **Consider the position when deciding what to wear.** If you are unsure, dress professionally. Make sure not to wear strong perfumes or colognes as some people find these offensive.
- **Arrive to an interview alone.** If you are coming with someone, have that person wait in the car. Do not let them come in with you.
- **Relax.** Don't be stressed. Act like you are comfortable even if you're not. Breathe well and consider your responses before speaking.
- **Be confident.** Don't be shy about your achievement and skills. At the same time, be sure not to sound conceited.
- **Consider ahead of time some possible questions that could be asked.** Consider your strengths and

Types of Interviewing: Information and Behavioural

Information Interviewing

Part of the job search process - finding out more information about various types of work or specific jobs before actually working in the area. Information to seek - nature of the job; career opportunities; and experience necessary

Sources for Information Interviews

- People who are doing the type of work you are interested in - supervisors, managers, directors, educators, professors, and many others.
- You may not know the person on a personal level

Process of Information Interviewing

- Preparation is essential
- Gather as much information as you can about the specific area of work you are interested in
- Make a list of potential people you can contact-if you don't know someone doing what you want to learn more about, ask others for references or contacts of people they may know
- Prepare specific questions to ask the person you will be interviewing
- Book a specific appointment if possible - ask for 20 minutes of their time
- Most people like to talk about their work and will be happy to provide advice
- Different than interviewing for a job-here the focus is on your needs

Sample Questions to Ask

- Would you mind describing a typical day in your position?
- Try to find out specifics like how much of the job involves direct contact with people versus documentation, phone calls or e-mail
- What are the best/worst things about your job?
- What previous experience/education does this job require?
- What advice can you offer to someone who wants to enter this field?
- What is the future for this type of job?
- What is the starting salary for this job? Salary after five years?
- How does one find out when job openings occur?

Follow-up After Information Interviews

- Thank the individual for their time
- Send a follow-up thank you note
- Information interviews may be time consuming but they are important to your job search and can make the difference in finding the best type of work for you

Behavioural Interviewing

Behavioural interviewing is about using past performance to predict future behaviour. It is based on competency models and emphasizes the behavioural traits of a candidate rather than just technical skills. This style of interviewing is not new; it has been around in the human resource literature since the early 1970's.

How does it work?

Organizations develop competency models to define the motives, attitudes, skills, knowledge and behaviours that are essential to perform the job, and to differentiate average from superior performers. It is the belief that technical skills can always be taught but it is much harder to change a person's behavioural competencies. Interview questions are structured using questions that highlight past life examples of how a candidate demonstrated the required behavioural skills.

Sample Questions Used in Behavioural Interviews

- Tell me about a time when you felt you went beyond the call of duty in helping a patient
- We have all felt stress in our lives. Tell me about a nursing-related situation that has caused stress for you. How do you typically handle stress?
- Tell me about a challenge you faced in one of your clinical placements. How did you respond?
- Tell me about an emergency or crisis situation in which you were involved. What was your role? What did you do?
- Describe the major highlights of your nursing experience so far. Where do you want to go next?
- Describe a situation that demonstrates your ability to adapt to changes at work
- Can you describe a situation where you have successfully managed conflict?



Click Here to Apply Online:

How to Make Web Postings Work for You

Employers love using the web to advertise positions and collect applications. It offers many benefits to them - and it can for you too, if you know how to take advantage of it.

The online application process is quite different from what your parents, friends, or other advisors may be accustomed to - so how do you prepare for it?

Although one of your top priorities as a job seeker will be to network your way in the "back door" for an opportunity that never gets advertised, you will no doubt spend quite a bit of time looking for a career on the web as well. This means that you will need to "apply online" to be considered for some of the best opportunities available.

Applying Online - How and Why It Works

First of all, let me clarify that "applying online" is as different from e-mailing your résumé as faxing it is. When you apply online, your information is no longer a static document but automatically becomes part of a dynamic database of applications. This database can be searched, sorted, updated, and shared.

In addition to submitting a résumé and cover letter (as you would via e-mail, fax, or snail-mail), the online process often includes answering a series of questions "on the spot." These questions play a vital role in the application process. In fact, the answers provided can be more important to the prospective employer than your résumé. These pieces together

are the foundation of a "personal profile" which you will use to get an interview.

We'll look more at how to prepare for those questions later, but first it is worthwhile to understand how the process works. For now, just assume that all of that work you are doing on assessing and understanding your skills and abilities, as well as your interview preparation work, will come in very handy.

Like any type of application process, applying online gives an employer to view personal information about you. This enables the employer to sort and search through all of your application information - your cover letter, your résumé, and even the answers to the questions you may have been asked. The employer can also easily "score" your application, add notes to your file, and share your information within their company. They can also easily e-mail you to keep you apprised of the hiring process.

