

Extended
3rd Edition

the **JOB SEARCH HANDBOOK**

The complete guide to finding your ideal job

The CaPS Job Search Handbook has been created by the McGill Career Planning Service (CaPS) to help you conduct an effective job search.

The Handbook can be used in conjunction with the CaPS Job Finding Club, CaPS workshops, in individual advising sessions or independently. The following chapters cover the entire job search process, from self-assessment to your first year on the job, and include important job search strategies, useful tips and information, exercises, additional resources and samples of C.V.s and other job search tools.

What is Inside the Handbook?

In addition to an introduction to CaPS and our services, the Handbook also contains an introduction to how we think about careers, and the following chapters:

- Chapter 1: Self-Assessment
- Chapter 2: Explore Employers & Occupations
- Chapter 3: Find Job Opportunities Through Networking
- Chapter 4: Write a C.V.
- Chapter 5: Write a Cover Letter
- Chapter 6: Prepare for the Interview
- Chapter 7: Job Offers and Your First Year on the Job

How to Use the Handbook

The Handbook was primarily designed to be worked through in order, from self-assessment to interviews to your first year on the job, but you can also “dip” into it and focus only on the specific areas you feel you need to work on. It is very user-friendly, with numerous exercises, tips and resources to guide you through every step of the job search process.

Enjoy the journey!

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The McGill Career Planning Service (CaPS) assists students in their career development and search for permanent, part-time, summer jobs and internships by providing workshops, individual advising, a comprehensive job posting service and an extensive Career Resource Centre.

We serve all full-time students, including graduates, up to one year after the end of their studies. In addition to the downtown CaPS office, we have a second office at Macdonald campus in scenic Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue.

Each year over 6,000 students and graduates look to us for assistance in their search for permanent, part-time and summer jobs and internships. We offer over 5,000 jobs and internship opportunities to students annually.

Our Vision

Our vision is to see all McGill students fully engaged in their career exploration in a manner that enhances their student life experience; helps them to see the relevance of their education to their career development; and enables them to achieve their career goals and make a positive contribution to society.

Our Mission

Our mission is to inspire McGill students in the exploration of their career options and to increase their employability through the development of lifelong career management skills by:

1. Creating an energized student-centred environment that makes career education accessible to all;
2. Leading the integration of career development and experiential education into McGill life and promoting their benefits to students;
3. Delivering high quality career and job search programs, resources and events; and
4. Developing a supportive network of McGill faculty and staff, as well as local, national, and international employers and alumni.

Our Services

Individual Appointments and Mock Interviews

Our qualified and experienced Career Advisors are available to assist you in your career choices, help you stay motivated and focused in your job search, provide tips on preparing for an interview, and look over your C.V., cover letter or graduate school application. CaPS is here to make your job search and career planning less stressful.

Career Development Workshops

Workshops are offered throughout the academic year on a wide range of topics, including Interviewing Techniques, C.V. Writing, Networking and Summer Jobs. They are designed to increase your employability and job search savvy. A complete schedule and detailed descriptions are available on our website.

C.V. and Advising Drop-In

During daily designated times, you can drop by the CaPS office to have your C.V. reviewed or to ask a quick career-related question. Drop-In times are listed on our website.

Career Resource Centre

The Resource Centre offers a wide array of print and electronic resources on career planning, job search, industry reports, scholarships, graduate programs and more. If you are not sure what to look for, or are having trouble finding anything, do not hesitate to ask our Resource Librarian.

The McGill Engineering Career Centre (MECC), the Management Career Centre, and the Macdonald Campus CaPS also have resource centres targeted to the programs they offer.

CaPS Website (www.mcgill.ca/caps)

Our website is the main gateway to services and information available at CaPS. It contains:

- A comprehensive overview of the job search process
- A listing of our services and programs
- Information for students applying to graduate studies or professional school
- Links to countless online resources
- Up-to-date announcements and events

myFuture (<http://caps.myfuture.mcgill.ca>)

myFuture is CaPS' job search and career tools suite. Using *myFuture* you can:

- Search hundreds of full-time, part-time and summer jobs/internships
- Register for CaPS events and workshops
- Browse career resources such as employment periodicals and weeklies
- View announcements and alerts
- View employer profiles

Career Fairs

Career Fairs are organized throughout the year in conjunction with student associations. They provide excellent opportunities for you to meet company representatives from a variety of sectors. Check our website for information on current and upcoming fairs.

On-Campus Recruitment

Every year companies from Canada, the U.S. and abroad, visit McGill to recruit students directly. More information on campus recruitment can be found on our website under the "Services and Programs" section.

Professionals on Campus

A wide range of professionals come to campus to participate in panel discussions, special events, and career cafés, and to deliver company info sessions. These networking and information events are a great resource for exploring your career options and increasing your knowledge and contacts in your field.

Specialized Programs

P.A.C.E. (Program for the Advancement of Career Exploration)

Unsure what to do with your degree after you graduate? P.A.C.E. is an interactive four-workshop series designed to help you explore career options and preferences, personal goals, values, interests and skills, as well as develop job search strategies. Each workshop is around 2.5 hours long, and the four workshops are spaced one week apart to allow time for vocational testing and occupational research. This program is a joint initiative of McGill Counselling Service and CaPS. Participants are required to pay a nominal fee to cover the cost of the vocational testing.

Mentor Program

Having a hard time meeting professionals in your field? The McGill Mentor Program connects students with working McGill alumni who can offer valuable advice about career alternatives, job requirements and career-life balance. To apply, please select your mentor by filling out the online application at www.caps.mcgill.ca/ci2

Peer Educator Program

Peer Educators – student volunteers – promote CaPS’ services throughout campus by organizing outreach activities, and also help students during C.V. drop-in sessions. To get involved, please email caps.cpe@mcgill.ca.

Job Finding Club

This two-week program for newly-graduated students is designed to teach job seekers the most effective means of finding work in the field in which they want to be employed. The group of around 10-15 students have each other for support as well as the assistance of a facilitator and the career advisors. The program is offered several times a year, usually during the spring and summer.

Contact Us

CaPS has offices at the Downtown and Macdonald campuses:

- **McGill Career Planning Service - Downtown Campus**
William and Mary Brown Student Services Building
3600 McTavish St., Suite 2200, Montreal, QC H3A 1Y2
Telephone: (514) 398-3304; Fax: (514) 398-1831
Email: careers.caps@mcgill.ca
Website: www.mcgill.ca/caps; *myFuture* <https://csm-caps.mcgill.ca/>
Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- **McGill Career Planning Service - Macdonald Campus**
Centennial Centre - Student Service Centre
21,111 Lakeshore Road Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, QC H9X 3V9
Telephone: (514) 398-7582; Fax: (514) 398-7610
Email: caps@macdonald.mcgill.ca
Website: www.mcgill.ca/caps
Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Below are faculty-based career centres on campus, which offer career services to students from those faculties:

- **Engineering Career Centre**
Frank Dawson Adams Building
3450 University Street, Room 22, Montreal, QC, H3A 2A7
Tel: (514) 398-8100; Fax: (514) 398-2169
Email: careers4engineers@mcgill.ca
Website: www.mecc.mcgill.ca
- **Management Career Services**
Desautels Faculty of Management
1001 Sherbrooke Street West, Room 650, Montreal, QC, H3A 1G5
Telephone: (514) 398-2996; Fax: (514) 398-2721
Email: careercentre.mgmt@mcgill.ca
Website: <http://www.mcgill.ca/desautels/career/>
- **Faculty of Law Career Development Office**
New Chancellor Day Hall
3644 Peel Street, Rm 416 Montreal, QC, H3A 1W9
Telephone: (514) 398-6159; Fax: (514) 398-2025
Email: placement.law@mcgill.ca
Website: <http://www.mcgill.ca/cdo/>
- **Faculty of Medicine Career Planning Office**
3655 Sir William Osler Drive, Montreal, QC, Canada H3G 1Y6
Telephone: (514) 398-5557; Fax: (514) 398-3595
Email: careeradvisor.med@mcgill.ca
Website: <http://www.medicine.mcgill.ca/careerplan/>

Planning your career is a little like planning for a backpacking adventure. Prior to your trip you would want to consult relevant guidebooks and travel websites, talk to friends and acquaintances who have visited before and ask for recommendations, and find out about current conditions in the areas you would like to visit. You would need to know about any visa or entry requirements, obtain the dates of any must-see events, and if necessary, visit a travel medical clinic prior to departure. You would search online and through travel agents for the best possible transportation and accommodation deals and book some of them before you leave. When travelling, advance research and preparation can go a long way towards an enjoyable and stress-free journey!

But you would also likely spend a lot of time daydreaming and considering the possibilities for places to visit, and asking yourself what you want to get out of the trip, what is really important to you. And once you are on your way you will likely revisit and subsequently change some of your preconceived plans as you meet fellow travelers, hear about new and interesting places to visit and gain greater knowledge of the kinds of experiences that truly matter to you. Your trip might turn out to be very similar to what you had in mind, or it could be vastly different, filled with sights and experiences you would never have been able to imagine beforehand.

It helps to think of your career as a journey, rather than a fixed destination. As with any journey, planning and researching is highly recommended: consulting career guides and websites, researching different occupations, talking with those who work in areas you are interested in and finding out about current labour market trends, job requirements and qualifications can all help you get a sense of your options and the parameters influencing your search.

But while this advance planning, research and thought will definitely make the process much smoother, it is also important to recognize that from where you stand right now, as a university student or recent grad, there is no way that you could possibly have all of the information you will need along the way. That will come over time as you grow and develop as a person, experience new things, meet new people and further refine your sense of who you are, what you value, what you are good at and what you enjoy doing. At various points in your career path you will likely stop to reflect on where you are going and what you want your next step to be. Career planning is a constant series of steps and decisions as you learn more about yourself and further refine your direction. Your career may turn out to be exactly what you had expected, or you may work in fields and occupations that do not even exist now!

A few additional points to keep in mind:

- If you do not currently know what you want to do with your *entire* life, that is ok. It is actually more than ok, it is quite normal at this point. The key is to be actively involved in your career journey, to think about and research possibilities, to try out different options and to learn about yourself in the process.
- Very few if any career decisions are irreversible; you can still change your mind along the way. If you make a decision that turns out not to be right for you, look at it as a learning experience, one more piece of information that will bring you closer to a job that better corresponds to who you are.
- Many people will have an opinion (solicited or not!) on your career direction, from family, friends and partners, to professors, advisors and even this guide. Seeking out the guidance, expertise and support of others along the way can be extremely helpful and

informative, but remember that you are the ultimate expert on yourself, and the responsibility for determining what you want and need out of a career, and the best path to follow, ultimately rests with you.

- When considering career options, give yourself permission to dream a little! There is a whole wide wonderful world out there to be a part of and contribute to – time spent imagining all of the possibilities is well invested, as career decision-making is not a solely logical/rational process. Your heart, your spirit and your passion matter hugely. It takes a great deal of courage and strength to honour your dreams and listen to what you really want out of your life and career. But why spend your time on anything else?

Starting the job search and career planning process can sometimes feel overwhelming so it helps to begin with the most important variable in the whole process – you!

Self-assessment refers to self-awareness and self-knowledge, particularly regarding your personal and professional values, your interests, achievements, skills and personality. It is challenging to conduct an effective job search without a clear understanding of who you are and an ability to articulate this knowledge to potential employers.

Take the time to do a thorough self-assessment. You can start by asking yourself the following questions:

- What wakes you up? What makes you feel alive?
- What matters to you? What are you interested in?
- What are you good at? What are you proud of?
- What makes you tick? What roles currently define you?
- What would you regret not trying? What kind of life do you want to create for yourself?

Even if you do not have all of the answers just yet, keep these questions in the back of your mind as you work through the self-assessment exercises in this chapter. These are designed to help you clarify and focus your self-knowledge as the first step to conducting an effective job search.

“What do you want to be when you grow up?!”

To get started with self-assessment, take a moment to reflect upon the different answers you have had to this question over time. In the space below, quickly jot down all of the things you wanted to be “when you grew up,” from as far back as you can first remember, right up until the present day. (Yes, even those embarrassing and seemingly irrelevant ideas from your kindergarten and grade school years!) Some of you may list just a handful of titles; others may run out of space.

| |
|--|
| <p>What do you want to be when you grow up?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
|--|

Even if your list at first appears somewhat “random,” look more deeply and you will likely find some common threads: values, themes and interests which have remained relatively consistent over time. Ask yourself if these still hold true for you today and keep them in mind as you complete the rest of the activities in this chapter.

Values

Values are the fundamental, deeply held beliefs and ideas we consider important. They shape how we view the world and what we consider right and wrong, good and bad. Some values are maintained throughout our lives, while others may change and become more or less important over time.

We sometimes take our values so much for granted that we are not even aware of them and may overlook them during the job search process. However, finding a position that fits with your values is absolutely intrinsic to your long term career satisfaction. Behaving in ways which are inconsistent with basic values may lead to frustration, disillusionment and even depression. A crucial part of self-assessment, then, involves becoming aware of one's values and seeking environments that are compatible with them.

The seeds of our values are often developed fairly early in life and shaped by family, friends, culture, education, religion etc. When you do the following exercise, make sure to focus on those values which are truly important to you, personally, not the ones which you think should be important to you or that others have told you should take priority.

Workplace Values Exercise

This is a 3 step exercise aimed at helping you to identify your workplace values. Be sure to be honest with yourself as no one is judging, nor scoring, your results.

Step 1

Rate the degree of importance that you place on each of the following workplace values using this scale:

- 1 = Very important to me
- 2 = Reasonably important to me
- 3 = Somewhat important to me
- 4 = Not important to me at all

I am interested in jobs and careers that include:

| | |
|--|--|
| Creating/building things | |
| Mental challenge/mentally demanding/problem-solving | |
| Physical challenge/physically demanding | |
| Opportunity for balance between work life and family life | |
| Flexibility in work structure | |
| Intellectual status, an acknowledged "expert" in a given field | |
| Order and structure | |
| High degree of competition | |
| Integrity and truth | |
| Rewarding loyalty and dependability | |
| Having self-respect and pride in work | |
| Stability and security | |
| Strong financial compensation and financial rewards | |
| Being recognized for quality of work in a visible/public way | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Having a positive impact on others and society | |
| Using creativity, imagination; being innovative | |
| Variety and a changing work pace | |
| Professional development and on-going learning and growth | |
| Friendships and warm working relationships | |
| Teamwork and work groups | |
| Glamour, prestige, respect, or a level of social status | |
| Predictable work projects | |
| Deadlines and time demand/pressure challenges | |
| Clear advancement tracks/opportunities for advancement | |
| Tranquility, comfort, and avoidance of pressure | |
| Dealing with the public/day-to-day contact with the public | |
| Using cutting edge or pioneering technologies or techniques | |
| Opportunities for leadership, power, influence | |
| Making decisions, having power to decide courses of action | |
| Respect, recognition, being valued | |
| Autonomy, independence, freedom | |
| Precision work with little tolerance for error | |
| Adventure and excitement | |
| Other: _____ | |
| Other: _____ | |

Step 2

Try to identify the 10 most important values to you from the list above and circle them.

Step 3

Narrow down your list of 10 to the 5 core values you hold most sacred - that you cannot live without in your job/workplace - and place them below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Your core group of workplace values can help determine your level of satisfaction with your job and your career path - and can be used to judge the level of “fit” with any future job, company or career change.

Ask yourself: How well do your core values fit with your current career path and goals? And what, if anything, are you going to do about these results?

Interests and Experiences

One of the best ways to determine your work-related preferences and interests is to try things out, to participate in part-time and summer work, internships, volunteering, extracurricular activities, etc.

On the following pages, list all activities you currently participate in, as well as those from the past five years. Once this is done, make a note of all of the aspects you liked and disliked about each activity in the appropriate column, as well as what you learned. Taking an inventory of your preferences in this way will provide you with a deeper understanding of your personality and will also help you to identify your skills.

| Interests and Experiences Inventory | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| School Activities (includes education, extra-curricular and field studies) | | | |
| Activity | Like | Dislike | Learned |
| i.e. Team Project | Group synergy Learning from each other | Some people were slower at doing their part of the work | To work with a diverse group To express my opinions clearly and compromise when necessary |
| i.e. Organizing Career Fair | Researching potential employers Persuading employers to participate Publicizing events Encouraging students to attend | Setting up the room (physical aspect) | About the job market, the world of work, and the structure and organization of the University To be tolerant and work well with others |
| | | | |
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Work Activities (includes paid work experience, volunteer work, professional memberships)

| Activity | Like | Dislike | Learned |
|------------------------------|---|----------------------|---|
| i.e. Sales Clerk | Dealing with people Creating displays | Performing inventory | To remain professional under pressure To deal with the general public |
| Volunteer at a distress line | Helping people through active listening and crisis intervention | Night shift | To listen carefully for important information To help people clarify their concerns To brainstorm solutions and alternate ideas |
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Leisure/Family Activities (includes sports, social clubs, hobbies)

| Activity | Like | Dislike | Learned |
|----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| i.e. Coaching senior hockey team | Building team Leading group Giving constructive feedback | Violence on the ice | How to motivate a group To break down complex skills in to their component parts |
| i.e. YMCA Hiking Club | Discovering new places Exercising Meeting new people | Schedule (waking up at 5am on the weekend) | To be open and flexible to new places and people |
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Once you have completed the tables, review your like and dislike columns and list your five most prominent entries in the spaces below:

| Likes | Dislikes |
|-------|----------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Skills

Skills are usually divided into two main types: hard skills and soft, or transferable, skills.

- **Hard skills** are concrete, and easily measured, and consist of factual knowledge primarily learned at school or during other formal training. Examples include technical expertise, computer skills, first aid knowledge, and laboratory techniques.
- **Soft skills** on the other hand are somewhat less tangible and can be acquired in various areas of one's life, from school, work, volunteering and extra-curricular interests and activities. They include interpersonal and communication skills, organization, problem-solving, leadership, creativity, initiative, professionalism etc. These skills are deemed transferable as they "come with you" from one experience or position to the next, and all employers, regardless of industry or field, look for a range of soft skills in potential employees.

The following inventory sheet will help you rate your current level of competency and comfort in a variety of skill areas.

Skills Inventory

Rate your current competency in each skill listed below on a scale from 1 to 5 (5 being the highest skill level). Also, identify those skills you would need to develop to reach your career goal.

Tip

Identifying our own skill set can be a challenging endeavour. You may want to ask trusted family and friends for feedback on what they see as your particular strengths.

| Organizational Skills | Self-rating (1 to 5) | Want to develop (yes, no, maybe)? |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Organizing people, events, things | | |
| Classifying information | | |
| Coordinating resources | | |
| Streamlining procedures | | |
| Researching, gathering information | | |
| Separating important from unimportant | | |
| Determining sequences of tasks | | |
| Setting priorities | | |
| Total: | ____/40 = ____% | |

| Leadership Skills | Self-rating (1 to 5) | Want to develop (yes, no, maybe)? |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Promoting change | | |
| Taking risks | | |
| Engendering trust | | |
| Leading groups | | |
| Building a team | | |
| Delegating authority | | |
| Overseeing work projects | | |
| Total: | ____/35 = ____% | |

| Problem Solving Skills | Self-rating (1 to 5) | Want to develop (yes, no, maybe)? |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Evaluating alternatives | | |
| Clarifying problems | | |
| Generating solutions | | |
| Testing ideas | | |
| Determining outcomes, consequences | | |
| Tracing problems to sources | | |
| Total: | ____/30 = ____% | |

| Communication Skills | Self-rating (1 to 5) | Want to develop (yes, no, maybe)? |
|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Verbal | | |
| Conversing with individuals | | |
| Exchanging ideas with groups | | |

| Communication Skills | Self-rating (1 to 5) | Want to develop (yes, no, maybe)? |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Making presentations | | |
| Listening | | |
| Debating | | |
| Written | | |
| Writing correspondence | | |
| Writing business materials | | |
| Writing research papers | | |
| Teaching | | |
| Demonstrating ideas through examples | | |
| Instructing/tutoring individuals | | |
| Creating effective learning environments | | |
| Total: | ____/55 = ____% | |

| Initiative | Self-rating (1 to 5) | Want to develop (yes, no, maybe)? |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Initiating new ideas/projects | | |
| Making the first move in relationships | | |
| Finding new solutions | | |
| Total: | ____/15 = ____% | |

| Technical Skills | Self-rating (1 to 5) | Want to develop (yes, no, maybe)? |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Computer skills | | |
| Laboratory skills / Conducting experiments | | |
| Managing budgets, money | | |
| Maintaining /operating equipment | | |
| Controlling inventory | | |
| Total: | ____/25 = ____% | |

| Interpersonal Skills | Self-rating (1 to 5) | Want to develop (yes, no, maybe)? |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Managing/resolving conflicts | | |
| Negotiating | | |
| Collaborating | | |
| Persuading, recruiting, selling | | |
| Treating, healing others | | |
| Giving constructive feedback | | |
| Coaching, mentoring | | |
| Giving practical advice | | |
| Developing rapport | | |

| Interpersonal Skills | Self-rating (1 to 5) | Want to develop (yes, no, maybe)? |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Demonstrating empathy | | |
| Understanding people's motivations | | |
| Total: | <u> </u> / 55 = <u> </u> % | |

| Creative Skills | Self-rating (1 to 5) | Want to develop (yes, no, maybe)? |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Creating new ideas, images | | |
| Inventing new products | | |
| Designing projects/systems | | |
| Designing learning materials | | |
| Improvising with existing resources | | |
| Finding new solutions | | |
| Composing music | | |
| Playing musical instruments | | |
| Writing novels, short stories, plays, poems | | |
| Drawing, painting, sculpting | | |
| Acting, dancing | | |
| Finishing, restoring | | |
| Total: | <u> </u> / 60 = <u> </u> % | |

Your 5 Top Skills:

_____, _____, _____,
 _____, and _____.

Skills Exercise

List concrete situations where you demonstrated the skills listed above.

| Situations | Skills demonstrated |
|---|---|
| Proposed and coordinated bake-a-thon for Missing Children's Network. Publicized event through newspapers and radio. | Initiative, organization, leadership, communication |
| As a new camp counsellor, proposed and led weekly meetings with the crew to discuss particular issues faced by the campers. | Leadership, initiative, problem-solving, teamwork |
| | |

| Situations | Skills demonstrated |
|------------|---------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Tip

Employers use your past performance as an indication of your likely future performance, so they are very interested in hearing about your successes and accomplishments.

Achievements

What are you proud of? Can you think of occasions where you really felt like you accomplished something?

