

# **Job Search Training Program**

## **Unit 1: Constructing Résumés**

### ***Teacher's Guide***



# Unit 1: Constructing Résumés

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**Purpose Statement:**

In this unit, the worker will focus on an essential self-marketing tool by understanding and creating error-free, effective résumés.

**Unit Objective:**

Upon completion of this unit, workers will demonstrate an understanding of the principles behind effective résumé writing, as well as create and revise résumés to market themselves to potential employers.

**Specific Objectives:**

Upon completion of this unit, the worker will be able to:

- Describe the basic sections of a résumé and what they should include.
- Determine and transcribe the relevant sections of a résumé.
- Use the writing process to create/modify one or more employer-oriented versions of their résumé.
- Use résumé tips and checklists to edit and perfect their résumé.

**Resources:**

- § Summit Student Guide
- § *Career Focus Canada, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed.* (Chapter 5)
- § Internet access
- § *Résumés for Dummies, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed.* (or 4<sup>th</sup>)

**Evaluation:**

Formative: Introduction, Ten Minute Resume, Drafting Your Resume

Summative: Completing the Resume Process

**Length:**

2 hours – 3 hours

## Table of Contents/Unit Activity Checklist (for the corresponding Student Guide):

Note that the activity checklist (ü column) focuses on tasks to be completed, including, for the most part, readings external to the Student Guide, as well as activities to be completed in the Handbook or on separate paper. Have the worker use the checklist to monitor his/her progress as they work through the unit.

Section/Subsection	Page(s)	Activity	Completion Details	ü
<b>Introduction</b>			Introductory Quiz and reflection	<b>q</b>
<b>Ten Minute Résumé</b>			Fill-in appropriate information	<b>q</b>
<b>Getting Ready to Write</b>				<b>q</b>
<b>Résumé Components</b>				<b>q</b>
<b>The Writing Process</b>				<b>q</b>
<b>Drafting Your Résumé</b>			Completion of résumé template	<b>q</b>
<b>Resume Checklist</b>				<b>q</b>
<b>Unit Assignment Rubric</b>				-

## UNIT GUIDE

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### Introduction

- § The introductory quiz and reflection in this unit is a good way to assess how well your worker knows her-/himself and to provide an interesting way of opening the unit.

#### Answer Key:

1. What is a résumé?
  - a) A self-marketing tool.
  - b) A written representation of who you are.
  - c) A list of ingredients and a set of instructions as to what to do with them.
2. What is the purpose of a résumé?
  - a) To get you a job.
  - b) To get you an interview.
  - c) To get you a date.
3. What information should you include in your résumé?
  - a) A list of education, work experience and skills you would need for the job you want.
  - b) A comprehensive list of your past jobs, education, skills, interests and accomplishments.
  - c) A selective list of education, work experience and skills as related to the job you want.
4. How many different résumés should you have?
  - a) Just one.
  - b) One résumé for each unique type of job for which you are applying.
  - c) Two or three.
5. How long will the typical employer or recruiter spend on each résumé he looks at?
  - a) As long as it takes them to read the entire résumé thoroughly and attentively.
  - b) Thirty seconds to one minute.
  - c) Until they find a reason to put it down and go on to the next one.
6. What do you need to know to write a good résumé?
  - a) Yourself.
  - b) Einstein's theory of relativity.
  - c) Yourself and the type of work you are applying for.
7. Is it okay to stretch the truth or "pad" your résumé?
  - a) No.
  - b) Yes.
  - c) Only if you are applying to work for the government.

8. What is the best way to organize information in a résumé?
- a) Alphabetically.
  - b) By always making sure what the reader is processing is the next best thing about you.
  - c) Chronologically.
10. What should you always send along with your résumé?
- a) A picture of yourself.
  - b) A cover letter.
  - c) A large wad of bills, preferably tens and twenties.

\*Extracted from "The next Steps résumé Quiz," <http://www.nextsteps.org/resume/resquiz.html>.

Take a few moments after the worker has completed the quiz to go over the following questions, as found in the worker's handbook:

- Have you ever written a résumé? More than one?
- If yes, when? How did you feel about it?
- What do you think are the three most important tips to remember when writing a résumé?

## Ten Minute Resume

- § Worker should complete the résumé outline provided in their Student Guide

## Getting Ready to Write The Outstanding Résumé

- § Workers should be aware that the potential employer's attention must be captured within 15 seconds after first viewing their résumé. It is not simply a glorified list of academic and work related accomplishments. Encourage the worker to think of it as a professionally documented version of who you are and how well you would fulfill a specific position.
- § Emphasis should be put on the distinction between Reverse Chronological and Functional résumés.
- § It is important for workers to explore examples of "outstanding" résumés whether on file or online. If you feel comfortable, bring a copy of your own.
- § Refer the worker to the "Résumé Writing" article in the Online Supplementary Resources.