In most cases, you will be able to access your profile after you submit it by using the username and password you have been asked to create. Be sure to keep this username and password somewhere so that you can find it again later. You may be able to use it to update your profile when you need to add new information such as completed degrees or certificates. Keep in mind, however, that you probably won't be able to change the answers to the questions you have submitted.

Submitting Your Application

There are two main routes to applying online: via a job site and via a company website (sometimes these are combined when you get to the company website via a job site). When you find an opportunity that interests you, click on the "apply online" button to start the process. If you are applying via a job site, then you may already have your cover letter and/or résumé stored there. In this case, you will need to choose the résumé and cover letter you wish to apply with (if you have more than one); and, if you are given the option, customize them for the specific position to which you are applying.

If you don't already have a résumé stored or are applying via a company's site for the first time, you will need to create your résumé "on the fly." You will do this by completing the files/questions they may provide. This should be done by copying and pasting pieces from your existing résumé, which you should have open in a separate window. This will enable you to use the well-crafted wording you have already prepared.

At some point, you will likely be asked to copy and paste or "upload" your full résumé as well as a cover letter. To do this, carefully follow the instructions given. Be sure to take the time to customize your cover letter and résumé for the position sought. Do this customizing in your word processor so that you can use the spell-check and grammar-check functions before copying your information onto the web page. None of this should be very difficult if you already have prepared cover letters and résumés on your computer.

It may be helpful to think of applying online as initiating a relationship, or dialogue, with an employer. Information will be shared in both directions. Questions will be asked and answered. This relationship will lead to a better understanding, on both sides, of the hiring equation and the potential fit between employer and you. Since it is a dialogue, you should receive a prompt response from the employer acknowledging receipt of your application. The more diligent the employer is about keeping you apprised of the hiring process, the better an indicator you have that you are dealing with a well organized and professional organization.

The important thing to remember is that this process should be taken seriously and with great care to avoid mistakes. In most cases, you will not get a second chance to apply - and small errors like spelling mistakes can ruin an otherwise great application.



Preparing for Online Questionnaires

One thing that employers love most about online applications is the opportunity to ask specific questions that are appropriate for each position they post. This enables them to collect and view more appropriate information about you quickly. Since the employer could ask you just about anything - within the bounds of employment legislation, of course - how can you prepare? The answer lies in the fundamentals of your job search: assess and understand your strengths and interests and be prepared to communicate these succinctly.

Employers will often conduct their first screening of applications by using the answers you provide to their questionnaire. If applicants must have a driver's license and a particular certification to qualify for a job, then it simply makes sense for employers to screen out those who do not have these. This means that in many cases, the importance of the résumé is going to diminish as other forms of interaction, such as questionnaires, increases. Your objective is to get "screened in," not out, so that the employer will proceed to the next stage of reviewing your cover letter and resume and then contact you for an interview. You will do this by providing truthful, accurate, and complete answers.

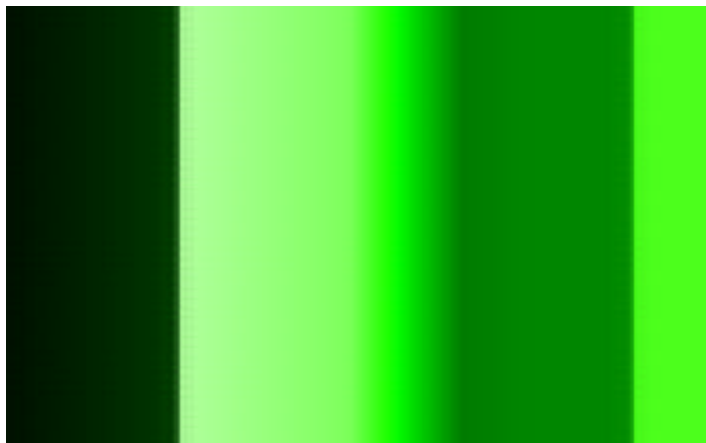
Many employers will ask just a few basic questions to help them evaluate potential candidates. These include questions such as:

- Do you have a driver's license?
- Are you legally eligible to accept work in Canada?
- When are you available to start working?
- Where are you willing to work?
- What is your Grade Point Average (GPA)?

Thankfully, these are simple questions for you to answer directly and truthfully. But employers are not limited to yes/no, numerical, or multiple-choice questions. They may also ask you open-ended questions, such as:

- Describe how your course work, class projects, and presentations prepare you for this position.
- Highlight your skills that are relevant to this position.
- Describe how your extra-curricular experience has prepared you for this position.