Achievements are actions which improve a situation. They illustrate your abilities and are indicative of your potential for taking initiative and solving problems. The following activities will help you to identify your achievements and think about how you might communicate them to prospective employers.

The questions below can be used to help trigger your memory of past achievements:

- Did you receive some form of recognition (award, title, trophy, etc.)?
- Did you intervene in a situation that could have become a serious problem had you not detected it?
- Did you make a suggestion that was adopted by your classmates, team or coworkers?
- Did you accomplish a task using fewer resources than usual?
- Did you satisfy a particularly demanding client?
- Did you initiate something?
- Have you trained or taught people?
- Did you participate in a project where your influence and ideas were largely responsible for its success?

Once you have identified some key achievements, use the S.T.A.R. formula to write them out clearly and concisely:

Situation

- Provide a brief overview of the situation.

Task

- Outline the specific task you were assigned to do, responsibility you undertook or problem you faced.

Action

- Explain the action you took and why, step by step.

Result

- Describe the positive result or outcome of your actions using numbers or percentages if possible.

S.T.A.R. Example

Situation

- The window display at the bakery where I worked last summer was not very creative and was not changed very often.

Task

- After getting permission from the manager, I took it upon myself to change the display every week, featuring the special of the week.

Action

- I made a backdrop, put some baskets in the display and filled them with bread and buns. I put the cakes on a slant so that the customer would have a better view of them. I changed the display weekly in order to feature the weekly special.

Result

- Many customers commented on the attractive display and sales of the weekly special increased by 20%.

Use the S.T.A.R. formula and the chart below to write out four of your achievements. These will come in handy when composing your C.V. and cover letters, and when preparing for interviews.

S(ituation): _____

T(ask): _____

A(ction): _____

R(esult): _____

S(ituation): _____

T(ask): _____

A(ction): _____

R(esult): _____

| |
|---------------------------|
| S(ituation): _____ |
| _____ |
| T(ask): _____ |
| _____ |
| A(ction): _____ |
| _____ |
| R(esult): _____ |
| _____ |

| |
|---------------------------|
| S(ituation): _____ |
| _____ |
| T(ask): _____ |
| _____ |
| A(ction): _____ |
| _____ |
| R(esult): _____ |
| _____ |

People Environment

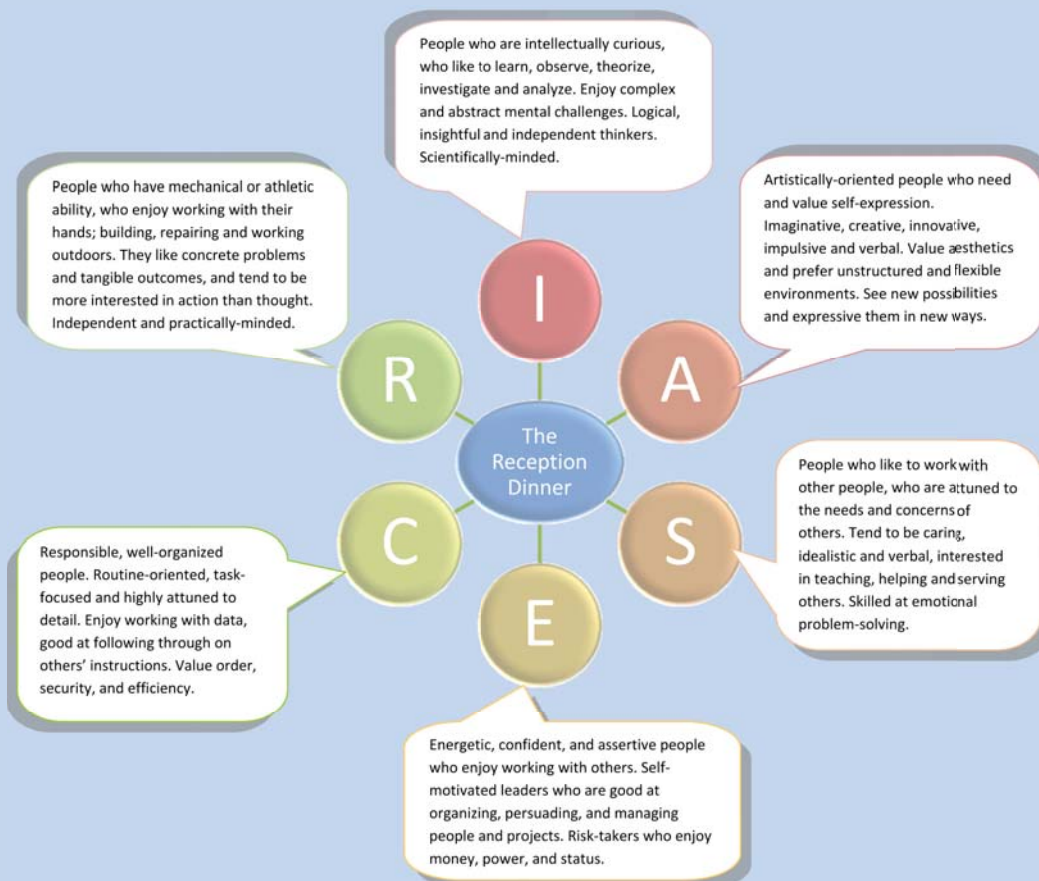
A job is not just about what you do; it is also about who you work with. Each workplace has an environment and culture of its own and you will find some are a better fit for you than others. The following exercise will help you determine which kind of people you enjoy being around.

Scenario: Reception Dinner

You have been invited to attend a reception dinner this evening where, for some reason, people of similar interests have clustered together in different areas of the room (see diagram). Putting aside any questions of shyness or social abilities, which group would you instinctively be drawn to first, knowing that these might be the people you spend the entire event with? Write the letter for that group here: _____

After the appetizers have been served, your entire table politely excuses themselves to attend another event. Of the remaining groups, which would you be drawn to next? Write the letter here: _____

After the main course, the entire table again gets up to leave. Where would you sit now?



* Adapted from Bolles, Richard N. What Color is Your Parachute? California: Ten Speed Press, 2008, pp. 308-311.

The six groups described above are based on work done by J.L. Holland (1997), who classifies people and environments into six main types:

R – Realistic
S – Social

I – Investigative
E – Enterprising

A – Artistic
C – Conventional

Referring to Holland's typology, list the three groups of people you would most enjoy working with (for example, Realistic, Enterprising and Conventional):

Working Conditions

Since we spend more than one third of our life at work, it is important to have working conditions which motivate and satisfy us. Although we have to show some flexibility, there are certain working conditions that are absolutely essential for each of us to be happy and productive.

The following list will help identify and rank various working conditions. Use the following scale of -3 to +3.

| | |
|----|--|
| 3 | This is an essential component of any job I accept. |
| 2 | I would like this to be a component of any job I accept, but it is not absolutely essential. |
| 1 | This is preferable, but I can live without it. |
| -1 | Not very important, but I could live with it. |
| -2 | I would not like this to be a component of any job I accept. |
| -3 | This must not be a component of any job I accept. |

Working Conditions Inventory

Travel

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| | Overnight travel |
| | Extended travel |
| | Once or twice a month |
| | Once or twice a year |

Work Environment

| | |
|--|---|
| | Indoor |
| | Outdoors |
| | Fast pace environment (high pressure) |
| | Slow pace environment (little pressure) |
| | Modern facilities and equipment |
| | Work safety |
| | First aid resource |
| | Formal dress code |
| | Informal dress code |
| | Uniform |
| | Own office versus sharing or having a cubicle |
| | Office with a window versus an office without |

Size and Type of Organization

| | |
|--|------------|
| | Local |
| | Provincial |

Size and Type of Organization (continued)

| |
|--|
| National |
| International |
| Canadian subsidiary of American parent |
| Profit-oriented |
| Non-profit |
| Product-oriented |
| Service-oriented |
| Less than 500 employees |
| Between 500 and 5000 employees |
| More than 5000 employees |
| Unionized environment |

Position Characteristics

| |
|---|
| Opportunity for advancement |
| Challenge (skills tested in a variety of situations) |
| Opportunity to learn new things |
| Opportunity to take initiative |
| Work alone |
| Work with others |
| Being part of a small team |
| Being part of a large team |
| Prestige (job title, special privileges, etc.) |
| Having authority |
| Responsible for own work |
| Exposure (to clients, customers, outside agencies, media) |
| See a project through from start to finish |
| Contribute to a larger project completed by others |
| Variety of tasks |
| Project-oriented work |
| Following established procedures |
| Solve problems creatively |
| High level of change |

Geographic Location

| |
|--|
| Working in a particular city |
| Working within Quebec |
| Working within Canada |
| Working internationally |
| Spending less than half hour commuting from home |
| Spending less than one hour commuting from home |
| Spending less than two hours commuting from home |

| Type of Supervision | |
|---------------------|---|
| | Work closely monitored |
| | Work autonomously with weekly or monthly program checks |
| | Authoritative boss |
| | Democratic boss |
| | Casual boss |
| | Formal boss |
| | Set own schedule |

| Hours Worked | |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| | Regular working hours |
| | Flexible working hours |
| | Shift work |
| | Paid overtime |
| | Unpaid overtime |
| | Company scheduled vacation |
| | Employee scheduled vacation |
| | Opportunity to work from home |

| Salary and Benefits | |
|---------------------|--|
| | Financial security |
| | Health insurance |
| | Dental insurance |
| | Life insurance |
| | Salary insurance |
| | Pension plan |
| | Child care |
| | Financial support for continuing education |
| | Company car |
| | Wellness program |
| | Employee assistance program |

Look at your completed list of working conditions and indicate below your four most and least desirable working conditions.

| Most desirable working conditions | Least desirable working conditions |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Summary: Ideal Job Profile

Using the answers you provided in the previous exercises, fill in the blanks below to come up with an ideal job profile which summarizes all of your self-assessment work.

Values

The top five values I cannot live without in the workplace are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Interests

My most predominant likes and dislikes:

Likes

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Dislikes

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Skills

The top five skills I would like to use in the workplace:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

People Environment

I would prefer to work with people who are:

1. _____
2. _____

Working Conditions

Working conditions which I deem essential are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Career Objective(s)

Now that you have completed your self-assessment, you likely have a better idea of what sort of work you would like to do and in what areas. Do you want to work as an assistant editor in book publishing in Toronto? As a management trainee position in the international banking industry or a researcher in biochemistry in a university? Use these ideas to compose your career objective(s). Pay special attention to your ideal job profile, which summarizes those elements of a job that are the most important to you. Since you are still in the exploration phase, your career objective can be as general or as specific as you want to make it.

Here are examples of specific career objectives:

Specific Career Objectives

- A management trainee position in the international banking industry
- An assistant editor position in the children's book publishing industry
- A biotechnology research position in a university laboratory

If you are open to different possibilities, it may be better to have a general career objective. Here are a few examples of general career objectives:

General Career Objectives

- A junior level position in the financial services industry
- An editing position in the publishing industry
- A research position in a laboratory

Review the self-assessment exercises that you completed, and write down your own career objectives below.

My Career Objective(s)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Chapter 2

Explore Employers & Occupations

Once you have a solid sense of yourself, of who you are and what you are looking for in a career, the next step is to get a handle on how the world of work operates and to research your desired field in detail. Before you launch your job search, you need to know what occupations, employers and industries are out there and which ones you are most interested in. Thorough research will help you target your applications to specific employers and show how you can contribute to a particular organization or company, thereby increasing your chances of success.

Take the time to do your research in order to:

- Develop a list of potential employers;
- Discover what opportunities exist which suit your qualifications and interests;
- Know what skills and qualities the employer is looking for in potential employees;
- Acquire more details about the companies and positions in order to produce more targeted applications;
- Prepare for a possible interview; and
- Garner insight into your potential happiness and satisfaction in the job.

If you are a graduate of a general program such as History, English, Biology or Anthropology, your choice of potential occupations is vast. Thus, your research will focus on both *what* you would like to do and *where* you would like to do it.

If you come from a more career-oriented program such as Nursing, Management, Education or Engineering, your choice of occupation is more straightforward so you will be focusing your research on *where* you want to pursue your career.

The World of Work

The following diagram provides an introduction to the “world of work” and it illustrates aspects you need to know to help you with your research. The “World of Work” can be organized into five categories:

- Type of Organization
- Industry Sector
- Mission (or purpose) of the Organization
- Departments
- Job Titles

As you study the diagram, think back to your Career Objective(s) from Chapter 1. See if you can further refine your career objective by selecting options from each category that you are already sure about. You can start at any point on the diagram

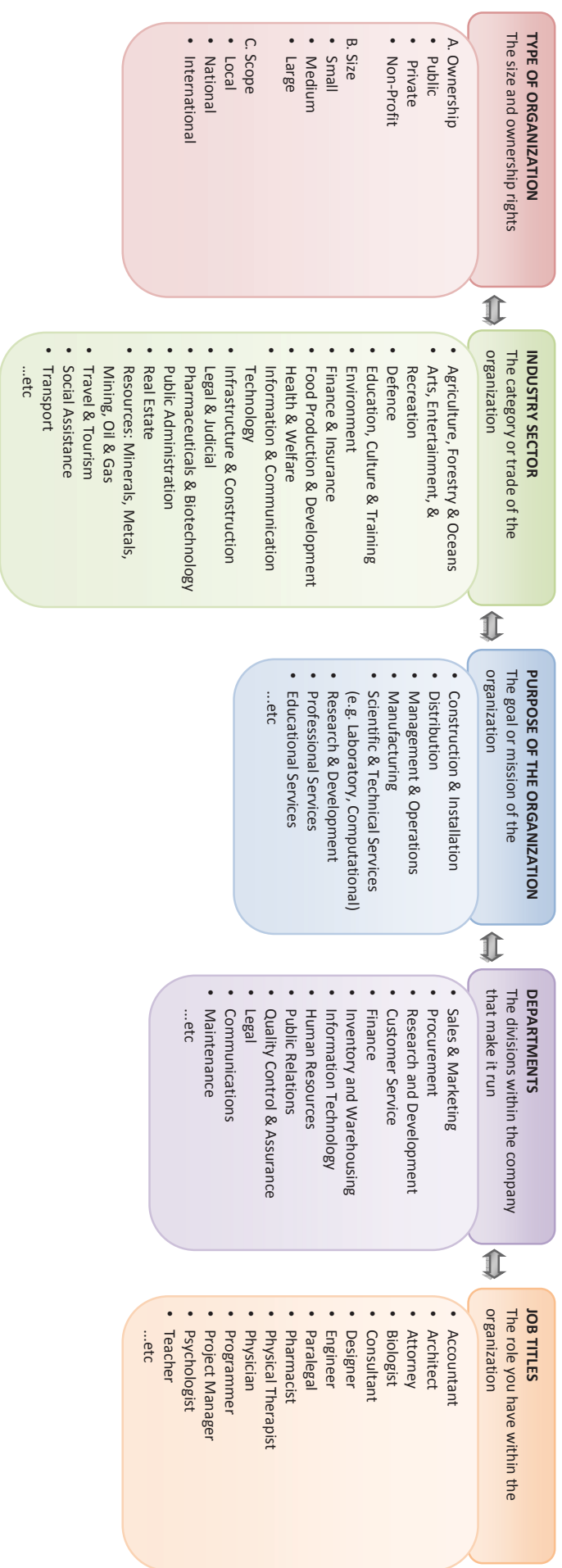
You may already know which options from each category interest you or you may need more information about some areas. Use these findings to guide your research efforts.

For example, you might start with the Department category because you know you want to work in Sales and Marketing as a Brand Manager. You know you are interested in large, private, organizations with international scope, but you are not yet sure on the industry sector you would like to work in, and do not have a strong preference regarding the mission of the organization. You would therefore want to focus most of your energy on investigating different industries of interest to help you in your job search.

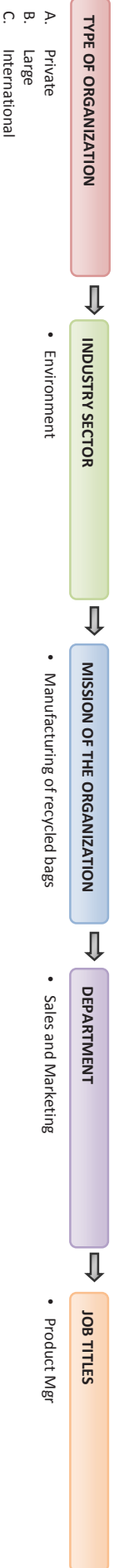
THE WORLD OF WORK

Understanding the world of work, and where you fit in, is a challenge for many graduating students. Up to now, most students only know what they have been exposed to and cannot imagine, or comprehend, what else is 'out there'. The following diagram provides an overview of how the 'world of work' works. The various aspects of the world of work are classified into 5 categories.

In order to identify where in the world of work you want to be, you should select an option from each category. It does not matter which one you start with, nor if you cannot select one for every category, but keep in mind: the better you refine where you want to work, the easier your job search will be. Your choices will depend on your interests, values, skills, and future goals.



EXAMPLE OF ONE STUDENT'S CHOICES



Where to Find Information

CaPS Resource Centre

The CaPS Resource Centre contains over 3,000 items spanning the career exploration process, which can help you research occupations, industries and employers.

For general guides to occupations, section 4.101 contains books that survey a variety of careers. Check out *Best Jobs for the 21st Century*, *100 Fastest-Growing Careers: Your Complete Guidebook to Major Jobs with the Most Growth and Openings*, *150 Best Recession-Proof Jobs*, *Guide to Your Career* and *Top 100 Careers for College Graduates*.

The *Careers for...* and *Great Jobs for...* series in sections 4.12 and 4.13, respectively, present possible careers according to personality type and major. These are great quick reads to get you started.

Sections 4.2 through 4.9 hold print resources for careers in the liberal arts and communications; social sciences; education and sports; engineering, architecture and urban planning; business, economics and finance; law, government and military; health; and the natural sciences. In these sections you will also find books from the *Opportunities in...* series, which describe potential career paths within a specific field.

Consult our directories to identify potential employers and get their contact information. Section 5.3 holds Québec, Canadian and U.S. directories in industries ranging from pharmaceuticals to theatre. Popular titles include the *Canadian Environmental Directory*, *The Canadian Hidden Job Market Directory*, the *Québec dans le monde* series, *Directory of Community Services of Greater Montreal*, *Contact Toronto* and *Best Entry-Level Jobs*.

Finally, CaPS has print and digital weeklies available through myFuture and in the Resource Centre for job postings in various sectors around the world. These include:

- *Artsboard*
- *Canada Employment Weekly*
- *Current Jobs in the Liberal Arts*
- *International Career Employment Weekly*
- *The International Educator*

Online Resources

Researching Occupations

- **National Occupational Classification (NOC) code**
<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2006/OccupationIndex.aspx>
Brief job descriptions and alternate job titles with cross-references. Identify the occupational code to search other career exploration websites, such as Working in Canada and Career Cruising.
- **Working in Canada**
<http://www.workingincanada.gc.ca/>
Detailed and Canada-specific occupational information, including local salary information, job demand, skills requirements, job opportunities and more.

Tip

CaPS employs a full-time Career Resource Consultant, who will be pleased to help you research employers and industry trends.

- **Career Cruising**
<http://www.careercruising.com/Default.aspx>
 Interactive career exploration site. Gives in-depth occupational profiles, including interviews with professionals. Take the Career Matchmaker test to find suitable career paths.
 *See the CaPS front desk for username and password information.
- **Service Canada: Labour Market Information**
<http://www.labourmarketinformation.ca/>
 Excellent resource for job descriptions, employment prospects, wages, potential employers, and industrial profiles.
- **Emploi Québec: Labour Market Information**
http://imt.emploiuebec.net/mtg/inter/noncache/contenu/asp/mtg941_accueil_angl_01.asp
 Comprehensive site that includes occupational descriptions, an employer directory, study and training programs, and industry descriptions of Quebec.

Researching Industries and Employers

- **Statistics Canada: North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code**
<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/subjects-sujets/standard-norme/naics-scian/2007/list-liste-eng.htm>
 Gives brief industry descriptions. Identify the industrial code to search specialized websites and databases such as Industry Canada.
- **Industry Canada – Information by Industry Sector**
http://www.ic.gc.ca/epic/site/ic1.nsf/en/h_00066e.html
 Offers resources related to industry sectors. Search for industry profiles by sector or category. Type of information available varies with each sector.
- **Vault Career Guides (McGill Network)**
<http://www.library.mcgill.ca/cdroms/Restricted/vault.html>
 Popular series of career guidebooks available for download in PDF format. Over 70 titles available, including: CV, interview, internship, industry and top employers.
- **Howard Ross Library of Management – Subject Guides (McGill Network)**
<http://www.mcgill.ca/library/library-findinfo/subjects/management/>
 Listing of business databases useful for researching companies and industries.
- **Scott's Directory (McGill Network)**
<http://www.scottsinfo.com/scottshome/default.aspx>
 Profiles of over 150,000 Canadian companies. Searchable by a variety of criteria including NAICS code, location, number of employees, etc. Gives detailed contact information, including the names of key persons.
- **Factiva (McGill Network)**
<http://global.factiva.com/sb/default.aspx?lnep=hp>
 Source for news articles, news wires, company press releases and industry reports.
- **Marketline (McGill Network)**
<http://www.marketlineinfo.com/library/Default.aspx>
 Search profiles on specific international markets. Also includes news and commentary.

- **Corporate Affiliations (McGill Network)**
<http://www.corporateaffiliations.com/subscriber/quickSearch.asp>
 'Who owns whom'. The 'inquire' search allows for natural language queries.
- **Yahoo! Finance**
<http://finance.yahoo.com/news/category-earnings>
 Offers current information on specific companies and industries.
- **Google Directory**
<http://directory.google.com/>
 Free resource. Can browse by category or search. Use category 'Regional' to narrow down potential employers in a certain area and industry.

Additional Research and Job Search Resources

- **myFuture**
<https://csm-caps.mcgill.ca/students/>
 CaPS' online career centre. Search for jobs and internships; upload documents and apply for jobs directly through the site; register for workshops and career fairs; and access library resources.
- **The Bridge**
<https://www.myinterfase.com/nec/student/>
 Music job listings. *See CaPS front desk for username and password information.
- **Going Global (McGill Network)**
<http://online.goingglobal.com/default.aspx>
 International job and internship listing updated daily. Includes employer directory, country guides and U.S. city guides.
- **Devex – International Development Premium Job Board (McGill Network)**
<http://www.devex.com/en/welcome/mcgill>
 International development jobs and network site.
- **Eluta - Career Directory Online**
<http://www.eluta.ca/search-new-grad>
 Search jobs in Canada; includes a search option for entry-level jobs for recent graduates.
- **Emploi Québec Online Placement**
<http://placement.emploiuebec.net/mbe/login/portail/portcherc.asp?CL=english>
 Post your CV and search for jobs. All student jobs with the provincial government are posted here.
- **Idealist.org**
<http://www.idealists.org/>
 Job, internship and volunteer opportunities in the non-profit sector. Includes an employer directory, handbooks for download, and other resources.
- **Commission des normes du travail Québec: Labour Standards**
<http://www.cnt.gouv.qc.ca/en/home/index.html>
 Information on standards for wages, leaves and absences, end of employment and other points all workers should be familiar with.