Resources:

"Guide: Résumés," [http://www-english.tamu.edu/pubs/tamu%5Ftech%5Fwriting/Guides/job\\_docs.htm](http://www-english.tamu.edu/pubs/tamu%5Ftech%5Fwriting/Guides/job_docs.htm).

"Creative Methods for Finding Work in the Hidden Job Market," *Career Development eManual*, University of Waterloo.

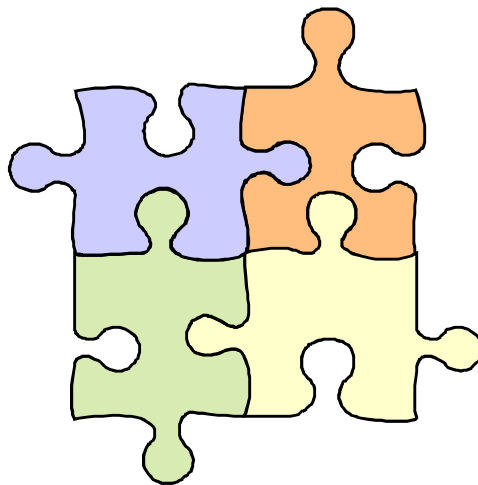


## Résumé Components

### The Sections of a Résumé

- § Résumés are divided up into important sections as a way of guiding the reader through the information presented in a logical and purposeful way. Explain to your worker that the choice of headings and order in which they appear go a long way towards your initial impression with a potential employer.
- § Headings are not only used for organizational purposes, but to emphasize specific accomplishments that you think are relevant to the position you are applying for.
- § Go over each section individually using examples from the textbook, *Résumés for Dummies* and the JST Online Supplementary Resources.

Resources:  
Career Focus Canada, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition  
*Résumés for Dummies*  
JST Online Supplementary Resources



## Writing Your Résumé

### The Writing Process

- § Workers should be aware of each individual stage of the writing process: Pre-writing, Drafting, Revising/Editing, and Publishing.
- § It is important to emphasize that, as with most published written work (e.g., essays), both the pre-writing and revising/editing stages should take up a significant portion of the overall writing process. An effective strategy for emphasizing this point would be to draw a pie graph on the board and allocate time frames in addition to important criteria at each stage.

Resource:  
Career Focus Canada, 4th Ed



### Drafting Your Résumé

- § Allow workers to begin compiling all of the information that they need to draft their résumé effectively. This may involve looking back through their notes to locate important pieces of information (e.g., previous employers).
- § Review the various résumé formats presented in this unit. As an alternative, provide the worker with some time to research different résumé formats online using Google, etc. This will allow them to find a personalized style that is right for them. Make sure that they receive your approval before beginning to write.
- § Complete the Résumé Process checklist (have the worker show you their work after each stage to ensure that they are on the right track).
- § Appendices from the Student Handbook are also very helpful at this stage for suggested formatting (e.g. font styles, sizes, etc).
- § Ensure that the worker then submits the Checklist sheet.
- § You will be grading the worker's résumé after they have completed this unit. The



worker will be graded based on the rubric on the following page.

- § **VERY IMPORTANT NOTE:** After the worker has produced his/her final copy of the résumé, you will then send it via email to Summit's Employment team. They will review it, and possibly suggest changes to be made before you/the worker submit(s) the résumé to job opportunities.



# Unit One Summative Assignment

Résumé Checklist		
At Summit, we ensure documents are accurate and effective at communicating their messages to the intended recipient. As part of this quality assurance, we check and amend your job search documents – we call this “2 <sup>nd</sup> Eye-ing”. This is simply intended to ensure nothing was overlooked by the person who first created the document. Essentially, when a document is given to your instructor for submission, it is all but “ready to go,” according to the person who created it.		
Documents sent for a 2 <sup>nd</sup> Eye should <u>not</u> be draft copies that need re-writing or editing.		
OVERALL APPEARANCE		
FORMAT		ü
Pleasing to the eye	White space, balanced margins, etc.	
Consistent	Consistent font style, bullet style, spacing throughout, etc.	
Distinctive	Name (in header) is slightly larger, bolded on first page, included on second page (if applicable)	
CONTENT		
Substantive	There is some ‘meat’ to what is being said; no fluff	
Demonstrative	Displays ability to do the job	
Bulleted Information	Is organized in order of importance; uses action verbs whenever possible	
Perspective	Information is framed in the terms of potential employer	
Benefit	Information is framed in terms of the benefit the employer will gain	
Concise	Use only as many words as required; no fluff	
Clear	Clear wording; limit use of acronyms (e.g. OSSD); words like WHMIS are acceptable as they are widely used	
Spell checked	No red squiggly lines (MS Word) unless under names of people or places	
Grammar checked	No green squiggly lines (MS Word)	
Consistent tense	Same past/present tense used throughout	
RÉSUMÉ SPECIFICS		
FORMAT		ü
Career Objective	Objective is clearly stated, brief, in sentence form and modified for the job	
Sections	5-6 parts are included: Contact Info, Skills/Qualifications, Education, Experience, Personal/Other	
Style	Uses ‘Combination’ format (or “Functional” vs. “Chronological”) Student uses the style that is appropriate for their situation e.g. Reverse Chronological used to emphasize employment growth patterns, Functional used when changing career goals or have changed employment too frequently	
Chronology	Most recent & relevant employment/education info placed first only 5-10 years included	
Length	1-2 pages; more than 2 is too long for most applications	
CONTENT		
Tangible	Specific and clear information	
Relevant	Is information relevant to employer? (e.g., no Boy Scout achievements) and avoids possible controversial topics (e.g. religious or political affiliations)	