These are questions that you may have addressed in your cover letter. Therefore, the effort you invested in preparing an effective cover letter will prove very useful when responding to these questions. Do not be afraid to repeat information that is in your cover letter - focus on providing complete answers to the specific questions asked.



One big problem when answering open-ended questions is ensuring that your grammar and spelling is correct. An easy solution to this is for you to keep a window of your word processor open as well as the web browser you are answering the questions in (just as you did when composing your resume). When you come to questions that require written answers, you can draft them in the word processor and use the grammar and spell-check functions before copying the response onto the web page.

As employers move beyond these basic questions, they may ask an infinite variety of specific questions related to experiences, competencies, interests and so on. Here are a few examples:

- Indicate which of the following software programs you are proficient in (check list).
- Describe how you would build a strong customer relationship.
- When you are part of a work team, what role do you play?
- Please explain any periods in the past five years that you were neither employed nor in school.
- What is the minimum salary you would be willing to accept for this position?
- What are your mid- to long-term career goals?
- How do you respond to pressure? Deadlines?
- How structure do you like your work environment?

While all these questions may seem intimidating, the good news is that preparing for these questions is exactly like preparing for an interview. In fact, the more work that you invest in the whole job search process (and especially such fundamentals as self-assessment), the better prepared you will be for online questionnaires. Preparing written answers to potential interview questions and completing assessment tools will help provide you with the language you need to describe yourself in questionnaires.

There is no legitimate short cut to answering online questionnaires. The best way for you to success in the sophisticated new world of online job applications is to start with the fundamentals of job searching:

- Explore your skills, abilities, and interests and practice describing them in writing;
- Prepare answers to common interview questions and;
- Assemble "sound bites" or words that best convey your strongest assets.

Just as employers can use the web to their advantage in finding and selecting candidates, you can use it to draw attention to your greatest strengths and demonstrate your "fit" with the position you are seeking. Having done the preparatory work, all you need to do is answer the questions honestly and carefully.

More Tips on Online Applications!

Top Tip:

To prepare the best possible answers to online questions, review them in advance! To do this, you will need to "apply" for the job with a false identity. Use an alternate e-mail address and pretend name that does not reveal who you are. Better yet, use a name like "Test Name" and include some indication that this is not a real application so that the employer knows they can delete it. AS you proceed through the application, print off or copy the questions so that you can give your answers some thought before submitting your real application.

Applying Online Tips:

1. Keep track of your online applications by maintaining a list that includes:
 - The name of each company and position applied for
 - The date you applied
 - Information about responses you've received from employers
 - Which of your resumes you applied with
 - Your username and password for the employer's site (if applicable)
 - Other useful reference
2. Print copies of your completed application for future reference.
3. Spell check your answers to questions by drafting them in your word processor first (and then save them for future use).
4. Customize your resume and cover letter for each position.
5. Update your profile with each employer you submitted it to when important new information is available (i.e. degrees completed, scholarship won, new e-mail address, etc.) - employers may consider you for other positions months later.
6. Create "alerts" if the website you're applying at allows you to create e-mail alerts that will send you a notice of jobs that fit your profile. This will save you time searching that site in the future.

The Good News:

Online application systems enable employers to:

1. Do their hiring more quickly
2. Collect more accurate information about you
3. Communicate with you more easily and consistently
4. Find a better fit between their organization and prospective candidates

Although some employers don't yet take advantage of all this, for the most part this is all good news for you. Employers will be able to consider your application sooner, keep you posted on their progress, have a better understanding of your skills and abilities, and ensure that you will fit well with their organization.

A Note on Privacy:

Cover letters, resumes, and questionnaires encompass a tremendous amount of personal information.

Fortunately, there is plenty of legislation regulating the use of personal information by employers. You are also pretty safe with the major job sites. But nothing is foolproof. If you are concerned about the privacy of the information you are providing, consider the reputation of the employer and explore the ownership of the job sites you are using. You should be able to submit information to any of these organizations without receiving any unsolicited e-mails or other contact (except perhaps an e-mail confirming receipt of your application or registration).

In the end, if you don't trust a particular company with your personal information, you probably won't want to work there.

Formatting Tips:

Don't worry about making your resume visually appealing when applying online. It's not about being fancy, but more about the employer being able to decipher all of the information you've provided. Here are some tips:

- Use a common font such as Times New Roman or Arial
- Do not use bolding or italics within your document. Instead use all caps as your headings and sub headings
- Do not use bullets or other symbols. Use dashes instead.
- Apply online using a false name or call it "test" before sending it to ensure there are no hidden codes or strange symbols within the text.