*For more information, contact caps.library@mcgill.ca or call 514-398-3304 x00950. You can view our entire catalogue at <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/services/resource-centre/catalogue/>.

CaPS Website (www.mcgill.ca/caps)

The “Explore Careers” section of the CaPS website (www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/job-search/explore/) contains links to a number of resources that can help you research industries, occupations or employers of interest, including:

- **What can I do with my major?**
A compilation of handouts, books and websites to assist you in thinking about what you can do with your major.

Company Websites

Most companies and organizations now offer a wealth of information on their websites and you are expected to consult them in depth.

Professional or Trade Associations

You may wish to consult the literature of professional organizations, business councils and other relevant websites to find out about salary scales, working conditions and current market trends.

To identify specific associations, consult the *Associations Canada* available on reserve at CaPS. Handouts through the “What can I do with my major?” feature on the CaPS website (see above) also list relevant professional associations.

- **Associations Canada Répertoire des associations du Canada (VPN is required)**
<http://circ.greyhouse.ca/search/quicksearch?clear=1&customer=mcgi1001&database=AS>
Canadian organizations and international groups including industry, commercial and professional associations, registered charities, special interest and common interest organizations.

Information Interviews

Another excellent way to gather information is to conduct information interviews with individuals currently working in the sector, organization, or position of interest. Information interviews provide you with a chance to informally ask questions about the work and market conditions in a particular field, and are also a great way to develop contacts in your field of interest. For details on how to prepare for an information interview, see Chapter 3.

Tip

Many professional associations have discounted memberships for students and new graduates. You may wish to consider joining one.

McGill Mentor Program

The McGill Mentor Program connects students with working McGill alumni who can offer valuable advice about career alternatives, job requirements and career-life balance. It is also an excellent tool for getting more information about a particular industry or organization.

You can find out more information about the Mentor Program and fill out an application online at <http://caps.mcgill.ca/ci2/>

Get to Know Occupations, Industries, and Employers

Research the Occupation/Position

There are many aspects to consider when targeting particular occupations. Evaluate how they match your values, experiences, achievements and interests, as identified by your self-assessment, by considering factors such as duties and responsibilities, working conditions, opportunities for advancement and salary ranges. By answering the following questions, you will be better able to determine whether an occupation/position corresponds to your Ideal Job Profile.

- What are the duties and responsibilities?
- What are the educational and training requirements?
- What kinds of skills and experience are needed?
- What are the primary characteristics and values of people working in the occupation/position?
- Who would be my clients in this position (business people, students, artists etc.)?
- Does the salary range and benefits correspond to my needs and lifestyle goals?
- What are the working conditions (hours of work, amount of travel etc.)?
- What opportunities are there for advancement and career mobility?
- Is there a professional association connected with this occupation?
- What are the present and future prospects for this occupation/position?
- Are there related occupations/positions I should be exploring?

Exercise

List three occupations of interest below and then research them using the Occupation Search Form at the end of the chapter:

| | |
|----|-------|
| 1. | _____ |
| 2. | _____ |
| 3. | _____ |

Research the Industry

You might be more interested in working in a particular field rather than for a specific employer or organization. Researching the industry will help you to identify potential employers and provide you with important background information so you can speak knowledgeably about the industry and the company's area(s) of business. Consider the following questions when researching an industry.

- What are the career prospects in this sector?
- What are the key issues and future trends for the industry?
- What characteristics or qualities do people need in order to succeed in this industry?
- What are the different occupations that make up the industry?
- Which companies, organizations, and professional or trade associations are related to the industry?

Exercise

Name two industries which you are particularly interested in and find out more about them by using the Industry Search Form at the end of the chapter:

| | | | |
|----|-------|----|-------|
| 1. | _____ | 2. | _____ |
|----|-------|----|-------|

Research the Employer/Organization

Researching your target employer before applying will help you become more familiar with the organization, its values and its services. Keep the following questions in mind in order to determine if the goals and values of a prospective employer fit with your own and if you would be happy working there.

- What type of organization is it (public, private, non-profit etc.)?
- What are the organization's goals and values?
- What are the major products and services provided by the organization? Who are its clients?
- Who are the organization's major competitors?
- What positions are available?
- How is the organization structured?
- Where is it located (including subsidiaries and branches)?
- What kind of reputation does the organization have? For what is it best known?
- What is the history of the organization?
- What are the organization's community interests and involvement?

Exercise

Target five employers who hire people with your skills and interests. List them below, then research them thoroughly and fill in the Employer Search Form at the end of the chapter.

- | | | | |
|----|-------|----|-------|
| 1. | _____ | 2. | _____ |
| 3. | _____ | 4. | _____ |
| 5. | _____ | | |

Occupation Search Form

Occupation title: _____

Duties and responsibilities: _____

Educational and training requirements: _____

Skills and experience required: _____

Characteristics and values of people working in this field: _____

Clients (business people, students, artists etc.): _____

Salary range and benefits: _____

Working conditions (hours of work, amount of travel etc.): _____

Advancement opportunities and career mobility: _____

Professional associations (optional or compulsory): _____

Present and future prospects for this occupation: _____

Related occupations: _____

Employer Search Form

Employer name: _____

Contact name: _____

Website: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone number: _____

Address: _____

Type of organization (public, private, non-profit etc.): _____

Goals and values: _____

Major products and services: _____

Clients: _____

Major competitors: _____

Positions available: _____

Organizational structure: _____

Number of employees: _____

Location including subsidiaries and branches: _____

Reputation: _____

History: _____

Community interests and involvement: _____

Industry Search Form

Industry: _____

Career prospects: _____

Key issues and future trends: _____

Characteristics of people working in the industry: _____

Occupations which make up the industry: _____

Five organizations in this industry:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Professional or trade association(s): _____

Career Objective(s)

Following your research, you will likely find that your career objective has become more specific and informed. If this is the case, write your new career objective below and keep it in mind as you work through the following chapters.

My Career Objective(s) Revisited

Additional Resources on Exploring Employers & Occupations

For the complete Resource Centre catalogue and regularly updated lists of relevant websites, please visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/services/resource-centre/catalogue/>

For a regularly updated list of relevant websites on exploring employers and occupations, please visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/job-search/employers/>

Depending on the sector, at least 75%, and as high as 95% of all available jobs are never publicly advertised. These jobs are located in what is called the “hidden job market” and are primarily accessed through networking.

This chapter explains the importance of networking and how to effectively integrate networking techniques into your job search in order to access this hidden job market. It is divided into three steps:

1. Understand the Hidden Job Market
2. Get Comfortable with Networking: Concrete Steps to Expand Your Network
3. Find Job Opportunities Through Information Interviews

It also includes additional information and tips on:

- Cold Calling and Telephone Etiquette
- Preparing Networking Tools

Understand the Hidden Job Market

Scenario: Imagine that you have recently moved to a new city/neighbourhood and you are in desperate need of a haircut. Or maybe you are just unhappy with your current hairdresser and are looking for a change. How would you go about finding a good salon and stylist?

You *could* reach for the nearest Yellow Pages and scan the ads, or maybe you *could* stop in at a few of the salons in your neighbourhood. But most of us will likely turn first to friends, family, coworkers and acquaintances to ask if they can recommend anyone good. Despite, or maybe because of, the proliferation of advertising, there is something very reassuring about a personal recommendation or referral. And it does not even seem to matter if the person giving the information is not a very close friend. If your best friend’s aunt’s neighbour just got a great haircut, you will likely happily call up that same salon when you need a comparable service, even if you have never actually met the neighbour in question.

This same scenario plays itself out over and over again in other areas of daily life: when you are wondering where to go for dinner or what movie to watch this weekend, or when you need the services of a dentist, financial planner, plumber, counsellor, or piano teacher. But for some reason, when looking for a job, we often forget this principle and instead of reaching out to our network we hole ourselves up at our computers, endlessly (and often fruitlessly) searching the online job listings and classified ads - a strategy which pays off for only a very small percentage of job seekers.

How do employers find and connect with potential employees?

For most employers, publicly advertising a job is a strategy of last resort, used only when other, more informal methods of hiring, have failed to pay off. Put yourself in the shoes of a typical employer and imagine you are the manager of a small communications company. One of your team of four technical writers has just told you they are moving to Toronto next month. As manager this is not positive news: you are a busy person and you do not have a lot of time and energy to spend finding someone new, but you also cannot afford to leave the position unfilled. What then would be the cheapest, most efficient, painless and ultimately most successful way

Tip

The CaPS Resource Centre contains many directories and guides to help you access the hidden job market and research potential employers, including *The Canadian Hidden Job Market Directory*.

for you to fill this vacant position?

You could post an ad online, but this will cost you valuable time and money and you will have to expend a great deal of energy writing and gaining consensus on the job description and then sifting through hundreds of C.V.'s, many from blatantly unqualified applicants. Conversely, it will cost you only a few seconds to send an email to your team asking them to spread the word and recommend any prospective candidates they know of. The other members of your technical writing team are perfectly positioned to do this as they know what the job requires and they almost certainly know other technical writers from previous jobs or school or professional development events. Members of your team will also be sure to recommend people they think would fit in with the company. In the meantime you will also mention the open position to friends, family, acquaintances, and others in your network. Additionally, you may take a brief look at the pile of C.V.'s you have received from job seekers over the past few months, people who have sought out the company proactively, and maybe give a few of them a call. You will likely only post the position publicly several weeks or even months later if you have been unable to find someone suitable through your network.

So, if the above scenario is indicative of how the majority of employers prefer to operate, what does this mean for you as a job seeker? Read on to find out...

Get Comfortable with Networking

Networking is about people helping people; about actively creating and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with others, particularly those in your fields of interest. As a general rule, the larger your network, the more effective your job search is likely to be. By expanding your network you increase your chances of hearing about job openings like the technical writing position described above *before* the manager decides to use a more formal, public method of recruitment.

Commonly Cited Barriers to Effective Networking

Tip

For networking tips for introverts, consult the following article at: <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/publications/scoop/grads/2008-2009/articles/#art2>.

Tip

Attitude is everything here. Neediness, selfishness and desperation repel others; kindness, generosity and genuine interest in people attract.

- **Sheer Terror! I am much too shy/introverted to do this!**
If you are not a naturally extroverted person, the concept of networking can seem massively intimidating. It helps to remember that networking is not primarily about you, it is about the other person. Skills like listening attentively, asking good questions and showing an interest in others are key. And if the idea of making cold calls day after day or attending self-proclaimed “networking events” ranks among your worst nightmares, there is no rule that says you have to network this way. Focus on creating and fostering relationships in ways that work for you, be that community involvement, referrals from friends, or talking with professors.
- **I don't like schmoozing/using people – networking seems rude/aggressive to me.**
Done poorly and with the wrong attitude, networking can indeed come across as aggressive and inconsiderate. Good networking, however, is about seeking out mutually beneficial relationships - it's a two-way street. Never assume that you can “use” someone and then just move on: reputations spread quickly within organizations and fields and you want to build a reputation as a “giver” not a “taker.” Show respect for your contacts' time by doing your homework prior to any meeting. Do not try and push someone to do more for you than they are willing and make sure to show your appreciation by following up with a simple thank you note or email.

- **I don't like asking for help or imposing on people – won't that seem desperate?!**
The idea of the truly independent individual, the “self-made” man/woman is often held up as an ideal in North America culture, but whether this exists in reality is doubtful. People influence and help us out in our lives and careers in a myriad of different ways and like having the opportunity to do so. When you are just starting out in your career there is no way that you could have all of the answers and information that you need to make fully informed choices. Rest assured that anyone you talk to will have received help from someone somewhere along their career path and they will likely be quite pleased to give back a little. By asking for help you are giving others the opportunity to give and share their knowledge, wisdom and passion for their field. It can be a genuine pleasure to talk about your career path and interests with an eager listener.
- **If I get a position through networking, will I be qualified enough to do well in the position?**
Only in the rarest of cases does networking get you the job in and of itself – that is your responsibility. In an interview or when you meet with someone from an organization, you will still have to earn the job yourself and be judged on your own merit. Even if you come highly recommended by a dear friend of the Human Resources Manager, you are going to have to prove that you have the skills, background and attitude to fit in with the company and do the job well. The advantage of networking is that it opens up many more opportunities to do just that.
- **Getting a job through networking is somehow not as valid as getting it myself.**
Networking is sometimes viewed as taking the easy way out. Remember that it is hard work to network well. Building and maintaining meaningful relationships takes time and energy and investment on your part and requires much more of a proactive approach to the job search than simply scanning online postings day after day.
- **I don't know anyone in my field or know very few people.**
Perhaps counter-intuitively, research indicates that more often than not, it is not your family or close friends who provide you with job leads, but rather acquaintances and more distant referrals. The power of “friends of friends of friends” lies in the fact that these people likely move in quite different circles from you. They tend to know different people and have more range than those closer to you. If your primary contact list does not yield anyone in the field(s) you are interested in, ask them for referrals to secondary (and then tertiary) contacts. Also focus more on becoming active in your field through professional associations and volunteering.
- **This will take so much time, and I need a job NOW!**
This could be a problem because building and maintaining meaningful relationships takes time and commitment and you never know when a meeting or a contact may lead to a potential job opportunity. Networking is thus a career-long, life-long skill. Ideally you will employ a combination of strategies in your search, including networking, researching and approaching employers directly and using job listings. Any one of these strategies could be the one that ultimately leads to a job, but in terms of priorities, networking should take precedence over the others as statistics consistently show that the majority of job seekers hear about employment opportunities from family, friends and acquaintances. Networking is simply the most effective way to search for a job.
- **I am terrible at selling myself and that's what networking is all about right?**
The metaphor of the job search as a sales campaign is a highly pervasive one, but also very problematic for many job seekers who struggle to “sell” themselves to potential employers. However, as Cathy Keates points out in her book *Not for Sale! Why We Need a New Job Search Mindset* (2009), “...the process of finding work isn't about selling and buying, but it is

Tip

As a job seeker it is natural to feel somewhat vulnerable and powerless at times – consciously remind yourself that you have a lot to offer others, be it your time, enthusiasm, knowledge, contacts, advice, skills, a listening ear, etc.

Tip

Remember that good networking is NOT only about you. It really is not. It is about the relationships you build and what you can do for others.

Tip

Instead of focusing on what you need from an interaction, relax and start really listening to the other person. Find out what makes them tick, where their passions lie. Pay attention to what their needs are and figure out how you might be able to help them. Give first, and give often, the rest will tend to take care of itself.

about people and organizations connecting and finding a fit.” Employers do not necessarily require job seekers to sell themselves, but they do desire clarity from an applicant. As a job seeker, it is imperative that you are able to clearly communicate your skills, the fit between you and the organization and what you would contribute if hired. Networking is all about communication, forging connections and building relationships - NOT about selling.

Concrete Steps to Expand your Network

Tip

Be proactive in seeking out the information which would be helpful to you in your job search and would increase your knowledge about your field. The more people who know about you and the kinds of positions you would be interested in, the better your chances.

1. **Create a list of primary contacts.** Start with the people you already know, from family and close friends, to former coworkers, classmates, professors and community acquaintances. Make a list of all these primary or “warm” contacts, regardless of whether or not you think they may be knowledgeable about your field of interest. If it has been a while since you spoke, get back in contact with these people, find out how they are, let them know what you have been doing lately, and ask if they know of anyone working in your target area who you could talk to. If they give you names, the people they refer you to are known as your secondary contacts. If you have recently finished your degree, many people will ask you: “What are you going to do now that you have graduated?” Take the opportunity to have a conversation with them about the areas you are interested in and the questions you still have about your career path.
2. **Meet your secondary contacts.** Actively seek out new relationships within your chosen field(s). Start by getting in touch with the secondary contacts referred to you by family and friends. Be prepared to talk about your career goals, skills and experiences. You may want to ask your secondary contacts whether they would be willing to have an information interview (see #5) with you.
3. **Create new contacts.** You can also create your own contacts by joining professional associations and organizations (many have discounted rates for students/new grads), attending career-related conferences and events and by volunteering or doing an internship in your area of interest. Making cold calls (see below) is another good way of expanding your contact base.
4. **Make cold calls to target organizations.** Calling companies and organizations of interest and attempting to meet with the person who has the decision-making power to hire you, or with someone who is knowledgeable about the field, is a great way to expand your network. If you are extremely uncomfortable making cold calls, you can also write to the organization or company. However, networking by email is often much less effective than networking in person or over the phone. Additional tips on cold calling can be found later in this guide.
5. **Arrange information interviews.** Information interviewing involves meeting someone currently working in a field, for an organization, or in an occupation of interest, in order to increase your knowledge of your target career. It also helps grow your contact base in the field. You can have an information interview with a primary contact, secondary contact or someone you met through a cold call. More information about this simple, and extremely effective tool, can be found later in this guide.
6. **Follow up!** The importance of nourishing and maintaining relationships cannot be overstated, as many people neglect this step. It can be very awkward or difficult to get back into contact with someone you have not talked to in years and ask a favour of them when you have done nothing to maintain the relationship in the meantime. Keep in touch regularly and follow up with those who have been helpful to you. Let people know if you followed their advice, met with someone they referred you to, or found a resource they recommended useful. Keep them informed of your progress in your job hunt, share your successes and remember to give back when you can.

Primary Contact List

People I know from school:

- Professors/Teachers: _____

- Classmates: _____

- Alumni: _____

- Mentors: _____

- McGill Advisors and Counsellors: _____

- Other: _____

People I know from work:

- Co-workers: _____

- Supervisors: _____

- Clients: _____

- Suppliers: _____

- Professional Associations: _____

- Other: _____

People I know personally:

- Family/Extended Family: _____

- Friends: _____

- Neighbours: _____

People I know from...

- Internships: _____

- Career Fairs: _____

- Company Presentations: _____

- Extracurricular Activities and Clubs: _____

- Sports: _____

- Church/Temple: _____

- Community (i.e. doctors, dentists, store owners, bankers, electricians etc.): _____

Find Job Opportunities Through Information Interviews

Researching and reading about your field is a great way to start your job search, but at some point you will likely find it useful to get information and advice directly from someone with concrete experience in the area. Information interviews can help you fine tune your career objective(s), to discover additional possibilities or areas of interest, and to develop contacts and potential mentors in your field.

An information interview is a meeting between two people: someone (you) who wishes to learn more about a particular career and someone who works in that field. An information interview is NOT primarily about getting a job from your interviewee; it is about getting to know people in, and increasing your knowledge of, the career you are researching and targeting. You can interview anyone who knows about the work you would like to do, ideally someone employed in your field of interest or in an organization or sector where you would like to work.

Who Should I Contact for an Information Interview?

Tip

Remember that most people are willing to help and love to talk about themselves and their work.

Interview people whose perspectives will help you make decisions about the career path you wish to take. There are several ways to go about finding interviewees, including:

- **Approaching primary and secondary contacts:** Start by connecting with those people already in your network. These include your family, friends, peers, professors, co-workers, previous employers, alumni and anyone else you can think of. You might find potential interviewees among your primary contacts; but what is more likely is that your extended network will know of a potential interviewee (i.e. secondary contact).
- **Approaching organizations of interest (cold calling):** Choose a relevant company/organization and contact a person in a position that interests you. Sometimes you can find names easily on the company's website. However, if that does not work, call the main line of the organization and ask for the name and extension number of the head of the department you would like to target.
- **Approaching new contacts:** These could include speakers from on-campus career panels and events, those you meet at career fairs, or even inspiring individuals you read about in the news and would like to talk to.

But Why Would They Want to Talk to Me?

It is important to remember that an information interview is about information and advice. It is not about calling someone up and asking them for a job. This approach is both more intriguing and less intimidating for both the interviewer and the interviewee. Many people and organizations respond very positively to the initiative and courage it takes to ask for an information interview. It is a compliment to be asked for your advice and opinions by someone who respects what you do, and if you enjoy your career, it is actually quite pleasant to talk about it to an eager listener. Many people also enjoy the opportunity to help out a student or recent graduate, to do some informal mentoring and give back a little. Yes, some of the people you ask may say no, often for reasons (such as an overly full schedule) that have nothing to do with you. But you have nothing to lose. If even one person says yes, you will be farther ahead than where you are now.

Questions to Ask at an Information Interview

The key to a successful information interview is your enthusiasm, preparation and ability to communicate clearly. Before you go to an interview, think about the type of information that would be helpful to you. Revisit your self-assessment exercises and come up with some questions that will help you determine if this type of career is a good fit with your interests and your personal and professional values.

The following questions are meant to help you get started at an information interview. Others will naturally flow from your conversation once you get going. Focus on the areas and concerns of most relevance to you and respect anything your interviewee does not want or is not able to talk about. Always remember to thank them for their time and ask if there is anyone else they would recommend you speak with.

Questions about their career path/training:

- How did you get into this field?
- What has your career path been like to date? Is it representative of most people in this kind of position?
- What kind of education/training do you have?
- Are you a member of any professional orders or associations? Which ones do you feel are the most important to belong to?
- What are the future prospects in this field? What trends do you see developing over the next few years?
- If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself?

Questions about their current position and responsibilities:

- What does a typical day/week in your job look like?
- What do you enjoy the most about your job? The least?
- What skills have you found essential for success in this occupation?
- Could you tell me about one of the main challenges you face in this position?

Questions about working conditions:

- How many hours do you work in a typical week?
- How much autonomy do you have in terms of what you focus on at work?
- What kind of supervision did you have when you were starting out? Now?
- How is your performance evaluated?
- What kind of professional development opportunities are available?

Additional questions:

- What advice would you have liked to have heard when you were starting out?
- How would you recommend I “try out” this line of work (i.e. through a summer job, internship, volunteering...)?
- What other fields or jobs would you suggest I research before making a final decision?
- Is there anyone you would recommend I talk to next? When I call them, may I mention that you referred me?

| INFORMATION INTERVIEW | |
|---|--|
| Early Stage | Later Stage |
| <p>Focus: To gather information about the industry in general.</p> <p>Target: Anyone who has the information you are interested in – an employee at your level or higher.</p> <p>Time: 20 minutes</p> <p>Content: Gather information about the company, its structure, philosophy, mission; about the industry in general; what are the employers look for in candidates; about the target person's career development; ask for advice and insight as how you can fit into this industry.</p> <p>Ask for referrals within the industry. Ask if this person knows anyone who works at any of the companies on your employer list.</p> <p>Offer to keep the person informed of your progress.</p> <p>CV: Do not leave it behind unless you are requested to do so.</p> <p>Thank you: Send a thank you note.</p> | <p>Focus: To gather information about the company and/or about a specific position.</p> <p>Target: The head of the department of which you wish to work (your future boss, or the person who has the decision-making power to hire you).</p> <p>Time: 20 minutes</p> <p>Contact: Gather information about the company, its structure, philosophy, mission; about your target person's career development, why he or she chose this company. State your desire to work for this company and reason why.</p> <p>Ask for referrals within the company.</p> <p>Offer to keep the person informed of your progress.</p> <p>CV: Offer your CV</p> <p>Thank you: Send a thank you note.</p> |

Following Up

You may want to take some notes during the information interview, but do so sparingly, so as not to interrupt the flow of conversation. Then, after the interview, expand your notes and write down all of the main points and pertinent details covered. You might also want to note down your impressions of the organization – the general vibe, dress norms, etc.

Send a thank-you note or email within 24 hours of the interview. This does not have to be long, but should express your appreciation and reflect the content of the meeting.

Nurture and maintain your relationships with the people you have interviewed. Keep them informed of your progress and any action you have taken based on their advice. If they referred you to someone who was also helpful or recommended a book, website or professional organization which you subsequently followed up on, let them know that. Once you make a decision about your career path or land the position you were hoping for, inform them of this as well and thank them for their role in your journey. And remember, good relationship building is reciprocal: if you read an interesting article they might enjoy, forward it on; if you hear about a success they have achieved or an award they have received, send a congratulatory note.

Tip

Ask for your interviewee's business card so you can follow up with them in the future.

Sample: Thank You Email

Re: Information Interview Last Week

Dear Mrs. Newman,

Thank you so much for agreeing to have an information interview with me last week. I really appreciated you taking the time out of your busy schedule to tell me about your fascinating and varied career path and to bring me up to speed on the latest developments in the field of Speech-Pathology.

I learned a great deal from our discussion, and it has left me more excited than ever about entering the profession. I also greatly appreciated your referral to your colleague in private practice, Mr. Johnson. I spoke with him yesterday and we will sit down for an information interview later this week.

I will be sure to keep in touch and let you know how my career plans develop. Thank you again for your time, your enthusiasm and your suggestions.

Sincerely,

Linda Green

Cold Calling and Telephone Etiquette

Cold calling refers to making direct contact with potential employers who do not know you. Used in conjunction with information interviewing, it can be an excellent way to make inroads at a particular organization or industry.

Cold calling can be used to gather information about jobs and organizations, schedule information interviews and develop a network of contacts. Using the telephone successfully in your job search requires gumption, planning and practice.

Dealing with Potential Barriers

You may encounter barriers or difficulties when trying to get through to the person you wish to reach. The first person you speak with at a company will most likely be an administrative assistant or receptionist whose job includes screening and filtering calls and answering general information questions. These people are not your enemies; they can be important facilitators and sources of information about the person you are calling.

You should be prepared to respond to questions/statements like those below:

- ***What is your call regarding?***
In responding to this question, be honest and positive. State the type of information you are looking for and mention if someone has referred you.
- ***The person is unavailable.***
Instead of leaving a message, ask for the best time to call back. Try to avoid being put in the situation where you are waiting for a call that may never come.
- ***Human Resources will be able to help you. I will transfer you now. or We are not hiring right now.***
The receptionist thinks that you are looking for a job opening. Emphasize that you are calling to obtain information, not employment.

Tip

Remember to thank the receptionist or administrative assistant at the end of every call, regardless of whether or not you get through.

Ultimately, the key to getting through to the person with whom you wish to speak, is persistence. If you are able to reply intelligently, logically and confidently to the receptionist's screening questions, you will eventually get through. In order that you come off as polished and professional, practice what you would like to say before you try the real thing.

When You Get Through

Once you successfully get through to the person you wish to reach, you will want to:

- Greet the person by name and address them professionally (i.e. Mr., Ms., Dr., Professor)
- Identify yourself and let them know if you were referred
- State why you are calling (otherwise you risk the person getting restless)
- Identify where you are in your career and say something that is likely to arouse your listener's interest (see Mini Introductions)
- Get to the point quickly and do not monopolize their time
- Keep your objective in mind: obtain a face-to-face meeting with your contact, gather information, etc.

If you are successful in arranging an information interview, suggest a specific time to meet,

preferably before the business day begins, and let them know that the meeting will only take 20-30 minutes. If the person cannot meet you for whatever reason, do not give up. Ask for other referrals or request permission to call again at a later date.

Sample Scenarios/Scripts

Below are a few sample scripts illustrating scenarios/responses you are likely to encounter when making cold calls. Use them to practice possible responses and generate other ideas of possible scenarios. In general, the more confident you feel and sound and the clearer you are about the purpose of your call, the easier it will be for you to get through.

Sample A

Front Desk: Good morning, Widgets Inc. How can I help you?

You: Hello, I would like to speak to a marketing specialist please.

Front Desk: Certainly, I'll transfer you to Bob Smith's office.

You: Thank you.

*You could also call back the next day and ask to speak to this individual then.

Bob Smith: Bob Smith speaking.

You: Good morning Mr. Smith. My name is Sally Green and I recently graduated from McGill. I am looking to pursue a career in marketing and am trying to find out as much as possible about the field before making any definite decisions. I have heard very positive things about you and your work from my neighbour, Jim Philips, and am very interested in finding out more about what you do. Would it be possible to arrange a short appointment to talk about your career path to date?

Bob Smith: That's an interesting idea. Certainly. How is Monday at 3pm?

Tip

When speaking on the telephone, remember to:

- Smile
- Listen attentively
- Show enthusiasm and ask questions
- Be positive
- Be polite
- Thank the person at the end of the call

Sample B

Secretary: Good morning, Bob Smith's office, how can I help you?

You: Good morning. My name is Sally Green. May I please speak with Mr. Smith?

Secretary: What is your call regarding?

You: I am a recently graduated student from McGill currently researching the field of biore-source engineering, and I understand that Mr. Smith might be able to offer me some information and advice.

Secretary: One moment please.

Bob Smith: Bob Smith speaking.

Sample B (continued)

You: Good morning Mr. Smith. My name is Sally Green and I recently graduated from McGill's Engineering program. I am looking to pursue a career in bioresource engineering and am trying to find out as much as possible about the field before making any definite decisions. I understand you are the Director of Research and Development and I am interested in speaking with you about the work you do. Would it be possible to arrange a short appointment to talk about your career path to date?

Bob Smith: I'm sorry but we don't actually have any openings right now, but perhaps if you send me your C.V. I can keep you in mind for future positions.

You: I am not actually looking for a position right now. I am researching career options and would like to find out more about the field of bioresource engineering in general. I would be interested in speaking with you for about 20 minutes if you have some time to discuss your career path and answer a few questions. I'd be happy to come by whenever is convenient for you.

Bob Smith: While I'm flattered you would like to speak to me, I'm afraid this time of year is extremely busy and I won't be able to meet with you at present.

You: I understand and thank you for your time nonetheless. Would it be alright if I called you back next month? Or perhaps there is someone else you could recommend I speak to?

Sample C

Secretary: Bob Smith's office, good morning!

You: Good morning. My name is Sally Green. May I please speak with Mr. Smith?

Secretary: I'm sorry but Mr. Smith is not currently available. Would you like to leave a message?

You: No thank-you, I can call back another time. Could you let me know some generally good times to reach Mr. Smith?

Practice Good Telephone Etiquette

Be prepared before making a call. Be sure to verify the name of the person you wish to speak with and ensure that any relevant documents (i.e. C.V., recent correspondence) are organized and close at hand.

Practice, practice, practice. Ask a friend to play the role of the potential employer. Practice what you would like to say until it sounds and feels natural.

Remember the person you are talking with will pick up on both verbal and non-verbal cues – your tone, attitude and voice projection are all important.

Preparing Networking Tools

Mini Introductions

Communication and conversation skills are critical to successful networking. Employers naturally prefer candidates who know themselves and what they have to offer and who can express this clearly and compellingly. As you develop relationships within your target field you will need to introduce yourself to many people and be able to make the most of these opportunities.

In such situations a little preparation goes a long way, especially if talking about yourself and your achievements does not come naturally to you. Start by identifying your strengths as a potential employee: your relevant skills, experiences, achievements, interests and goals. Then think about the organization or industry or individual you are targeting and consider which factors directly contribute to a good fit between you and them. Thirdly, be clear on what your goals are for the interaction. What are you hoping to learn?

Finally you want to try to put all of this together into a mini introduction that might take several possible forms.

a) Sound Bite: An abbreviated introduction best used when time is short, as a lead-in to a telephone conversation for instance. Mention your name, educational background, and the purpose of making the contact.

Sample: Sound Bite

“Hello. My name is Danielle Ferguson and I am in my final year in McGill’s English program. I am currently researching potential career options after graduation and the publishing sector is an area of particular interest to me. I understand you have held many different positions in this field, I am interested in finding out more about your career path. Would I be able to conduct an information interview with you sometime this month?”

b) Infomercial: A longer version of a sound bite, more along the lines of a verbal business card. In addition to your name and educational background, mention relevant experience and skills, knowledge of the organization and the information or position you are seeking.

Sample: Infomercial

Continue with: “Last summer I completed an editing internship at H & R Publishing in Toronto where I especially enjoyed collaborating closely with writers. I would like to continue to gain editing experience, but am also interested in finding out more about the marketing side of the publishing business. I know that your company, NewBooks Plus, has recently expanded its marketing operations. Could you tell me more about these developments?”

c) Commercial: The longest version describes your background, qualifications, skills and achievements in more detail and would be used in situations where you are able to have a more extensive conversation with someone.

Tip

The sample scripts outlined here are designed to get you thinking about what you want to communicate in any given situation - use them as a place to start and a way to help structure your thoughts.

Sample: Commercial

Continue with: “Over the course of my degree I have taken numerous business and marketing electives along with my core English and literature courses. I have a thorough understanding of Canadian literature and writers and would enjoy collaborating with local authors to promote their new works. I have several questions regarding the qualifications and experience necessary to break into the field, and am very interested to hear what you have to say about this.”

Tips:

- Your conversation partner will almost certainly have questions and responses to various aspects of your introduction. Prepare for this by thinking about what you might be asked and considering relevant points you would like to bring up in your answers.
- You are the ultimate expert on yourself. No one can be more informative than you in describing your skills, expertise and experience. A passionate, confident introduction is what tends to impress.

Business/Information Cards

A business card or information card can be an effective and useful tool when used to complement a conversation or relationship. The card makes an appearance *after* you meet someone, not as the introduction or the entire interaction. Attending a networking event and rapidly distributing as many cards as possible to as many people as possible, without actually pausing long enough to learn a little about them, is next to useless. You will come across as abrupt and harried at best.

Give your business card to friends and family to pass on to secondary contacts and to new contacts at the end of a discussion or meeting if they would like to get in touch with you. Bring them to professional events, career fairs and panels and carry a few extra in your wallet just in case.

When you receive or ask for cards from others, take a moment to jot down any points about them you would like to remember. Make a note of anything you have said you will do (i.e. follow up, send your C.V., pass on a referral).

Your card should contain the following:

- Your name and current contact information, primarily phone and email.
- A professional webpage, MySpace or LinkedIn profile if appropriate.
- Your degree, indicating your major/minor if relevant.
- Any titles or certifications (i.e. Psychologist, Pianist, IT specialist).

As with other career tools, keep it clear, professional and uncluttered.

Tip

You may also wish to include the following information on your card:

- Languages you speak
- Key hard and soft skills
- Experience highlights

Final Word: It's all about building relationships!

Remember that good networking is really about being friendly and interested in others, being an active and attentive listener, and treating people with courtesy, respect and generosity. Smile, make eye contact, approach each interaction with an open mind and a positive attitude and you never know what may happen. Do not be shy to ask for help and be confident that you have a lot to give and offer in return. Actively seek out new contacts, follow up with those you meet, and put in the effort to maintain and build upon these initial contacts and you will be well on your way to success.

As Zig Ziglar, motivational speaker and author, noted: “You can get everything you want in life, by helping enough other people to get what they want.”

Resources on Networking

Books available at CaPS:

- Keates, Cathy, *Not for Sale! Why we Need a New Job Search Mindset*, Kingston, ON: Career Considerations, 2009.
- Hansen, Katherine, *A Foot in the Door: Networking your Way into the Hidden Job Market!*, Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2000.
- Marriner, Mike, Gebhard, Nathan, & Gordon, Joanne, *Road Trip Nation: A Guide to Discovering Your Path in Life*, New York: Ballantine Books, 2006. (This team of three friends conducted US-wide information interviews with all kinds of interesting people from the CEO of Dell to a lobster fisherman in Maine.)

For the complete Resource Centre catalogue and regularly updated lists of relevant websites, please visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/services/resource-centre/catalogue/>.

For a regularly updated list of relevant websites on networking, please visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/job-search/networking/>.

Appendix - Sample Information Cards

Colleen Templeton

Bachelor of Science (Anatomy)
McGill University-2003

Laboratory experience (Molecular biology, Cell biology, Chemistry)

Computer literate (Word, Excel, SPSS, Powerpoint)

Bilingual (English & French)

1234 Peel Street
Montreal, Quebec H3A 1B3

Tel.: (514) 842-9876
E-mail: colleent@mail.mcgill.ca

1333, rue Lacombe
Montréal (Québec)
H3T 1K6

Téléphone : (514) 342-5987
Téléavertisseur : (514) 987-3324
Courriel : dominic@videotron.ca

DOMINIQUE GIACOMELI

Agronome

Bachelière en sciences de l'agriculture (Science des plantes)

Membre de l'Ordre des agronomes du Québec

Expérience en services-conseils, gestion et décontamination des sols, supervision, recherche et développement. Trilingue : Français, anglais et italien.
Possède un permis de conduire et une voiture.

Karen Zeiling

Bachelor of Arts in English
McGill University - 2004

- ❖ Experience as an editor and writer
- ❖ Effective oral and written communication skills
- ❖ Superior research skills
- ❖ Critical and analytical thinker

3333 Côte-des-Neiges
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MARC PETERSON

Baccalauréat en relations industrielles

Membre de l'Ordre des Conseillers en ressources humaines et en relations industrielles du Québec

Connaissances en recrutement, droit du travail, formation, gestion de la rémunération et des avantages sociaux. Bilingue: Français et anglais (parlés et écrits).

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Tél/télec : (514) 937-5766
Courriel : Petersonm@mail.mcgill.ca

Your C.V. is a job search tool designed to introduce and promote yourself, your skills and your experiences to a potential employer. It highlights some of the interesting, impressive and unique things about you, and outlines skills and experience relevant to the type of work you are seeking. Your C.V. should make it easier for a potential employer to determine whether your skill set matches their needs and should motivate them to invite you to an interview to learn more.

Although the terms C.V. (curriculum vitae) and resume are used interchangeably in Quebec, they are distinct documents. More specifically, a C.V. is generally used for academic positions and is much longer, as it includes publications, conferences etc. A resume is shorter and only contains information that is relevant to a particular position. For our purposes, however, C.V. will be used as a general term throughout this chapter and this handbook.

Keep in mind:

- Writing a C.V. is an art, not a science! There are many different types and formats possible; the key is to choose one that works for you and fits with your skills and experiences.
- Put yourself in the shoes of your reader and do your research! It is important to tailor your C.V. to each type of employer you send it to. Generic C.V.'s are far less effective.
- Make sure any C.V. you send is clear, consistent (in terms of formatting), professional, and free of typos and grammar/spelling mistakes.
- Be concise. In Canada, most employers and industries prefer that your C.V. be no longer than 2 pages. One page is usually the norm in the U.S. and in the financial sector.

There are five main steps to writing an effective C.V.:

1. Take an inventory of your skills and experiences
2. Find a suitable employer
3. Choose the right format
4. Write your C.V.
5. Customize your C.V. for each application

Remember that there are many resources at CaPS to help you prepare your C.V., including books with examples from a wide variety of fields and industries to give you ideas. You can also attend our daily C.V. Drop-In times or make an appointment with an advisor to receive more detailed feedback.

Take an Inventory and Find a Suitable Employer

Self-assessment is the first and most important step in choosing an occupation, planning your career and starting a job search. It is also a very important step to take when you sit down to write your C.V.

Revisit the self-assessment work you did in Chapter 1 and ask yourself which specific skills, experiences, achievements and interests you want to showcase to a potential employer.

Then consider the types of employers you are applying to. Research them thoroughly using the tips outlined in Chapter 2 to determine whether they represent a good fit for you. Find out what they stand for, and what they are looking for in a potential employee. What are their needs and how do your interests, skills and experiences match up?

Choose the Right Format

C.V.'s can be either **targeted or untargeted** and formatted in three distinctive ways: **chronological, functional or combined**. The most important factor is that your C.V. highlights your accomplishments and abilities, as well as your personal career objectives.

Targeted or Untargeted

An untargeted C.V. is used when you do not have a clear idea of what job you are seeking or do not want to limit your application; whereas a targeted C.V. is used when you know what area you want to work in and/or have some career-related experience you can highlight. A targeted C.V. often includes a Career Objective (described in Step 4).

Examples of targeted and untargeted C.V.'s are provided in the Sample C.V. section of this publication.

Chronological

This type of C.V. organizes employment and volunteer experiences chronologically with the most recent information first. This format is good for demonstrating growth in a single profession: job titles and organizations are emphasized, and responsibilities and accomplishments are described in detail. This format is suitable for individuals with continuous work experience who have not had frequent job changes or prolonged periods of unemployment. It is not always the best choice for students right out of school.

Functional

The functional C.V. highlights the skills you have developed over the years and their application to the job for which you are applying, and focuses less on job titles and employment history. The attention is always on the skill acquired and less on the context of its acquisition.

For any C.V. to be effective, it should be composed with a target industry or position in mind, but this is especially true for functional C.V.'s. This format clusters skills and qualifications under specific headings. For example, you may include headings such as Communications Skills, Leadership Skills, Project Management, Teamwork, etc. What is critically important when writing a functional C.V. is to match your skill and qualification clusters with the employer's needs.

This format is suitable for individuals who want to emphasize skills gained in non-paid experiences (volunteer, extra-curricular) or the classroom. It may be particularly effective for individuals entering a new field in which they have little direct experience.

Combined

More often than not, the combined C.V. is the format of choice. It has flexibility that comes from combining both the chronological and functional formats. This format stresses your skills and accomplishments, but also provides a chronological work history.

The combined C.V. is particularly suitable for students because it lists your relevant work experience, but also highlights your abilities and transferable skills that may have been learned in the classroom or non-paid environments.

Which format is best?

The format of your C.V. depends on a variety of factors. Refer to your compilation of interests, skills and achievements from Step 1 and consider the chart below:

| | Chronological | Functional | Combination |
|------|---|--|---|
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Emphasizes relevant work experience, continuity and career growth | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Highlights skills not apparent in job descriptions or acquired in other waysGood for beginning or changing career pathsA way to bring together disjointed employment experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Highlights both skills and experiencesMost detailed and comprehensive formatGood for targeting a specific job or industry |
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Exposes gaps in employment historySkills may not be readily apparent | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Fails to provide support, with specific sources, for the skills highlightedDoes not represent a clear career path | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Can be confusing if not well writtenCan lose focus |

Tip

If you are still unsure which format suits you best, you may want to make an appointment with an Advisor or consult our numerous books in the Career Resource Centre.

Write Your C.V.

Your C.V. is your own personal advertisement so what you choose to include and **how you sell your skills and experience will determine whether you are asked for an interview.**

The following are the basic components of a combined C.V. for students. Note that your contact information and career objective and/or summary always come first. The other sections can be presented in whatever order you feel is most relevant to the position for which you are applying.

A) Contact Information

Contact information includes your:

- Full name
- Current and permanent address (if you live in Montreal during the school year but are at home in the summer, you might want to include both your temporary and permanent addresses)
- Phone number
- Email address
- Optional website address

Your contact information always comes first and can be incorporated into a header to save space and make the C.V. look more attractive. Also ensure your voice mail message and e-mail address are professional; avoid funny or strange nicknames (ex. bubblegum@hotmail.com).

B) Career Objective or Summary

The Career Objective or Summary sections is a fast, effective way to hook the reader into looking at the rest of your C.V. It gives your C.V. focus so the employer does not have to sift through all the sections to find out what position you would be good for. The Career Objective or Summary should follow your contact information.

Tip

Make sure your contact information is up-to-date. Nothing is more frustrating for an employer than outdated contact information. If your contact information changes, be sure to submit a new C.V. to the employer and request that the old one be discarded.

Tip

Include a Career Objective if you have a fairly clear idea of the department or position you are interested in.

If you are not sure, or do not want to limit your application, a Summary of Qualifications might be better.

A **Career Objective** should outline your short-term goal; the rest of your C.V. should focus on relating your experience to this goal. A Career Objective is:

- one or two sentences which summarizes the career direction you hope to take; and
- should answer one or all of these questions: what, where, with whom and at what level of employment?

Including a Career Objective indicates that you have a fairly clear idea of what you would like to do. Keep in mind that it could limit you if your application is too precise or not clear enough.

As an alternative, you can mention your Career Objective in your cover letter and leave it off your C.V.

Example Career Objectives

- To utilize my education and experience to enhance organizational effectiveness and client relations as a Financial Administrator.
- To combine my degree in English Literature with my reputation as a creative individual to launch my career as a talented Writer and Editor.

A **Summary of Qualifications**, on the other hand, highlights your strongest selling points and the most relevant qualifications and experiences (specifying duration, responsibilities and accomplishments). A Summary is:

- three to five sentences summarizing your qualifications; and
- includes skills and experiences you have to offer to the organization.

Including a Summary is also a good idea if your C.V. is going to be electronically scanned.

Example Summaries of Qualifications

- Dynamic motivator and problem-solver with excellent organizational skills looking to pursue a career in the area of Public Relations, Marketing and Broadcasting. Proven administrative capabilities and experienced in training and project coordination.
- Bilingual Environmentalist with a solid education in the areas of waste management and impact assessment. Excellent written and oral communication skills with strong knowledge of environmental regulations and federal policy planning.

C) Languages

When listing the languages you speak, start with those that are the most relevant to the workplace, even if they are not your mother tongue. If you are fluently bilingual, specify “Fluent English and French (written and spoken).” If you are not fluent in French but can get by, indicate “English, French” without mentioning your level of proficiency - you can save that for the interview.

If you speak languages other than English and French, list them and indicate your level of proficiency (fluent, conversational, working knowledge or basic). If you are unilingual, it is preferable to leave this section out.

D) Education

For students entering the workforce for the first time, and who have less work-related experience, this section is extremely important and deserves a lot of attention. In it:

- list your degrees and years of study in reverse chronological order (if you have not yet received your degree, you can put the expected date with “expected” next to it or “to present”;
- include the name and location (city, province/state, country) of the institutions where you studied, as well as scholarships and educational awards (if you have many of these, you may want to create a separate section called Awards and Scholarships); and
- include any specialization (major, minor), authorships, thesis, or honours work if relevant to the job for which you are applying;
- include relevant courses or electives and any official study abroad/exchange experiences.

Tip

If your G.P.A. is high, you may want to consider mentioning it.

If you are working on a post-secondary degree, it is not necessary to list your high school unless the school is prestigious, you studied in another language relevant to the job, or you want the employer to know what city or country you grew up in.

After you have listed your schooling, you may wish to consider listing any other educational training you have received, including certifications, workshops or seminars attended, licensures, etc. under the subheading “Certification and Additional Training” or “Professional Development.”

Education

Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Civil Laws **date-date (expected)**
McGill University, Montréal, Québec

Bachelor of Arts; History Honours, Minor in Political Science **date-date**
McGill University, Montréal, Québec

- Graduated with First Class Honours and a cumulative GPA of 3.7/4.0.

Certification and Additional Training

Diploma in Graphic Design **date-date**
Maisonneuve College, Montréal, Québec

E) Skills (optional)

This section summarizes the information you gathered in Chapters 1 & 2 of this handbook and reinforces your Summary of Qualifications. It indicates the relevant skills you possess and can offer to the employer. In this section:

- highlight relevant skills and how you have acquired them; and
- choose only those skills that are important for the job for which you are applying.

Tip

Remember, relevant skills may include both the hard skills and soft skills you have acquired through work, volunteer, extra-curricular, internships and school experiences.

Example 1:

Communication Skills

- Facilitated small group discussions as a Teaching Assistant.
- Created weekly e-bulletins for McGill students as a Publications Assistant.
- Worked with students to improve their cover letters and C.V.s as a CaPS Peer Educator.

Computer Skills

- Adobe Creative Suite (InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop and Dreamweaver).
- XHTML and CSS.

Example 2:

Skills

Laboratory Techniques:

- Assisted in gel electrophoresis as a Research Assistant.
- Used Western blotting to detect specific proteins within tissue samples.
- Measured the mass-to-charge ratio of ions using mass spectroscopy.

Computer Skills:

- Microsoft Office.
- Adobe Creative Suite (InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator)
- AutoCAD.

F) Career-Related Experience

Tip

You can change “Career-Related Experience” for a more targeted heading, such as “Teaching Experience,” “Professional Experience,” “Research Experience,” etc.

A Career-Related Experience section is included in a targeted C.V., which is normally used when you know what area you would like to work in and/or have career-related experience you can highlight. Your targeted C.V. will then have two experience sections: one that is “career-related” and one for “additional experience.”

In this section:

- List your experience in reverse chronological order starting with the most recent.
- Include the period of employment (season, month and/or year).
- Specify the position titles (create one if need be; ex. “Office Worker” if you had a general position in an office environment).
- Include the name and location of the organization (city, province, country if not in Canada).
- Describe your responsibilities and achievements and write specific examples to demonstrate your soft and transferable skills such as communication, leadership and organization. (You may want to refer back to the work you did in Chapter 1.)
- Emphasize the elements of your previous jobs that relate to your career objective.
- Write using action verbs preferably in single lines.

You may combine entries where appropriate. For instance, if you worked for the same company for the past couple of summers, but held different positions, you can bring them together under one entry. This will save space, but also highlight career growth within the organization.

Career-Related Experience

McGill Career Planning Service, Montréal, Québec

Graphic Designer and Desktop Publisher

date - present

- Produce brochures and booklets for distribution to students.
- Administer monthly career e-bulletins to the McGill community.
- Consult with Career Advisors regarding graphic-related projects.

Raven Truck Accessories, Edmonton, Alberta

Marketing Assistant (date-date)

date-date

- Led a marketing team with the goal of increasing sales.
- Maintained and updated company website.
- Oversaw production of company catalogue.

Corporate Development Assistant (date-date)

- Assisted the V.P. of Corporate Development in developing strategies to improve company growth and sales.
- Developed and implemented company's privacy and health policy.
- Launched company's intranet.

Additional Work Experience

RBL Warehouse, Edmonton, Alberta

Accounts Payable Clerk

date-date

- Matched invoices with shipping receipts.
- Inputed payable amounts into computer system.
- Mailed cheques.

Tip

You may organize the components of your career-related and work experience differently. For example, if you feel that your job title will have more impact on the reader, you may want to list it first. If, however, the employer's name is relevant, you might want to list it first.

What *is* important is that you are consistent. Do not alternate between these formats on one C.V.

G) Work Experience

A general Work Experience section is usually included in an **untargeted C.V.** Format this section like the Career-Related Experience described above.

Work Experience

Groundskeeper

date

Jagre Ridge Golf Course, Edmonton, Alberta

- Groomed golf course each morning for its clients.
- Worked as a member of a large team of 12.
- Proposed and implemented a more efficient process for watering the greens.

H) Extra-Curricular Activities, Interests and Volunteer Experience

While these sections are not mandatory, they can be very important for students. Employers may look at it carefully, especially if your work experience is limited. They may also use this information to learn more about your personal characteristics and may use this knowledge as an icebreaker during an interview. These sections can also demonstrate that you are a participating member of your community.

If you participated in student clubs or did community work, describe these in the same way you would for paid work (remember to use action verbs and achievements) and place them in a separate section under the title “Extra-Curricular Activities” and/or “Volunteer Experience.”

Under the title “Activities and Interests,” briefly mention your leisure and/or additional activities if you have something substantial to mention. Be specific. For instance, state “Elected Team Captain of community hockey team” as opposed to just stating “Hockey.”

Tip

These sections can be titled in a variety of ways. You can break them up into themed headings like on the right; or you could group ideas under one main heading, such as “Activities.” Subsequent sub-headings could include:

- Sports
- Academic Involvement
- Community Involvement

Volunteer Experience

Peer Educator

date-date

McGill Career Planning Service, Montréal, Québec

- Met with students to review and offer feedback on their C.V.'s and cover letters.
- Organised classroom presentations to promote CaPS activities and services.

Conference Organizer

date-date

Canadian Constitutional Affairs Conference

- Designed and maintained Conference's website.

Extracurricular Activities

Stage Actor

date-present

- Performed in over 12 plays throughout high school and university.

Leisure Activities

- Dedicated member of Ultimate Frisbee team for three years.

I) Possible Additional Sections

Honours and Awards

If you have been recognized for excellence or for an important contribution you may include an Honours and Awards section. However, be selective in putting down awards: they should be significant, relevant and current. Another option is to create a sub-section. For example, in Education you could include a sub-section that lists your academic honours.

Honours and Awards

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| • Dean's Honour List | date-date |
| • Chamber of Commerce Business Award | date |
| • Rutherford Scholarship (value \$2500) | date |

Professional Associations

If you belong or have belonged to one or more professional associations that are relevant to your career goal, list them. Your participation in an association demonstrates your interest in and commitment to the field. You may also include specific information about your role.

Professional Associations

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Vice-President | date-date |
| Canadian Federation of Medical Students | |

Publications

In this section, list books and/or articles you have written and published. Include the name of the publisher, co-authors (if applicable), title, journal, date and relevant page numbers. Individuals who have published their thesis or dissertation may also include the title of their work.

Publications

Statistics Canada (Summer 2007): "Payday Loans" in *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, Volume 19, No. 2, pp. 16-24.

J) References

Unless you are applying for an academic position, or the job posting requests it, do not include references on your C.V. Instead, you may write "References available upon request" at the end of your C.V. Be prepared to provide three references to a potential employer if requested (they will likely only ask for references at the interview stage or when they are considering offering you a job). The best references are supervisors or professors, or people you know from volunteer or extra-curricular activities. List your references on a separate sheet, using the same type of paper and font face you have used for your C.V.

You should include the following information:

- Name
- Title
- Connection to you
- Name of organization
- Address
- Phone number
- E-mail

Tip

Remember to verify that the information you provide is accurate. Always let your references know they might be contacted. Take advantage of this time to talk to your references about the position so they can emphasize the things which are most relevant.

Customize Your C.V.

Congratulations! You have now prepared a basic C.V., but there is still work to be done. You cannot send the same C.V. to each employer. Rather, it is important to take the time to customize your applications. An employer will most likely spend only 20-30 seconds scanning your C.V. In that time you need to convince the reader you are a candidate with the skills and background suitable for the job being offered and deserve an interview. Your C.V. should be well-organized and visually appealing.

Here are some suggestions you should keep in mind when preparing your C.V. for a particular employer:

Content

- Make sure your C.V.'s content is targeted towards your specific employment objective. Do not include extraneous or irrelevant material.
- Review, review and review. There should be no spelling or grammatical mistakes. (Do not rely solely on spell check because a word may be spelled correctly, but used incorrectly.)
- Use action verbs to describe your skills, accomplishments and responsibilities.
- Keep your statements short. Do not use lengthy sentences or descriptions.
- Be concise! Eliminate “fluff,” such as “responsibilities include...”
- Be positive - do not include negative information.
- Update your C.V. regularly as you acquire new skills and experiences.

Organization and Layout

- In Canada, your C.V. should be approximately two pages in length. The first page is the most important so present your most compelling information first. If the reader is not convinced you are a strong candidate by the end of the first page, they have little reason to continue reading.
- Organize your sections in an order that best supports your employment objective. If your education is your strongest selling point, put it first; if your work experience is your strongest selling point, put it first instead.
- Include your Contact Information at the top of the first page. Include your name and phone number in the top corner of each subsequent page.

Format and Design

- Your C.V. should be cleanly formatted. Use a common type face (Arial, Verdana) and do not change fonts throughout the body of your C.V. (it decreases readability). Use a legible font size (preferably 11 point).
- Section headings should stand out: use CAPITAL LETTERS, a **bold type face** or underline to emphasize section headings.
- Your header can be formatted in a different font and should be larger than the body text, but be tasteful in your choice!

Presentation

Printed

- Your C.V. should be laser printed on good quality 8 1/2” x 11” paper. Avoid using patterned paper, which may decrease readability. If you choose to use a colour other than

white, use a neutral tone (avoid dark or brightly coloured paper because it does not fax or copy well).

- Do not print your C.V. double-sided. Staple your pages together instead of using a paper clip. Do not staple your cover letter to your C.V.
- Avoid folding your C.V. Mail or drop it off in a large envelope.

Email

Many employers request that your C.V. be emailed. The preferred method is as an attachment (Word or PDF).

Scannable

Some employers, particularly big firms, may scan the C.V.'s they receive. If you know that your C.V. is going to be scanned, you should keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Use as many keywords as you can: these are different from action verbs in that they are nouns, phrases and terminology that demonstrate some of your skills or achievements and are known to be valued in the industry (buzzwords). They are usually hard skills. You could include a section on your C.V. titled Keyword Summary and list as many keywords that you feel are relevant.
- Do not use italics; instead, use capital letters to designate section headings.

Other C.V. Styles

C.V.'s for Graduate Students

Graduate students wanting to work as academics, physicians or professionals can have C.V.'s that are three to ten pages long. Those seeking a research career outside of academia or a non-academic job should limit their C.V.'s to two pages. In either case, your C.V. should include some additional information, including:

- Dissertation title
- Research undertaken and interests
- Teaching experience
- Publications
- Presentations
- Additional academic experience (organizing conferences and administrative and editing work, etc.)
- Grants and awards

The CaPS office keeps samples of C.V.'s for graduate students, including those seeking an academic position, a non-academic job or a research position. Come by the office and ask for one or download one from www.mcgill.ca/caps.

One-Page C.V.

There are certain instances where a one-page C.V. is recommended, namely when applying for a position in the U.S. or applying to consulting or investment banking firms. In these instances, brevity is the rule. Employers will use your C.V. to test your ability to be concise: every word should count.

Tip

Some employers will photocopy your C.V. for members of the hiring committee. If your C.V. is double-sided, you risk losing the back page.

International C.V.

When applying to schools, agencies and organizations outside of North America, different conventions apply when writing a C.V. The components of an international C.V. often also include:

- A Career Objective: you should address the geographic setting, field of work and level of entry
- Personality traits: tell the employer what type of person you are, your qualities and your strengths
- Professional skills: include your skills that are relevant to the job. Give concrete examples
- Education
- Work experience
- International experience: if you have international experience including education, paid-work, volunteer work, and travel, group it together under this heading.

Most organizations will also require a detailed application form to accompany the C.V.

In Canada, it is illegal for employers to request personal information; however, Canada has no control over what international organizations may require from potential job applicants. International employers may want to know:

- Age
- Marital status and number of dependents
- Spouse's occupation
- Availability
- Language
- Nationality and national origin

For more information on international C.V.'s, consult the books and samples in the CaPS Resource Centre.

Resources on C.V. Writing

Books available at CaPS include:

- *VGM Professional Resumes Series*, New York: McGraw Hill.
Includes: Resumes for First-Time Job Hunters, Resumes for Communications Careers, Resumes for Environmental Careers, Resumes for Sales and Marketing Careers and more!
- *Real-Resumes Series*, Fayetteville, NC: Prep Publishing.
Includes: Real-Resumes for Jobs in Nonprofit Organizations, Real-Resumes for Social Work and Counseling Jobs, Real Resumes for Human Resources and Personnel Jobs and more!
- Thompson, Mary Annew, *The Global Resume and C.V. Guide*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000.

For the complete Resource Centre catalogue and regularly updated lists of relevant websites, please visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/services/resource-centre/catalogue/>.

For a regularly updated list of relevant websites on C.V. writing, please visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/job-search/cv/>.

Appendix - Sample: Untargeted C.V.

Use this sample when you do not have a clear idea of what job you are seeking or do not want to limit your application.

Your Name in bold and/or large

Address

Phone number/e-mail

LANGUAGES

Describe varied levels of fluency according to the following: *Fluent, Intermediate, Basic*. If you are unilingual, leave this section out.

English and French (Fluent)

SKILLS

Depending on your skills, this section could also be entitled or subtitled *Computer Skills, Technical Skills, Laboratory Skills, or Research Skills*. Include all software and hardware knowledge, lab techniques, equipment and specific methodologies you are familiar with.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of ____: Major area of study, Minor area of study

date - date

McGill University, Montreal, Quebec

- add academic awards and any subjects taken relevant to your career objective
- add research undertaken with results if possible

Diploma of Collegial Studies, Discipline

date - date

Dawson College, Montreal, Quebec

- add academic awards and any subjects taken relevant to your career objective

High School Graduation Diploma

date - date

* It's usually not necessary to include high school unless:

- it shows that you have studied in another language or you studied abroad or you went
- to school in the same town where you would like to work (i.e. you're a "local")

WORK EXPERIENCE

List all the paid work experience you have had.

Position Title (in bold)

date

Name of company or organization, City, Province

- use "one-liners" to describe your activities and "action verbs" to give more impact
- at least one of the one-liners should describe an initiative you took or an achievement you had with results
- consider using the S.T.A.R. formula (situation, task, action, result)
- emphasize your "transferable skills": leadership, organization, communication, creativity, etc.
- you should specify if the position was contract, part-time or summer

News Editor (summers)

date - date

The McGill Daily – McGill University, Montreal, Quebec

- Oversaw and planned the news section
- Researched and compiled news leads, and conceived story ideas
- Edited articles and instructed reporters on effective writing techniques
- Wrote general and investigative articles concerning today's health issues

Appendix - Sample: Untargeted C.V. (continued)

WORK EXPERIENCE (continued)

Field Research Assistant

date

N.B. Mammal Institute, St. Andrews, New Brunswick

- Researched marine mammals on-site
- Analyzed the results of the oceanographic factors of the field study
- Studied the biology, taxonomy and social aspects of marine mammals
- Communicated all findings to the research team and participated in group discussions

(Add other positions if applicable)

EXTRA-CURRICULAR AND VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

List the positions you have held in student and other voluntary organizations. Treat them like “regular” jobs.

Position Title (in bold)

date

Name of club, council, etc.

- describe what you did in this position
- emphasize your “transferable skills” and any achievements

Committee Member

date - date

Students’ Society of McGill University (SSMU)

- Organized social activities and fundraising events
- Responded to student needs at the front desk and via telephone

(Add other positions if applicable)

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

List your awards, scholarships and distinctions here if they are numerous. If you have only a few awards or if they are prestigious, you may include them under the relevant degree program, under education.

ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

This section will include any additional information about activities you are involved in or interests you have that are not included above. Avoid “reading, sports, films” which is too general. Be creative and specific. This is often the section where employers look to start an “icebreaker” conversation. Some activities could include the following:

- Sports Activities – mention levels of competition and any prizes awarded in a particular sport.
- Travel Overseas – mention places traveled, length of stay and any independent trips
- Personal Improvement – mention organizations and what you learned

(Add other activities if applicable)

REFERENCES ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Do not list references, but prepare a list with all contact information. Be certain to contact your references in advance and inform them of the position for which you are applying.

Note: Depending on your combined education, experiences and activities, your C.V. can either be one or two pages in length. Be sure your second page is at least 2/3 full.

Appendix - Sample: Targeted C.V.

Use this sample when you know what area you would like to work in and/or have some career-related experience you can highlight.

Your Name in bold and/or large

Address

Phone number/e-mail

CAREER OBJECTIVE

Outline your short-term career objective using some of the following criteria: position title(s), department, specialization, and industry. Your C.V. should focus on how your education, experience and activities relate to this objective. This section could be anywhere from 2 to 3 lines.

LANGUAGES

English and French (Fluent)

Describe varied levels of fluency according to the following: Fluent, Intermediate, Basic. If you are unilingual, leave this section out.

SKILLS

Depending on your skills, this section could also be entitled or subtitled Computer Skills, Technical Skills, Laboratory Skills, or Research Skills. Include all software and hardware knowledge, lab techniques, equipment and specific methodologies you are familiar with.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of ____: Major area of study, Minor area of study

date - date

McGill University, Montreal, Quebec

- add academic awards and any subjects taken relevant to your career objective
- add research undertaken with results if possible

Diploma of Collegial Studies, Discipline

date - date

Dawson College, Montreal, Quebec

- add academic awards and any subjects taken relevant to your career objective

High School Graduation Diploma

date - date

* It's usually not necessary to include high school unless:

- it shows that you have studied in another language or you studied abroad or you went
- to school in the same town where you would like to work (i.e. you're a "local")

CAREER-RELATED EXPERIENCE

List all experience relevant to your career objective including your paid employment, extra-curricular activities and volunteer work.

Position Title (in bold)

date

Name of company, organization or club, City, Province

- use "one-liners" to describe your activities and "action verbs" to give more impact
- at least one of these should describe an initiative you took or an achievement you had with results
- consider using the S.T.A.R. formula (situation, task, action, result)
- emphasize your "transferable skills": leadership, organization, communication, creativity, etc.
- you can specify if the position was contract, part-time or summer if you like

Appendix - Sample: Targeted C.V. (continued)

CAREER-RELATED EXPERIENCE (continued)

News Editor (summers)

date - date

The McGill Daily – McGill University, Montreal Quebec

- Oversaw and planned the news section
- Researched and compiled news leads, and conceived story ideas
- Edited articles and instructed reporters on effective writing techniques
- Wrote general and investigative articles concerning today's health issues, eg. "The Link between Hot Dogs and Memory Loss"
- Created first International News section resulting in a twenty percent circulation increase

(Add other positions if applicable)

OTHER EXPERIENCE

List other jobs, extra-curricular activities and volunteer experience that are not directly relevant to your career objective in this section or under separate headings if there are many to include.

Position Title (in bold)

date

Name of company or organization, City, Province

- describe what you did in this position
- emphasize your "transferable skills"

(Add other positions if applicable)

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

List your awards, scholarships and distinctions here if they are numerous. If you have only a few awards or if they are prestigious, you may include them under the relevant degree program, under education.

ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

This section will include any additional information about activities you are involved in or interests you have that are not included above. Avoid "reading, sports, films" which is too general. Be creative and specific. This is often the section where employers look to start an "icebreaker" conversation. Some activities could include the following:

- Sports Activities – mention levels of competition and any prizes awarded in a particular sport.
- Travel Overseas – mention places traveled, length of stay and any independent trips
- Personal Improvement – mention organizations and what you learned

(Add other activities if applicable)

REFERENCES ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Do not list references, but prepare a list with all contact information. Be certain to contact your references in advance and inform them of the position for which you are applying.

Note: Depending on your combined education, experiences and activities, your C.V. can either be one or two pages in length. Be sure your second page is at least 2/3 full.

Appendix - Example: Targeted Undergraduate C.V.

Anna Robertson

5454 Saint Urbain
Montreal, QC, H2W 1V6

anna.robertson@mail.mcgill.ca
(514) 555-5555

CAREER OBJECTIVE

To apply my knowledge of psychology and my extensive research and database management experience as a Clinical Research Coordinator.

LANGUAGES & SKILLS

- Fluent in English and French
- Computer Skills: Windows, Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point, Access, Internet, SPSS
- Assessment Skills: Knowledge of many neuropsychological, cognitive, career and personality assessment measures.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts: Major in Psychology

2006-2009

McGill University, Montreal, QC

- McGill Entrance Scholarship
- Included, in addition to core courses, anthropology, sociology and literature courses

Diploma of Collegial Studies: Creative Arts

2004-2006

Dawson College, Montreal, QC

- Obtained Honour Roll status in all four terms

CAREER-RELATED EXPERIENCE

Database Developer

2008-2009

McGill University, Department of Education and Counselling Psychology, Montreal, QC

- Created and managed MS Access database to store data collected for ongoing research projects in the department
- Interpreted research questions and developed queries to extract and transform data for statistical analysis
- Trained graduate students on the functions of the database

Research Coordinator

2007-2009

McGill University Department of Psychology, Montreal, QC

- Coordinated several research projects investigating hormones, mood and cognition
- Assisted graduate and undergraduate students to design and execute their projects
- Conducted individual interviews, mood and cognitive assessments of participants
- Developed data collection procedures using MS Access and performed data analyses using SPSS
- Designed and edited advertisements for recruitment, and information packages for participants

Clinical Research Coordinator/ Assistant

2005-2006

Bone and Mineral Unit, Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal, QC

- Assisted and coordinated several research projects investigating treatments for osteoporosis
- Successfully recruited hundreds of study participants, using various advertising techniques
- Liaised between patients, investigators, hospital staff, and sponsoring companies
- Designed and provided information and resources for patients diagnosed with osteoporosis

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Video Clerk

2002-2006

Westmount Video, Montreal, QC

- Provided video reviews and recommendations for customers
- Efficiently served 50+ customers at peak times (within 2 hours)
- Assisted and soothed irate customers
- Designed and created window displays to attract new customers
- Arranged and catalogued new videos

Camp Counsellor

Summer 2003, 2004

AMAC Day Camp, Montreal, QC

- Supervised and interacted with a group of 16 children aged 6 to 10 years
- Developed weekly activities and agendas for campers
- Created and led local outings, for example: to Botanical Gardens
- Prepared and administered work schedule for all counsellors

ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

Physical Activities

- Yoga, swimming and hiking
- Currently renovating a 120-year old house

Travel

- Backpacked independently in Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Portugal, Israel, Britain and Australia
- Keen interest in cultural diversity

Arts

- Appreciation of visual arts, especially theatre and international film

References Available Upon Request

Sally Green

123 Lala Street • CITY • Quebec • H9X 2E6
sally.green@mail.mcgill.ca • 514-123-4567

OBJECTIVE

To apply my clinical experience and my passion for working with children in the position of Clinical Dietician at the Cree Board of Health

LANGUAGES AND SKILLS

Language Skills

- English and French (fluent), Spanish (intermediate)

Computer skills

- MS Word, Excel & PowerPoint; MassLynx and ProteinLynx; SPSS

Clinical skills

- Extensive skill and understanding of a wide variety of lab instruments and procedures used for health purposes as well as general analyses.
- Knowledgeable of food systems and industry on microbiological, chemical, and physical levels.
- Attained Specialties: Geriatrics, Surgery, Gastrointestinal Disease, Nutrition Support, Cardiovascular Disease, Clinic, Endocrinology

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science: Dietetics

2006-2009

McGill University, Montreal, Quebec

- CGPA: 3.71/4.0

Diploma of Collegial Studies: Pure and Applied Sciences

2004-2006

John Abbott College. Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec.

- Honour Roll (>85% average) in final 3 semesters

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE: McGill Dietetic Internships

Dietetics Intern (level 4)

Winter 2009

Wampanoag Rehabilitation Center, Saint Helen, Quebec

Lakeshore General Hospital, Montreal, Quebec

James Brown Long Term Care, Montreal, Quebec

- Ensured residents received proper diets and modified diets as needed
- Performed comprehensive Food Safety Inspection at Lakeshore hospital's kitchen
- Independently supervised kitchen production
- Gave a 1 hour seminar on food safety to hospital kitchen staff employees
- Developed and conducted a case study presentation to various members of the interdisciplinary medical team
- Initiated, conducted, and designed lay out for a successful trial run of two choice menu

Dietetics Intern (level 3)

Fall 2008

SAMC Long Term Care, Montreal, Quebec

Outpatient clinic - Montreal General Hospital, Montreal, Quebec

- Planned, implemented and evaluated nutrition interventions for residents
- Performed nutritional assessments on all new residents
- Collaborated with nurses, occupational therapist, social worker and physician to ensure proper implementation of nutritional goals
- Established a new protocol on modified textures for dysphagic patients and presented to the professional staff at three long term care centers.
- Researched and authored a modified texture handout as a reference for staff.
- Practiced ethically and with empathy to ensure optimal quality of life for residents

Appendix - Example Targeted C.V. for Student in Professional Program (continued)

Dietetics Intern (level 1 & 2)

2007-2008

Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal, Quebec

- Performed nutritional status assessments of patients with renal and liver disease.
- Planned, implemented, and evaluated nutrition instructions.
- Recorded patient status in medical records.
- Evaluated and assessed need for new equipment in kitchen.
- Performed quality assurance duties, food safety analyses, and evaluated patient satisfaction.

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

McGill International Student Buddy

2007-Present

International Student Services, McGill University, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec.

- Assist and advise new international students
- Communicate with new McGill students from abroad prior to their arrival
- Introduce them to the campus and surrounding area
- Be available for consultation during their entire first year

Fitness Consultant

2007-2008

MacDonald Campus Sports Complex, Montreal, Quebec

- Motivated and encouraged McGill students to reach and maintain fitness goals.
- Served as a resource for fitness and nutrition related questions.

Sales Clerk/Cashier

2002-2006

Healthy Times Grocery, Montreal, Quebec

- Provided organic produce information and recommendations for customers
- Scanned and bagged groceries, worked cash register
- Efficiently served 50+ customers at peak times (within 2 hours)
- Designed and created weekly flyers to attract new customers

Special Needs Camp Counsellor

2002, 2003

ABC Camp, St-Adele, Quebec

- Supervised and interacted with a group of 16 children aged 6 to 10 years
- Developed weekly age-appropriate activities and agendas for campers
- Created and led local outings, for example: to the waterslides
- Prepared and administered work schedule for all counsellors

CERTIFICATIONS & MEMBERSHIPS

- | | |
|--|------------|
| • Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) | 2008 |
| • Dietitians of Canada (Qualifying Member) | Since 2008 |
| • Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) | 2007 |
| • l'Ordre professionnel des diététistes du Québec (Student Member) | Since 2009 |

ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

- **Arts:** Writing short stories and novels, reading literary fiction, being creative in the kitchen, making homemade wine and mead.
- **Physical:** Hiking and camping, kayaking, snowshoeing, alpine skiing.
- **Travel:** Ireland, visiting places of historical or natural significance, experiencing different cultures and languages, exploring places off the beaten trail.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Appendix - Example: Targeted Graduate C.V.

Sarah Smith

519 City Street • CITY • Quebec • H9X 2E6
sarah.smith@mail.mcgill.ca • 514-321-7654

QUALIFICATIONS

- English and Mandarin (fluent), French (intermediate)
- MS Office suite, SPSS, Adobe Illustrator, ProteinLynx, MassLynx
- Worked successfully with 3 multidisciplinary teams in diverse work settings
- 3 years of project management and report writing experience

TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

- Extracellular recording from brain slices, including use of ion-selective microelectrodes
- Wholecell patch clamp recording in isolated neurons and brain tissue slices,
- Confocal fluorescence imaging in neuronal cells
- Primary neuronal and glial cell culture
- In vivo models of cerebral ischemia in both rats and gerbils
- Cerebral microdialysis and HPLC amino-acid analysis

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy: Neurological Sciences 2006

Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, McGill University, Montreal, Qc

Master of Science: Neurological Sciences 2001

Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, McGill University, Montreal, Qc

Bachelor of Science: Biology 1998

Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, P. R. China

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Doctorate Research 2001-2006

Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, McGill University, Montreal, Qc

- Examined effects of pH on hypoxic neuronal injury and spreading depression in rodent hippocampal slices
- Monitored field potentials and extracellular shifts in selected ions during hypotaxia
- Studied changes in evoked responses in post-ischemic gerbil hippocampal slices
- Supervised 2 undergraduate honours theses projects
- Trained graduate students in use of laboratory equipment, such as _____
- Collaborated with 2 teams of researchers in separate laboratories to produce a published manuscript

Research Biologist 1998-2001

Fancy pants Laboratory, Wuhan, P. R. China

- Studied structure-function relationships of human tissue plasminogen activator (tPA).
- Used sitedirected mutagenesis to generate cDNA variants. Expressed recombinant tPAs in cultured mammalian cells
- Performed in vitro and in vivo assays to detect modified enzyme activity or half-life
- Presented findings in oral and written reports to project leaders and directors monthly

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant

2002-2007

Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, McGill University, Montreal, Qc

Cellular Biology (NEUR310)

Fall 2002, Winter 2003, Fall 2004

- Created new marking scheme, evaluated students' competence, reports and exams

Free Radical Biomedicine (NEUR550)

Fall 2006, Winter 2007

- Developed course content and teaching material, implemented novel assignment options

Editor

2005 – Present

New Science Advances Magazine, Montreal, Qc

- Select, proofread, and edit articles for the promoting scientific advances to the general community
- Delegate monthly duties to staff of 10 volunteers
- Successfully obtained financing from 30+ advertisers

Student Representative

2006 – Present

McGill Graduate Neuroscience Association, Montreal, Qc

- Initiated Graduate committee to ensure graduate student representation the department
- Stimulate fundraising as well as events for students and faculty

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS (additional references available)

Smith, S., Weigand, N. (2002) Corticosterone accelerates hypoxia- and cyanide-induced ATP loss in cultured hippocampal astrocytes. *Brain Research*, 482:153-158.

Smith, S., Hong, S., Anderson, R, and Weigand, N. (2004) Corticosterone exacerbates hypoxic and hypoglycemic hippocampal injury in vitro: biochemical correlates and a role for astrocytes. *Journal of Neurochemistry*, 48:139-148.

3 conference presentations:

- Society for Neuroscience 2003 and 2005
- International Brain Research Organization World Conference of Neuroscience 2005

AWARDS & AFFILIATIONS

- National Science Foundation Pre-doctoral Fellowship 2004-2006
(valued at \$20,000/annually)
- Society for Neuroscience, member 2001-present
- International Brain Research Organization member 2005-2006

ACTIVITIES & INTERESTS

- **Arts:** Attending live theatre performances and music festivals.
- **Physical:** Cross-country skiing, pilates, skating and long-distance running.
- **Travel:** Central Europe, Russia, Mongolia and China, experiencing different cultures and languages, exploring places off the beaten trail.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Appendix - Action Verbs

| Communication | | | |
|----------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| Advertised | Called | Circulated | Coached |
| Communicated | Conferred | Corresponded | Defined |
| Discussed | Displayed | Distributed | Drafted |
| Edited | Emphasized | Explained | Extracted |
| Familiarized | Informed | Instructed | Interested |
| Interpreted | Issued | Learned | Lectured |
| Listened | Lobbied | Mentored | Oriented |
| Perceived | Politicked | Presented | Promoted |
| Publicized | Questioned | Reasoned | Recommended |
| Redirected | Represented | Referred | Related |
| Responded | Showed | Spoke | Summarized |
| Talked | Transcribed | Translated | |
| Transmitted | Tutored | Wrote | |
| Initiative | | | |
| Acted | Applied | Attended | Automated |
| Collected | Compiled | Conserved | Considered |
| Consolidated | Contemplated | Contracted | Delivered |
| Detected | Devised | Discharged | Discovered |
| Dispatched | Dispensed | Engaged | Engineered |
| Established | Examined | Expanded | Expedited |
| Founded | Handled | Helped | Implemented |
| Increased | Induced | Inspected | Instituted |
| Interviewed | Introduced | Inventoried | Investigated |
| Launched | Maintained | Manipulated | Monitored |
| Moved | Offered | Operated | Packaged |
| Participated | Performed | Problem-solved | Processed |
| Proposed | Provided | Received | Recruited |
| Reviewed | Risked | Shipped | Solicited |
| Sorted | Staffed | Submitted | Systematized |
| Trained | Troubleshoot | Utilized | Verified |
| Interpersonal Skills | | | |
| Accommodated | Adjusted | Advised | Agreed |
| Arranged | Assisted | Collaborated | Consulted |
| Contributed | Cooperated | Counselled | Empathized |
| Facilitated | Guided | Harmonized | Influenced |
| Mediated | Moderated | Modified | Motivated |
| Negotiated | Personalized | Persuaded | Provided |
| Reconciled | Related | Requested | Respected |
| Screened | Sensed | Served | Shared |
| Sold | Taught | | |

Appendix - Action Verbs (continued)

Results

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| Accomplished | Accounted | Achieved | Advanced |
| Altered | Answered | Attained | Attracted |
| Awarded | Benefited | Built | Changed |
| Combined | Completed | Constructed | Convinced |
| Critiqued | Decreased | Dismantled | Earned |
| Eliminated | Enlarged | Expanded | Finished |
| Generated | Identified | Improved | Integrated |
| Involved | Justified | Made | Manufactured |
| Marketed | Obtained | Ordered | Predicted |
| Prevented | Produced | Profited | Protected |
| Raised | Realized | Reduced | Rehabilitated |
| Remembered | Repaired | Replaced | Reported |
| Reorganized | Resolved | Restored | Retrieved |
| Revised | Separated | Solved | Tested |
| Turned around | Transformed | Traveled | Updated |
| Upgraded | Validated | Won | |

Leadership

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| Administered | Addressed | Allocated | Anticipated |
| Appointed | Approved | Arbitrated | Assessed |
| Assigned | Authorized | Awarded | Balanced |
| Chaired | Conducted | Controlled | Decided |
| Delegated | Designated | Directed | Disapproved |
| Discharged | Encouraged | Enforced | Enlisted |
| Evaluated | Executed | Gathered | Headed |
| Inspired | Governed | Hired | Led |
| Managed | Oversaw | Presided | Recommended |
| Regulated | Required | Selected | Settled |
| Signed | Spearheaded | Specified | Sponsored |
| Stipulated | Supervised | Team-built | Trained |

Organization

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| Arranged | Analyzed | Assembled | Budgeted |
| Calculated | Compared | Coordinated | Charted |
| Checked | Clarified | Determined | Disproved |
| Filed | Organized | Planned | Prepared |
| Purchased | Recorded | Reported | Scheduled |

Technical

| | | | |
|------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| Appraised | Audited | Catalogued | Computed |
| Diagnosed | Dissected | Experimented | Financed |
| Fixed | Hypothesized | Judged | Litigated |
| Modeled | Navigated | Observed | Piolted |
| Prescribed | Programmed | Researched | Served |
| Surveyed | Tabulated | Traced | |

Appendix - Action Verbs (continued)

| Creativity | | | |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| Adapted | Authored | Composed | Conceived |
| Created | Designed | Developed | Dramatized |
| Drew | Energized | Established | Estimated |
| Forecasted | Formulated | Illustrated | Improvised |
| Initiated | Innovated | Invented | Investigated |
| Originated | Painted | Played | Proposed |
| Researched | Revised | Shaped | Sketched |
| Studied | Set up | Symbolized | |
| Adjectives | | | |
| Accurate | Active | Adaptable | Advantageous |
| Analytical | Artistic | Beneficial | Better |
| Bigger | Calm | Capable | Careful |
| Competent | Complete | Confident | Conscientious |
| Considerable | Creative | Critical | Decisive |
| Dependable | Desirable | Determined | Diligent |
| Diplomatic | Distinctive | Distinguished | Durable |
| Dynamic | Effective | Efficient | Empathic |
| Energetic | Esteemed | Excellent | Exceptional |
| Extraordinary | Flexible | First-class | First-rate |
| Flourishing | Forceful | Fruitful | Functional |
| Good | Greater | Helpful | Humorous |
| Illustrious | Imaginative | Important | Imposing |
| Improved | Independent | Industrious | Influential |
| Innovative | Insightful | Larger | Logical |
| Lucrative | Major | Methodical | Money-making |
| More | Notable | Noteworthy | Ongoing |
| Orderly | Organized | Original | Outstanding |
| Patient | Perceptive | Perfect | Phenomenal |
| Powerful | Practical | Prestigious | Productive |
| Professional | Profitable | Progressive | Prominent |
| Prosperous | Punctual | Reliable | Remarkable |
| Renowned | Reputable | Respected | Responsible |
| Resourceful | Rewarding | Satisfied | Sensitive |
| Significant | Singular | Sizeable | Skillful |
| Solid | Solvent | Sound | Stable |
| Strong | Substantial | Successful | Superb |
| Superior | Supportive | Thorough | Thriving |
| Top | Upbeat | Uncommon | Unique |
| Unparalleled | Unsurpassed | Uppermost | Useful |
| Valuable | Versatile | Winning | Workable |
| Worthwhile | | | |

Do I really need to write a cover letter?

Short answer: Yes.

A cover letter is your opportunity to customize your application even further, to provide more details on particularly relevant skills and experience, and to demonstrate the match between you and the organization. It also allows you to showcase your writing and communication skills by expressing your ideas effectively.

As with C.V. writing, before you even start typing, you need to know yourself – what you have to offer the employer – and you need to know the organization you are applying to – what are their needs and what makes you a good fit for the company?

Elements of a Cover Letter

Your cover letter should contain the following elements in the suggested order:

A) Your Contact Information

Your contact information includes:

- Full name
- Current address
- Telephone number
- Email address

B) Date

Place one line of space before the date.

C) Recipient's Contact Information

Place two lines of space before the recipient's contact information, which includes:

- Recipient's full name
- His/her title and/or department
- Organization's name
- Organization's address

D) Reference Line

Place one line of space before the reference line. Including a reference line (ex. "Re:" or "Subject:") indicates the purpose of the letter. For a job application, your letter may include the job title or the competition number. For a networking letter, it may include the position about which you are inquiring or "Potential employment opportunities."

Tip

You may wish to provide your contact information in a header that matches your C.V. to make your application look professional and cohesive.

Tip

Never make assumptions about an individual's gender. If you are unsure, avoid using "Mr." or "Ms."

E) Salutation

Place one line of space before the salutation. It is always preferable to address your application and letter to a specific individual. If you have been in contact with someone who is in a position to hire you, address it to him/her. Alternatively, if you have been referred to someone else in the organization, be sure to ask for the person's name, their title, mailing address, telephone number and email address so you can address your letter appropriately.

If you do not have a contact in the organization, contact the receptionist or Human Resource department. They may be able to provide you with the name of the appropriate individual and his/her contact information. Ask for the correct spelling of his/her name.

As a last resort, you may address your letter using "Dear Sir or Madam" or "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Hiring Committee."

F) Introductory Paragraph

The opening paragraph of your cover letter should answer the question: who are you and why are you sending the letter?

- If you are applying to a specific position, refer to it here. Mention the job title or competition number, if applicable, and how you learned about the opening. If someone referred you to the posting or the organization, you may mention their name. For example, "I was recently speaking with Mr. Owen Thomas in your department who recommended I apply for the Graphic Design position."
- If you are writing a letter of inquiry, indicate the position, department and/or industry you are seeking and inquire about its availability and information on the job description.

G) Body Paragraph(s)

The body of the cover letter should consist of one or two paragraphs. It should answer the questions: why are you a good candidate and why do you want to work for the employer?

In this section, select your key skills, experiences and achievements and convincingly illustrate how they can be an asset to the employer. Be sure to draw connections between your background and the job description. Throughout, incorporate references and information that reflects your knowledge of the industry, the organization and pertinent issues.

Do not restate the content of your C.V. Pull out the most relevant information. For example, if a job posting does not mention post-secondary education as a requirement, do not waste space explaining your program of study, awards, etc. (after all, that information is still contained in your C.V.). Instead, expand on the points the employer has identified as important (ex. customer sales experience).

H) Concluding Paragraph

Conclude your cover letter by describing if and how you will follow up on your application, whether by telephone or email, to schedule an interview or to discuss your background. If you indicate you will follow up, be sure to do so. This relieves the employer of the responsibility.

State where and when the employer can reach you and express your willingness to be interviewed. Finally, thank the reader for his/her time and consideration.

I) Closing and Signature

Use “Sincerely,” “Truly,” or “Regards” to close your letter. Leave three lines of space and type your name. If your letter is in hardcopy, sign neatly within the blank space.

J) Enclosure(s)

Indicate any enclosures by writing “Encl.” below your typed name if you are including other documents, such as a C.V., application form and/or letters of reference.

Format and Proofread

- Your cover letter should be no more than a page in length and be formatted like a typical business letter.
- Text should be aligned to the left and be cleanly formatted. Use a common type face (i.e. Verdana) that matches the type face of your C.V. Use a legible font size (preferably 11 point).
- You may wish to include a stylized header that matches the one on your C.V.

It is critical your cover letter be error free. Review, review, review! Spelling, grammatical and formatting errors will make your cover letter stand out in a negative way and will not create a favourable impression. You may wish to have a friend or colleague proofread your letter for errors.

Tip

You could proofread your letter from bottom to top. This technique helps identify errors more easily.

Send Your Letter and Follow Up

Hardcopy

- Print your cover letter on the same quality paper as your C.V. and use a laser printer.
- Do not staple your cover letter to your C.V.
- Do not fold your cover letter and C.V. Mail them in an 8 1/2” x 11” envelope.

Electronically

- Attach your cover letter and C.V. separately in an email in Word or PDF format.
- Write a brief email indicating your cover letter and email are attached.

Tip

It is recommended that you not copy and paste your cover letter into the body of your email. The employer may want to print off your application and if your cover letter is in an email format, it will be unattractive compared to other applicants' letters.

Tip

You may wish to keep hard or soft copies of your cover letters and applications. This method will help you keep track of details and will ensure you have all your letters for future reference.

Example of an Email

Subject: Graphic Designer Position

Dear Ms. Thomas:

Please find attached my application for the Graphic Designer position you advertised on the McGill CaPS website. I have enclosed both my C.V. and cover letter.

If you encounter any difficulties, or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 514-987-6543.

Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,

Max Richards

Once you start to send out job applications, it is important you follow up with the organizations you have contacted. You might want to devise a system for keeping track of what you have sent, when you sent it, and when you indicated you would follow up. For example, if you indicated you would contact an employer regarding an interview the week of April 11, it is critical you do so. Furthermore, you should keep track of what you said in each letter so your follow-up with the employer is accurate.

You may need to follow up with an employer more than once (i.e. to thank him/her for an interview or to accept or decline a job offer).

Checklist

Be sure you have written the most dynamic and powerful cover letter possible by using this recommended checklist:

Appearance and inclusion of vital information

- ☐ Is it an original letter rather than a mass-produced copy?
- ☐ Is the letter in a standard business letter format?
- ☐ Is it clear where the employer can reach you during business hours? Have you ensured that either a person or your voicemail will take the employer's call if you are not available?
- ☐ Is the letter neat, attractive and reader-friendly?
- ☐ Is it no longer than one page?
- ☐ Have you signed your name boldly and confidently?

Writing style

- ☐ Is your spelling, grammar and syntax correct?
- ☐ Does the letter tell the employer why you are writing, as well as grab his/her attention in the first paragraph?
- ☐ Have you used action verbs?
- ☐ Is the letter concise and to the point? Have you avoided needless detail and autobiographical ramblings?
- ☐ Does it avoid clichés and have you minimized the use of phrases such as "I feel" and "I believe," which tend to weaken and dilute the statements you make about yourself?

Tone appeal to the reader

- ☐ Is it interesting? Have you read it from the employer's perspective?
- ☐ Does it project the image of a person the employer would like to get to know better? Is it confident without being arrogant?

Enhancing the value of your cover letter

- ☐ Have you quantified and given examples of accomplishments that demonstrate your skills wherever possible?
- ☐ Have you demonstrated your knowledge of the organization you are writing to?
- ☐ Have you made the most of your university experience and relevant extra-curricular activities?
- ☐ Have you ensured that your letter is not too skimpy and depend too much on your C.V. to do the work for you?

Avoiding major cover letter mistakes

- ☐ Is it addressed to a named individual (unless it is a response to a blind ad)?
- ☐ If it is a response to a blind ad, is the salutation non-gendered?
- ☐ Have you left out everything negative?
- ☐ If it is a response to an ad, does the letter speak to the requirements of the position?
- ☐ Have you told the employer what you can do for the organization rather than what the organization can do for you?
- ☐ Have you requested action or told the employer you will call for an appointment?
- ☐ Have you used caution with “willing to learn” statements so the employer is not reminded of training time and expenses?
- ☐ Have you avoided pleading for favours or sounding desperate and “willing to do anything”?
- ☐ Have you avoided rewriting/rehashing your C.V. in your cover letter?

Resources on Cover Letter Writing

Books available at CaPS include:

- Hansen, Katherine & Hansen, Randall, *Dynamic Cover Letters: How to Write the Letter that Gets You the Job*, Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2001.
- Kennedy, Alain, *Lettres d'offre de service: Comment se vendre auprès d'un employeur*, Outremont, QC: Les Éditions Quebecor, 2006.
- Noble, David F., *Gallery of Best Cover Letters*. Indianapolis, IN: JIST Works, 2007.

For the complete Resource Centre catalogue and regularly updated lists of relevant websites, please visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/services/resource-centre/catalogue/>.

For a regularly updated list of relevant websites on cover letter writing, please visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/job-search/cv/>.

Sally Green

123 Lala Street • CITY • Quebec • H9X 2E6
firstname.lastname@mail.mcgill.ca • 514-123-4567

August 7, 20xx

Ms. Kate Jordan
Personnel Manager
Human Resources Department
CREE BOARD OF HEALTH
203 Main Street
Mistissini, Quebec G0W 1C0

Re: Application for Clinical Dietitian position

Dear Ms. Jordan,

As a recent Bachelor of Science graduate of McGill's Dietetics program with a particular interest in working with an aboriginal population, I was immediately drawn to your advertisement on the CaPS myFuture website. I am confident that the combination of my academic background, my clinical experience in hospital settings and my passion for working with children make me an ideal candidate for this position.

During the course of my degree I have pursued a number of electives in First Nations and Inuit Studies and would welcome the opportunity to work directly with an aboriginal population and make a difference within the Cree community. My Dietetics degree covered many facets including biochemical and human behavioral sciences, clinical nutrition, community nutrition and research development, and included a strong practical component which allowed me to put my skills and knowledge to use in a variety of clinical settings.

Three of my recent internships were in Hospital settings, where I gained valuable experience in providing clinical services to individuals suffering from various medical ailments. In addition to my clinical duties I assessed food safety. I also completed additional internships in long term care and rehabilitation. In these settings I developed my compassion and patience for working with patients with ongoing special needs, several of whom were aboriginal.

I would welcome the opportunity to apply my skills and experience with the Cree Board of Health. I thank you in advance for your review and consideration of my application, and please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information. I look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Sally Green

Appendix - Cover Letter Example B

John B. Neufeld
555 Durocher, #8
Montreal, QC H3H 1A1
(514) 123-1234
johnbneufeld@mail.mcgill.ca

July 29, 20xx

Mr. Kurt Comran
Principal, Muncton Elementary
1234 St-Laurence St.
Collingwood, ON XIX 1A1

Re: Application for Grade 4 Teaching Position

Dear Mr. Comran,

As a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Education program at McGill University, it is with great interest that I apply for the Grade 4 position as advertised in the Gazette. My training in the core areas of the curriculum combined with an intermediate specialization in Mathematics have prepared me well to assume the responsibilities of this position.

My commitment to teaching is genuine, and the success and welfare of each student is my overriding concern. During my recent student teacher placements, I regularly put in additional hours to tutor students in difficulty, coming up with innovative ways of explaining challenging concepts. I was consistently commended by my supervisors for my work ethic and creativity. As well, having been involved after school as a basketball coach and director of school-wide plays, I am confident of my ability to work effectively with other staff members to support the whole range of school activities. You will notice on my C.V. that my interests and additional related experience are quite varied. For example, I have worked as a Mathematics Tutor, volunteered in reading short stories to children in public libraries, and organized after school arts and outdoor activities for a multicultural community centre.

Your location in Collingwood is also very appealing for several reasons. I have friends in the area and am an avid hiker and mountain biker, so would enjoy living in a rural environment to pursue my outdoor interests.

I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you to discuss in more detail my suitability for this position. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John B. Neufeld

Enc.: C.V.

Appendix - Cover Letter Example C

Allie MacBean

555 Hutchison, #8 Montreal, QC H3H 1A1
Tel: (514) 123-4567 ambean@mail.mcgill.ca

August 10, 20xx

Mr. Howard Rich
Director, Human Resources
CompuHouse Inc.
123 Bloom St.
Toronto, Ontario T5D 4A1

Re: Opportunities for Computer Programmers

Dear Mr. Rich,

I was recently speaking with Mr. Jess MacBean about opportunities in the computer programming industry and he recommended that I contact you. I will be graduating this spring from McGill University with a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science and I am interested in working for your company as a Computer Programmer.

As you will see from my C.V. I have a well-rounded academic and employment background. I have gained valuable practical experience through several summer and part-time jobs as an IT Specialist and Research Associate at McGill. I am very proud of my involvement in many extracurricular activities, including participation in McGill clubs such as the Computer Science Students' Society and team sports like basketball and ultimate frisbee. In addition, I volunteer regularly at the Yellow Door, teaching seniors to use computers and the internet, and recently received a prestigious award for my community work.

I am confident that my courses at McGill University in software engineering and applications programming, coupled with my work experience, will prove particularly useful for the position of Computer Programmer at CompuHouse Inc. Although I am presently living in Montreal, I am willing to relocate in order to pursue my career.

I am very motivated to begin my career at CompuHouse and would welcome the opportunity to speak with you further regarding available positions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Allie MacBean

Encl. Allie MacBean C.V.

The interview is in many ways the final stage in the job search process and an extremely important aspect to focus on. Your C.V. and cover letter are designed to lay the groundwork of your application and secure you the interview, which allows you a chance to really shine and impress your potential employer. If you have been offered an interview, the employer views you as hireable on paper, and now wants to meet you in person to further evaluate your qualifications and experience and assess your personality, motivation and communication/interpersonal skills. Your job is to convey a good sense of who you are and what you have to offer and to discover if the job and organization mesh well with your values, interests and skills. For the employer, it is an opportunity to:

- Collect data about your background, skills and qualifications
- Determine whether your qualifications are consistent with the requirements of the position
- Evaluate your personality, your motivation for the job, and your communication skills
- Assess your potential for growth, development, and future advancement

Thus, an interview is a forum for two-way communication between you and your prospective employer.

This chapter is designed to help you prepare for an interview so that you can go into it feeling polished and confident. If you have additional questions or would like further practice, you can schedule a mock interview with one of the CaPS advisors.

Interview Formats

There are different settings and styles of interviews that can take place, depending on the employer's preference as well as what needs to be discussed. The setting of an interview could be: one-to-one, with a panel of interviewers, in a group with other applicants present, during a meal, over the phone, at a job fair, or even while being given a company tour. The format of the interview could be behavioral (where the questions are mainly based upon past experiences), case style, technical (where the questions are more specific to the position and the skills required), testing based (where there are no actual questions asked; instead a test is administered to assess your knowledge and to determine your overall suitability) or a mixture of several formats.

This chapter will focus primarily on the behavioural interview as it is currently the most commonly used format during the hiring process. Case, technical or testing interviews are often used following the behavioural interview as the next step in selecting and determining the most appropriate applicant.

Traditional and Behavioural-Based Interviews

Traditional interviews ask you about your goals, experiences and background. The behavioural-based component is predicated on the premise that past performance is the best indicator of future performance. They require you to draw on your past experiences to showcase the skills in question. There is a list of sample questions in the following pages.

When answering questions, make sure you understand the question being asked. If you do not, ask for clarification. If you are still having difficulty answering the question and find you do not have any experience on which to base your answer, admit you have never experienced such a

situation, but hypothetically explain how you would handle it.

Case Interviews

Case interviews are most commonly used by consulting firms, but other industries sometimes use them as well. The case interview format allows interviewers to see how you solve problems and how you might respond to certain situations that may arise. Case questions may be specific or broad. For example, some may ask you to formulate a long-term policy while others may require you to perform a specific task, such as developing promotional pricing for a product.

Critical thinking, analytical ability, creativity and presentation are often more important in a case interview than arriving at the “right answer.” Interviewers are looking at your ability to analyze, synthesize information, handle pressure and be creative.

Know Yourself

As always, self-assessment is key. Revisit the work you did in Chapter 1 and review the interests, experiences, values, skills and achievements you want to highlight. Consider how you will verbally convey this information to a potential employer:

- Which of your skills are most relevant for the position for which you are applying?
- How can you best highlight these skills based on your past experiences and achievements?

The S.T.A.R. technique discussed in the Achievements section in Chapter 1 is helpful in allowing you to draw parallels between your past experiences and skills which you may be asked about. Choose appropriate examples and talk honestly about yourself and what you have accomplished.

Know the Employer

At this stage in the job search and application process, you have hopefully already spent time researching the employer, but it is important to review your notes again before an interview. Being well prepared and knowledgeable reflects well on your enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism.

Research the Industry

Researching your desired field is as important as knowing yourself and what you have to offer. Before you research the specific organization, acquaint yourself with the larger industry. You may wish to consult the literature of professional organizations, business councils and other relevant websites to find out about salary scales, working conditions and current market trends.

Another excellent way to gather information on an industry is to conduct information interviews with individuals currently working in that sector. Information interviews provide you with a chance to informally ask questions about the work and market conditions of a particular industry.

Research the Employer

Doing research on the organization before your interview is an important step of the interview process. The better you know the organization, its values and its services, the better you will be

Tip

When researching an industry or organization, you may wish to consult:

- Annual reports or stockholder reports
- Prospectuses
- Trade magazines
- Websites

able to show how you will “fit” in. Communicating how you can contribute and add value to the particular organization or company should be the main goal of any interview.

Most companies and organizations now offer a wealth of information on their websites and you are expected to consult them in depth.

When researching the organization, consider how your skills and values fit with the stated goals and structure of the organization. This will help you respond to interview questions and help you formulate questions for the interviewers. Be aware that you may be evaluated as much by the quality of the questions you ask, as by your responses.

Research the Position

Researching the position for which you are applying can help you anticipate the type of questions you will be asked in your interview. You should be able to communicate your interest in the job and its impact on your career goals. In preparation:

- Research the general tasks and responsibilities of the position
- Research other aspects of the job that will have an impact on your decision (i.e. travel, overtime, shift work)
- Research salary ranges and other benefits

Prepare, Practice and Polish

According to polls, most job candidates spend less than an hour preparing for their interviews. Not unsurprisingly, unprepared candidates often give poor interviews. Thorough preparation in the lead-up to your interview will improve your performance and reduce your anxiety on the day of your interview.

Responses to Questions

Spend some time preparing answers to possible interview questions. This will help you feel more confident, keep you organized and focused, and reduce your stress leading up to the interview. You should be able to communicate your knowledge and experiences clearly, concisely and cogently. Consider asking a friend or a Career Advisor to conduct a mock interview with you. This will help you practice your answers, voice projection and eye contact.

Your answers should be complete, truthful and concise. Avoid rambling and getting off topic. Answer the question you have been asked. When confronted with a question, ask yourself why the interviewers have chosen that question so you can provide the best answer possible.

Interviews are essentially about communicating your skills and qualifications for the position. In order to be successful, you need to be both a good listener as well as a good speaker. Do not try to guess what the next question will be and listen to the entire question before answering.

Your syntax and grammar are important. You should use full sentences and avoid using slang and unnecessary “ums” and “ahs.” If you think this is an area you need to improve on, spend some time practicing your answers in a mock interview.

As the interview progresses, you should feel that a dialogue is developing between you and the interviewers. You may be asked to provide further details and the interviewers may give you the opportunity to ask questions.

Tip

It is always best to pause and collect your thoughts than to ramble a muddled answer.

It is natural to be a little nervous in an interview; in fact, it is healthy, as it shows you care about the position. However, being too nervous, jittery, shy and tense may impede your success. Doing a mock interview beforehand is a great way to reduce your stress levels in a real interview: it gives you a sense of the format and questions you can anticipate. It may also be helpful to think of an interview as a conversation or dialogue; this is your chance to find out more information about the organization and whether you really want the job.

Your overall attitude should be positive and attentive. Good posture and presentation is essential to conveying confidence and optimism. Always be conscious of non-verbal communication and the impression you are giving through your body language.

- Sit up straight
- Make good eye contact
- Speak clearly
- Avoid nervous mannerisms and ticks

Questions to Expect

The questions you can expect in an interview will depend largely on the position for which you are applying, the industry and the skill set the employer is looking for. Take the time to anticipate the kind of questions you might be asked and how you will answer them.

Typically, you will receive two phases of questions. Firstly, the interviewers will ask you general questions pertaining to your experiences, background and work habits. These general questions are followed by questions relating to specific qualifications.

General Information

There are some common questions that will invariably arise in every interview.

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- Why should we hire you?
- What are your long-term career goals?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Have you worked in this field before?

Work History and Experiences

Remember that behavioural-based interviews are designed on the premise that your past actions are the clearest indications of what you will do in the future. Therefore, employers are keen to learn about your work history and experiences. Be honest and portray yourself in a positive manner with a string of successes.

- Describe your duties in [this particular position].
- Of which of your past accomplishments are you most proud?
- Tell us about a difficult problem you encountered in one of your previous jobs and how you handled it.
- What skills have you learned in your previous jobs and how will they be applicable in this position?
- In your experience, what are your ideal working conditions?

- What lessons have you learned from your past experiences?
- Explain the transitions between the items on your C.V.
- If I were to call your last employer, what would they tell me about you?

Writing and Communication Skills

It does not matter what job you are applying to: communication skills are the foundation of any position. Interviewers are sizing up your ability to effectively communicate, both orally and in writing. Your oral communication skills will be on display from the moment you enter the interview room. Be eloquent, concise, polite and thorough.

- Do you have any experience speaking in public? In your opinion, what makes a successful public speaker?
- How do you ensure that your written work is error-free?
- Have you ever had a misunderstanding with one of your co-workers? How was it resolved? How could it have been avoided?
- How do you persuade someone you are right?

Responsibility, Judgement and Leadership

Interviewers are alert to indications that you are self-sufficient, creative, productive and that they can rely on you to carry out your duties and responsibilities. They also want to know that you are taking the application seriously and are going to stay in the position if hired.

- In what situations and in what circumstances have you been a leader?
- Do you prefer to have a lot of supervision or do you work better independently?
- How do you make important personal decisions? Work decisions?
- How do you deal with setbacks in your work?
- How do you motivate people?
- Name two management skills you think you have. What characteristics are most important to you in a leader? How have you displayed them?
- Give an example of a difficult decision you had to make. How did you handle it?
- What is the ideal working relationship between an employee and his/her supervisor?

Creativity and Flexibility

Most jobs in today's workplaces require individuals to be flexible and creative. Employers want to know that you can think outside of the box; that you are going to add value to the organization, regardless of the position. Chances are your new job will require you to undertake and complete a variety of tasks. Employers do not want to hire someone who is too rigid in their work habits. Being able to come up with a solution to a problem is an important part of any job.

- Tell me about a time when your ideas or suggestions helped improve some aspect of your workplace.
- Your job requires you to keep track of multiple tasks. Is this a problem?
- How do you feel about working extra hours on occasion?
- Sometimes our department offers support to [department x]. Would you be comfortable working with them?

Analytical Thinking

Employers are looking to hire someone who can think through a problem in a methodical manner. Interviewers may ask you questions designed to highlight your thinking process. Take the time to assess what they are asking you and do not rush into an answer. A carefully thought-out response is better than a hurried and muddled one.

- If you were hiring someone for this position, what attributes would you look for? Why?
- Tell me what your perfect job would be within this organization.
- What has been your greatest intellectual challenge so far? How did you overcome it?
- How do you define “success” in your personal life? How should an organization define “success”?

Planning and Organization

Planning and organization are paramount in any job. Employers want to ensure that you recognize the importance of details and well-thought-out plans. In answering these questions, remember to draw upon your past experiences and how you organized your approach to a specific problem or planned to achieve a certain goal.

- If you were in charge here, what would be your long-term goals for the organization?
- What does it mean to be “organized”?
- Your job involves keeping track of many details. How would you ensure that nothing is overlooked?
- What are your short-term career goals? What are your long-term career goals?
- Are you a naturally organized person? If not, how do you keep yourself organized?
- How do you see yourself growing in this position?

Interpersonal Skills

The degree of interpersonal skills required by a candidate will naturally depend on the job description. For positions where you deal with customers or the general public or work closely with a team, employers will be looking for good interpersonal skills.

- What are you willing to do to make a client happy? Where do you draw the line?
- Have you ever encountered a really difficult client? How did you resolve the situation?
- What do you like most about working with others? What do you like least?
- Tell us about a time when you worked in a team. What was your role?

Work Ethic

Hardwork: all employers are looking for dedicated employees who are willing to get the job done.

- What do you consider your greatest achievement? How did you achieve it?
- How does it make you feel if you do not complete a task?
- What does “hard work” mean to you?

Teamwork and Cooperation

Teamwork and cooperation are essential in all entry-level positions where you will often be a cog in a larger machine. This means you will have to sacrifice some of your personal needs, desires and credit for the greater good of the team. Interviewers are probing to see whether you can be a team player.

- Do you work well with others?
- Tell us about a time you were a member of a team. Was it rewarding? Frustrating?
- Is personal recognition important to you?
- Tell us about a time you had to sacrifice your personal needs for the larger good of a team.
- What would you do if members of your team were not doing their fair share of the work?

Trustworthiness

Most organizations deal with delicate information in one form or another. Interviewers want to know that you can be trusted to keep information confidential.

- Have you ever been trusted with sensitive information?
- Tell us about a time that you were required to be loyal to someone even though it was difficult.
- Would your friends consider you someone who can be relied upon?

Skills and Qualifications

All jobs require specific skills and qualifications, whether it is being able to use a word processor or being a member of a particular professional association. Depending on what is required, the interviewers may want you to show a portfolio or examples of your past work. They may ask you about situations where you applied your skills.

- Tell me about a time when you used [technology x] to improve your communication skills.
- Describe your experience with [technology x].
- Why do you feel you are qualified for this job?

Case Questions

Brain Teasers

Many consulting firms give their applicants brain teasers to test their creativity and analytical skills. You may be given a time limit so do not become bogged down.

- A company has ten machines that produce gold coins. One of the machines is producing coins that are a gram too light. How do you tell which machine is making the defective coins with only one weighing? [taken from *Vault Guide*]

Tip

CaPS has copies of the *Vault Guide* and the *WetFeet Insider Guide* on reserve. These publications can help you prepare and practice for a case interview.

Our office has resources in the Career Resource Centre to help you prepare for a case interview and you can book an appointment with a Career Advisor to have a mock case interview.

Guesstimate

Firms that are looking for someone with good technical and mathematical abilities may ask you to answer a question like, “How many golf balls fit into a 747?” The right answer is not what is important, but rather your thought process. The interviewer is trying to see if you can think logically.

- How many new cars were purchased in Quebec last year?
- How many gallons of white housepaint are sold in Canada each year?

Project

These kinds of questions are designed to flex your creativity and ingenuity. Try to relate your answer to the position for which you are applying. In other words, if you are applying for an engineering position, talk about design or engineering aspects of the project.

- Design the ideal toaster.

World Issues and Global Awareness

Interviewers may ask you about current events to test your ability to think through complex socio-economic problems.

- What are the most pressing issues facing the Prime Minister today? What would you do, if you were Prime Minister, to address these issues?

Tip

For other strategies on how to answer tough questions in a particular industry, you may want to ask for advice from your mentor or a working professional.

Responses to Tough Questions

One common challenge faced by all interviewees is addressing questions that deal with your shortcomings, such as “What are your weaknesses?” When responding, it is important to put a positive spin on your answer. Try to:

- Turn your weakness into a potential strength or explain how you have overcome or compensated for the weakness
- Avoid mentioning any personal qualities that may hamper job performance, such as bad temper, dishonesty or laziness
- Select an example where you can show that you are improving
- Avoid clichés (i.e. “I work too hard.”)

Another difficult question concerns salary. A lot of embarrassment and awkwardness can be avoided if you do your research beforehand and are knowledgeable about typical salary ranges in the industry and profession. What is important is to give a foundation, or reason, for the salary you mention, and not to just blurt out a number. For instance, you could say:

- “After doing some research on average salaries for individuals in this profession, I am hoping for a starting salary somewhere between the range of [x] and [x].”
- “Ideally I am looking for something between the range of [x] and [x], but am flexible depending on the compensation and benefits package your organization offers.”

Handling Illegal Questions

Various laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask you. An interviewer's questions must be related to the job you are applying for. By law, employers are not permitted to ask you about your citizenship, your age, your marital status, your affiliation with organizations, or your criminal record. If you are asked an illegal question you have three options:

- You can answer the question. However, if you choose to answer the question, you are giving information that is not directly related to the job. In fact, you might be giving the “wrong answer,” which could harm your chances of getting the job.
- You can refuse to answer the question, which is within your rights. If you choose this option, be careful how you phrase your refusal so you do not come across as confrontational and uncooperative.
- You can examine the question for its intent and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job. For example, the interviewer may ask you, “Are you a Canadian citizen?” You could reply, “I am authorized to work in Canada.”

Questions to Ask the Employer

All interviewers will provide you with the opportunity to ask them questions. Treat this as an excellent chance to demonstrate genuine interest in the position and the organization. Carefully crafted questions will show that you have been paying attention and can reinforce positive character traits. The best questions should:

- Make a positive impact on the interviewers
- Provide insight into your background and qualifications
- Help you determine if this is the job you want

Potential Questions to Ask

About the Position

- What would be my primary duties initially? How will these change over time?
- What do you consider to be the most challenging aspects of the position?
- What are the expectations of the supervisor?
- What is a typical day like?
- Why did the previous person in this position leave?

About the Organization

- How does this position contribute to the larger organizational structure?
- What are the department's current projects?
- What are the company's values and how do you incorporate them into your business practice?
- What makes this organization unique?
- What are the areas of anticipated growth for the company?

About Education and Training

- Does the company have an orientation program for new employees?
- Are there opportunities for professional development and training?
- Are employees encouraged to be active in professional organizations?

Tip

Do not ask questions that have already been covered in your interview. Try to formulate questions based on the interviewer's statements. This shows you were actively listening throughout the interview.

Tip

Salary is best negotiated after the position has been offered to you.

About Evaluation and Advancement

- How will my performance be evaluated?
- How often are performance reviews given?
- What opportunities are there for advancement in the organization?
- Does the organization typically promote from within?

About the Hiring Process

- What would the next step of the hiring process entail?
- When will you be making your decision to fill this position?

Touch Base with Your References

It is a good idea to remind your references that they might be contacted preceding or following your interview. You may wish to provide them with a copy of the job description or discuss the specific details of the position with them so they can provide the interviewer with the most relevant information that supports your application.

The Interview Day

Dress for Success

When you go to an interview, it is important to remember that you are not being evaluated solely on what you say, but also on how you present yourself. First impressions matter. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- Dress for the occupation
- Dress conservatively
- Pay close attention to personal grooming on the day of your interview (hair, nails, teeth, breath, etc.)
- Be certain all your clothes are clean, well pressed and tucked in
- Make sure your shoes are polished
- Avoid excessive make-up and heavy fragrances
- Bring a briefcase or portfolio
- Do not wear white socks

Be Prepared

When you arrive at the interview, you should be prepared to provide the interviewers with any documents they have requested. If they have not requested anything, you may wish to bring:

- Extra copies of your C.V.
- List of references
- Career portfolio or samples of past work (if you have them)
- Letters of recommendation
- Pen and paper
- Copy of your transcript
- Business card

Arrival

Be Punctual

Arrive at least 10-15 minutes prior to the interview. Being early reflects positively on you: it shows you are organized, interested in the position and prompt. If for some reason you cannot make the interview or become delayed, call as soon as possible and explain the situation. Apologize to the interviewer and see if he/she is willing to reschedule.

Be Friendly and Respectful

From the moment you walk into the organization's offices, the interview has started. Be friendly and respectful towards everyone you meet. Interviewers may ask receptionists and other employees their opinion based on their interactions with you.

Interview Structure

Greetings

An interview usually begins with a few minutes of small talk, giving you the chance to exchange pleasantries with the interviewers. This is a good opportunity to establish a rapport with them and show that you are confident and at ease.

Here are some tips:

- Greet the interviewers by their formal titles, until instructed otherwise
- Shake hands - firmly, not limply
- Make direct eye contact
- Smile
- Wait to be seated until asked to do so

Introduction

After you have exchanged pleasantries, interviewers will often provide you with an overview of the position and the organization. They may also indicate the structure of the interview. Pay attention and show an interest in what they are saying.

Interview Questions

This is the core of the interview where interviewers will ask you questions and will be evaluating your answers and suitability for the position. When answering, provide the information requested, demonstrating you have the skills and qualifications necessary for the job. If you have done a good job preparing, you should be comfortable and at ease.

Closing

Be sensitive to signs that the interview has drawn to a close. Stay positive even if you feel it has not gone well. The interviewers may simply be testing your reaction to adversity. At the end, the interviewers will usually explain the next steps in the hiring process and offer you one last chance to ask questions.

Before leaving, ensure you thank the interviewers for their time. **Above all else, it is important you leave the interviewers with a lasting impression that you are qualified for, and enthusiastic about, the position.**

Tip

At the end of the interview, you may want to ask the interviewers for their business cards. This gives you their contact information so you can follow-up with them in the future.

Follow Up

One of the biggest mistakes made by candidates after an interview is failing to follow up with the organization. It is important to remind the interviewers of your interest in the days and weeks following the interview.

Thank-you Note

Tip

Depending on the situation, your thank-you note can be in the form of a business letter, thank-you card or email. Use your judgement.

Within a day or two of the interview, send a thank-you note to the interviewers.

This simple but powerful gesture allows you to thank them for their time; to indicate your continued interest in the position; and if need be, to mention any “interview afterthoughts”, points you forgot to mention during the interview.

Even if you do not get the position, your interviewers can be potentially valuable contacts. They may refer you to another opening in the organization or keep you in mind for future positions. Never burn your bridges.

Sample: Thank-you Email

Subject: Yesterday’s interview to join ABC’s Human Resources Team

Dear Mr. Hunter,

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me yesterday regarding the Human Resources position at ABC Company.

I was extremely impressed by the positive and innovative environment you have nurtured at ABC and am more convinced than ever that my energy, initiative, and extensive experience in the field would allow me to make immediate contributions to your dynamic HR team.

I very much look forward to learning of your decision soon. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions, and thank you again for meeting with me.

Sincerely,

Susan Keys

Sample: Thank-you Email (with “afterthought”)

Re: Follow-up to Mark Nelson’s interview this morning

Dear Ms. Ouakinine,

I would like to thank you once again for meeting with me this morning regarding the Clinical Psychology Research Assistant position at Hospital JKL. I am very excited about this position and convinced that both my academic background and my extensive hospital volunteer experience have equipped me well for this position.

I meant to mention during the interview that I recently attended a two-week intensive seminar on advanced SPSS techniques. I know the job description requires a high level of competence with SPSS and wanted to ensure you knew that I am very comfortable working with this software and am quite up-to-date with the latest uses.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions. I look forward to hearing from you soon and thank you again for meeting with me.

Sincerely,

Mark Nelson

Sample: Thank-you Email for Building Strength

I’d like to thank you for talking with me about the research assistant position in your physiology Lab. I truly appreciate all the time and care you took in telling me about the job and learning more about me.

I’m so pleased that you agree that my senior research project in physiology provides me with excellent experience for this position. I am eager to bring my passion for physiology to the research-assistant position, and I am convinced the knowledge and experience I’ve already cultivated make me the best candidate for the job.

I very much look forward to learning of your decision soon. Please feel free to contact me if you need more information about my qualifications.

Thank you again for the exhilarating interview.

Sample: Thank-you Email for Damage Control

Thank you for the time you took to interview me for the animator position.

After our interview, I'm convinced that I have three ingredients you're looking for in your workshop animators. You expressed some concern at the interview that I have not worked in a career planning department. I want to stress, however, that I have participated significantly in the hiring process for my sorority and have a solid record of achievement in my industrial relations courses.

As for your requirements for public-speaking experience, my experience as a leader of new student orientation at my university for two years as well as high grades in public-speaking classes qualify me nicely.

Finally, I have enclosed some writing samples to further demonstrate the third requirement, my communication skills.

Thank you again, Ms. Smith, for this wonderful opportunity to interview for the workshop animator position. I won't let you down if you give me the chance to show what I can do. I eagerly await the next step in the process.

Sample: Thank-you Email that Restates an Understanding of the Next Step in the Process

It was such a pleasure to meet with you Monday about the marketing position at Cirque du Soleil. I thank you most sincerely for your time in getting to know me and answering all my questions about this exciting position.

Our meeting confirmed to me that this is the right position for me and that I have a great deal to offer your company. My marketing major and French literature minor, combined make me the ideal candidate.

My understanding from our meeting is that the next step is for me to meet with your Vice-President for Marketing, Mr. Tremblay. I can meet with him at any time is convenient and I am very much looking forward to speaking with him.

Mr. Chambord, I am truly grateful for the opportunity to meet with you, and I look forward to hearing from you soon about a meeting with Mr. Tremblay.

Sample: Thank-you Email After an Interview at a Career Fair

Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with me at the McGill Management Career Fair yesterday. I certainly appreciate your time and attention in the midst of so many students seeking jobs.

You were extremely thorough in explaining Boston Consulting Group's Management trainee program. Now that I have a better idea what the position entails, I am even more certain that I would be an outstanding member of your team. My solid education in management and the fact that I have worked my way through college show a strong work ethic and determination, two qualities you said were essential to success at Boston Consulting Group.

I would like to take the opportunity to visit the Boston Consulting Group's headquarters and speak to you further about the management trainee program. I'll contact you early next week to arrange an appointment to talk further.

Ms. Barley, thanks again for your time and attention.

Resources on Interviews and Thank-You Letters

Books available at CaPS include:

- Allen, Jeffrey G., *The Complete Q & A Job Interview Book (4th edition)*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004.
- Cosentino, Marc P., *Case in Point: Complete Case Interview Preparation (5th edition)*, Needham, MA: Burgee Press, 2007.
- Hansen, Katherine. *Dynamic Cover Letters For New Graduates*. Ten Speed Press, 1998. Berkeley, CA:
- Landry, Sylvia I., *Ditch the Flip-flops: Ace your Job Interview Fresh Out of College*, Winnetka, IL: Keystone Three LLC, 2007.

For the complete Resource Centre catalogue and regularly updated lists of relevant websites, please visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/services/resource-centre/catalogue/>.

For a regularly updated list of relevant websites on interviewing, please visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/job-search/interviewing/>.

It is a wonderful moment when all of your hard work – assessing your skills and values, re-searching organizations and positions of interest, writing targeted C.V.s and cover letters, conducting information interviews and preparing for job interviews – finally comes together and someone makes you an offer!

So...after you pump your fists in the air, jump up and down and call everyone you know...what comes next?

Well, you say yes of course! Or do you?!

You may feel pressure to accept the job offer immediately, particularly if it is communicated in person. If you have evaluated the job and the organization carefully, feel that the position is the right one for you at this time, know all that you need to about the job conditions (salary, benefits, start date, length of contract/commitment, hours, who you will be reporting to) and are enthusiastic and happy to accept, then by all means inform the employer on the spot.

It is completely acceptable, however, to request time to evaluate the offer and ask any questions you may still have. If you do this, be sure to clearly communicate your concrete interest and enthusiasm for the position when you ask for time to think it over, to reassure those on the hiring side. You also need to clearly indicate when you will get back in touch with your potential employers (i.e. within 12 hours, first thing Monday morning). And then make sure you follow up within the agreed-upon time frame.

Evaluate the Offer

Is the position right for you?

As you get to know the organization and position through research, networking and the application/interview process, you will likely start to get a sense of the fit (or lack thereof) between you and the organization, and whether or not you could be happy and productive working there.

Here are some other questions to keep in mind when evaluating an offer:

Job description and workload

- Will I enjoy the day to day duties? Have they been clearly defined and understood?
- Will I be challenged?
- Is this the level of responsibility I am looking for?
- Will I work well with my boss and coworkers? Who do I still have to meet?
- Will this job suit my lifestyle or do I have to make changes? (ie. travel requirements, working hours, commute time)
- Do I find the company's field, product or purpose interesting?
- Can I do this job well and with pride?

Career goals and future objectives

- Do I see myself doing this long term?
- Does this fit in with my future goals?

- Is there training? Promotion possibilities? Potential career growth?
- Will I learn new skills?
- Is there job security and stability?
- Am I settling? Am I putting my ideal future goals on the back burner?

Company culture and reputation

- Is the organization in good financial health and stability?
- Do they have high turnover?
- Why is this position open?
- Are their corporate values in line with mine?
- Where do I fit in with the organization's goals and values?
- Are they empathetic, loyal and appreciative of their employees?
- Do they have established policies and procedures?
- Does the overall working style of my supervisor, colleagues and department match mine?
- Will I feel like part of the team?

If you are in the position of evaluating multiple job offers, fill out a Position Profile for each and then refer back to your self-assessment work from the first chapter, particularly your Ideal Job Profile, to remind yourself of your main criteria, and how well each position satisfies these. Pay particular attention to the match between the job and your personal values set – how well does it fit with the five core values you identified in Chapter 1?

Position Profile

Values

The top personal values this position fulfills are: _____

Interests

My most predominant likes and dislikes about this position:

Likes

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Dislikes

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Skills

The top five skills I would be using in this position are:

1. _____

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

People Environment

I would be working with people who are: _____

Working Conditions

The important working conditions present at this organization are: _____

It is rare that any job will completely match with your ideal situation. Reflect on your priorities at this stage of your life: which ones are you willing to compromise and which are non-negotiable?

Try to avoid reaching the job offer stage if you have known since the outset that you are not able, or willing, to take the job. If you realize during the interview stage that there are certain aspects that just do not fit and never will, it is more professional and considerate to let your interviewers know at the time. If you through the entire process, are offered a job by an employer who really wants you, and then tell them that you will not be taking the position due to a factor you have known about all along, they are likely to feel you have deliberately wasted their time and misled them about your intentions. It is not worth burning bridges this way at the beginning of your career!

Negotiate the Offer

Studies consistently show that the majority of us do not negotiate. Why not?

Fear. Fear of what? Of the employer's perception of us. Of conflict. Of the employer's power. Of losing the job offer...

And yet it turns out the majority of employers actually expect potential hires to negotiate and feel it is absolutely appropriate to do so as long as you negotiate professionally. Employers are not going to withdraw their offer the minute you mention money.

A successful negotiation requires planning and preparation. You need to know your interests – what you want to negotiate and why. Collect as much information as you can. Consider any job duties you may be expected to perform in addition to those listed in the job description, and any experience and/or skills you possess over and above what they are looking for. Know salary levels and ranges for professionals in comparable positions with comparable organizations. If at all possible you want to provide data and justifications for what you are asking for.

Tip

Salary is only one of many aspects of a job offer which can be negotiated. Consider negotiating the overall benefits and compensation package, especially if there is no room to talk about salary. What about vacation time? Health care? A parking spot or bus pass? Spousal or family benefits? Professional development opportunities?

Just as with networking, everyone has their own individual style of negotiating. In general, however, a collaborative tone tends to work best.

Tips:

- Clearly communicate your enthusiasm for the company, the position and your interest in coming to a mutually satisfactory agreement.
- Be confident and do not be afraid to start the negotiation process. When you do this, it is more likely the discussion will focus on your priorities.
- Ask lots of questions to identify your employer's interests and priorities. Focus on the interests of BOTH parties, not just yours.
- Know what you can compromise on and be prepared to concede these points if necessary.
- Come prepared with multiple offers that you would be happy with.

Remember that if the negotiation is successful, you will soon be working with these people on a regular basis. It pays to keep your tone collaborative and positive and to focus on building relationships and coming to a mutually satisfying solution.

Your First Year on the Job: A Short Primer for Post-Graduation Workplace Success

As a recent graduate, your focus as of late has naturally been on the job search itself – on identifying and finding what and where you would like to begin your career. But, inevitably once this effort pays off, you are faced with...drum roll please...your new workplace, a world which you may have had very little experience with up to this point. Even if you have extensive work experience under your belt from summer work, a year off, part-time jobs during the academic year etc., making the transition from a “student” to an “employee” is a substantial one. It means more money yes, but also often more structure, less freedom and likely less frequent evaluations. The following tips are designed to get you thinking about how you will navigate this new world and some of the qualities which are essential to long-term career satisfaction and success.

Preparation

- **Assess your wardrobe.** Remind yourself what your interviewers were wearing and what you noticed others wearing. Buy a few things to get you through the first day or so and then go shopping as needed.
- **Figure out how to get there.** Then add some extra time so as not to arrive late and/or frazzled.
- **Review** any company literature or information provided by your new employer.
- **Fill out any required paperwork or forms.** These are often necessary to process your first paycheck, so you don't want to be late with them!

Your First Day

- **Be prepared for anything.** Literally. From being taken out to lunch and introduced to the whole office, to an introductory meeting with your boss, to LOTS of solitary reading at your desk, to “Oops, we forgot you were starting today!” Approach your first day as an adventure, remain positive and flexible, take it all in stride and make the best of whatever situation you are presented with. Recognize that while your first day on the job is a huge day for you, it's a fairly regular day for everyone else with business proceeding as usual.
- **Be on time.** Early even.

- Be on time. Early even. (This is not a typo, it bears repeating!)
- If you have not been assigned any particular tasks just yet, ask your co-workers and the admin staff if you can help out in any way. And then do so.
- Take the initiative to introduce yourself to those you cross paths with. Do not just wait for them to do so, they might not.
- If you are faced with a relatively unscheduled day, take advantage of the opportunity to do some relevant reading or research or to organize/decorate your office – it may turn out to be the last free day you will have for a while!

The First Few Months

- **Be enthusiastic and keep a positive attitude.** Remember how pleased/relieved/thankful/excited you were to get this job? Keep that in mind, even when doing uninteresting tasks. It is a fact of working life that not everything you do will be fascinating. There are boring and tedious aspects to even the best jobs, there just are. If you can do even these tasks brilliantly and with a positive attitude others are much more likely to be impressed with you and deem you competent to take on additional responsibilities.
- Continue to take the initiative to **introduce yourself to others**, and get to know as many people in the office/organization as you can, including, actually, especially, administrative assistants and secretaries. More often than not, these are the people who really keep the place running smoothly and know exactly what is going on. They can be some of your best allies in the workplace, it does not pay to be anything but polite and helpful to them.
- This hopefully this goes without saying, but **get to know your boss**. Part of your role is supporting this person, so the sooner you find out what motivates him/her and figure out how you might make her/his life easier, the better!
- **ASK QUESTIONS and clarify expectations**, on everything from how to work the coffee maker, to performance evaluations, to dress codes, unwritten office rules and more. It is much, much easier to do this early on when you are “the new person” than later on when people assume or expect you to know everything.

Additional Advice

- **Build and cultivate relationships.** Your short and long term career success will rest substantially on your ability to do this, to get along and work well with others and to communicate successfully. Start now.
- As on your first day, be consistently on time. Early even. Do not be the first out the door at the dot of five or the second your shift ends. And definitely, do not call in sick unless you are sick. Period.
- **Build goodwill and demonstrate your positive attitude early-on!** Say “YES” to things others ask of you, volunteer for tasks/assignments, cheerfully fill in for co-workers at home sick, swap shifts when you can. Pay it forward when you are the “new person” and get your positive, team-player reputation on solid footing.
- **Sweat the small stuff** – introductions, manners, email and phone etiquette, typos etc. matter. Pay attention to the details, as others definitely will.
- Learn as much as you can about your job, department, company, profession and industry. Yes, even if that means reading on your own time to stay up to date.
- **Build and maintain a professional image and reputation.** A professional appearance counts – you are now a representative of the company/organization/business and you need to demonstrate that your professionalism is up to the task. You want to be known for your ideas, not your wardrobe, so follow the old adage of dressing for the job you want. Figure out your relationship to money. You need to have a sense of how much it costs to be you. Determine what your monthly costs are for necessities like rent, food, utilities, transportation, insurance, etc. Factor in any loan repayments and important

Tip

It is a good idea to keep a spare business outfit and extra shoes in your office – you never know what opportunities might come up and you want to be prepared!

regular expenses like work clothing, phone bills etc. and then see what you are left with for more discretionary purchases. Get in the habit of putting a little aside each payday. Even small deposits such as \$20 a month add up over time.

- On the subject of money, remember that a new job often involves start-up costs for things like appropriate clothing and transportation. Budget for these, and resist the urge to blow your first few paycheques on fun stuff. If you can, put off making large discretionary purchases for at least the first few months until you have built up a bit of a cushion.
- While at work you want to look and act like the professional you are becoming, but it pays to continue to “live like a student” during your first year of work. Consider hanging on to your bicycle for your commute, continuing to live with a roommate, organizing potlucks rather than fancy dinners, etc.

Resources on Job Offers and Workplace Success

Books available at CaPS include:

Workplace success:

- Freedman, Elizabeth, *Work 101: Learning the Ropes of the Workplace without Hanging Yourself*, New York: Bantam Dell, 2007.
- Pink, Daniel H., *The Adventures of Johnny Bunko: The Last Career Guide You'll Ever Need*, New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 2008.
- Salazar, Marcos, *The Turbulent Twenties Survival Guide: Figuring Out Who You Are, What You Want, & Where You're Going After College*, Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2006.

Negotiating:

- Pinkley, Robin L, & Northcraft, Gregory B., *Get Paid What You're Worth: The Expert Negotiator's Guide To Salary And Compensation*, New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003.

Selected websites:

- Career Cruising (ask at CaPS for account information)
www.careercruising.com
- Canada – Jobs Workers Training and Careers
www.jobsetc.ca
- Job Futures
www.jobfutures.ca
- Salary.com
www.salary.com

For the complete Resource Centre catalogue and regularly updated lists of relevant websites, please visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/services/resource-centre/catalogue/>.

For a regularly updated list of relevant websites on job offers and workplace success, please visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/job-search/first-year/>.

Appendix A - 7 Habits of Highly Effective People *by Stephen Covey*

Summarized from Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, New York: Fireside, 1990.

The first three habits deal with moving from dependence to independence (i.e. self-mastery).

- **Habit 1: Be Proactive**

Take initiative by realizing that your decisions, and how they align with life's principles, are the primary determining factor for effectiveness in your life. Take responsibility for your choices and the subsequent consequences that follow. Get things done.

- **Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind**

Self-discover and clarify your deeply important character values and life goals. Envision the ideal characteristics for each of your various roles and relationships in life. It is always better to try and foresee situations. Predict outcomes and then think of worst case scenarios. This will help you come up with informed decisions.

- **Habit 3: Put First Things First**

Plan, prioritize, and execute your week's tasks based on importance rather than urgency. Evaluate if your efforts exemplify your desired character values, propel you towards goals, and enrich the roles and relationships elaborated in Habit 2. Prioritization is the key to success in business and in life. Being proactive rather than reactive leads to success

The next three have to do with interdependence (i.e. working with others).

- **Habit 4: Think Win-Win**

Genuinely strive for mutually beneficial solutions or agreements in your relationships. Value and respect people by understanding a "win" for all is ultimately a better long-term resolution than if only one person in the situation had gotten their way. Everyone will feel inclusive and involved, and a better environment of trust and loyalty is established.

- **Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood**

Use empathetic listening to be genuinely influenced by a person, which compels them to reciprocate the listening and take an open mind to being influenced by you. This creates an atmosphere of caring, respect, and positive problem solving, and can avoid misunderstandings. It is a good idea to listen twice as much as you talk since we have two ears to listen and one mouth to talk!

- **Habit 6: Synergize**

Combine the strengths of people through positive teamwork, so as to achieve goals no one person could have done alone. Encourage meaningful contribution, and model inspirational and supportive leadership to yield the most prolific performance out of a group of people. Everyone is a master of something and not everything. Positive potentials can be put together to achieve better results.

The last habit relates to self-rejuvenation.

- **Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw**

The balancing and renewal of your resources, energy, and health is necessary to create a sustainable long-term effective lifestyle. This involves constant improvement of one's self in order to be a better human being and to sharpen one's skills in order to achieve better results.



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