Pronouns	No "I" or other first person pronouns used	
Verbs	Action verbs are varied and in the past tense	
Keyword Dense	Utilize keywords and skill descriptions as many résumés are filtered	
Application-specific	Does it have to do with the position being applied to? Attach a job description if applicable	
References	An accompanying list of references has been supplied	

## Rubric

### COMPLETING THE RÉSUMÉ PROCESS

	1 UNSATISFACTORY (does not complete the assignment requirements)	2 SATISFACTORY (fulfills the assignment requirements)	3 VERY GOOD (high-quality assignment)	4 HONOURS (goes beyond the assignment requirements)
<i>Overall Appearance: Format</i>	Résumé is unappealing and plain, many inconsistencies and lack of fluidity.	Résumé is somewhat appealing, appearance of a formatting plan, some inconsistencies.	Résumé is visually appealing. Standard formatting, "clean" looking.	Résumé is outstanding. Formatting is eye-catching and professional, attention paid to consistency.
<i>Overall Appearance: Content</i>	Almost no checklist criteria are met.	Some checklist criteria are met.	Most checklist criteria are met.	All checklist criteria are met.
<i>Résumé Specifics: Format</i>	Almost no checklist criteria are met.	Some checklist criteria are met.	Most checklist criteria are met.	All checklist criteria are met.
<i>Résumé Specifics: Content</i>	Almost no checklist criteria are met.	Some checklist criteria are met.	Most checklist criteria are met.	All checklist criteria are met.
<i>Writing Process &amp; Overall Effort</i>	The student has not shown evidence of using the writing process.	The student has used some aspects of the writing process, or has used the writing process ineffectively.	The student has used some method of pre-writing and spent time drafting and editing/revising the composition before publishing.	The student has not shown evidence of using the writing process.
<i>Ability to Modify Resume</i>	Student is unable to modify their resume to match employer needs	Student requires much assistance to modify their resume to match employer needs	Student requires some assistance to modify their resume to match employer needs	Student is able to modify their resume independently to match employer needs
TOTAL				/25

Positive Comments / Recommendations for Growth:

# **Job Search Training Program**

## **Unit 2: Constructing Cover Letters**

### ***Teacher's Guide***



# Unit 2: Constructing Cover Letters

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**Purpose Statement:**

In this unit, the worker will focus on constructing and customizing cover letters.

**Unit Objective:**

Upon completion of this unit, the worker will create and modify effective and professional cover letters.

**Specific Objectives:**

Upon completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify the parts of a professional cover letter and use them in creating letters.
- Analyze and assess cover letters for strengths and weaknesses.
- Produce and use organized and customized employer-centred cover letters for self-promotion.

**Resources:**

- § Summit Student Guide
- § *Career Focus Canada, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed.* (Chapter 6)
- § Internet access
- § *Cover Letters for Dummies, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*

**Evaluation:**

Summative: Critiquing a Cover Letter and Writing a Cover Letter

**Length:**

1.5 hours – 2.5 hours

## Table of Contents/Unit Activity Checklist (for the corresponding Student Guide):

Note that the activity checklist (ü column) focuses on tasks to be completed, including, for the most part, readings external to the Student Guide, as well as activities to be completed in the Handbook or on separate paper. Have the worker use the checklist to monitor his/her progress as they work through the unit.

Section/Subsection	Page	Activity	Completion Details	ü
<b>The Cover Letter</b>				q
<b>DOs and DON'Ts</b>				q
<b>Writer Beware</b>				q
<b>Critiquing a Cover Letter</b>				q
<b>Writing a Cover Letter</b>				q
<b>Appendix A</b>				-

## UNIT GUIDE

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### Introduction

- § This unit centres on a vital component of the successful job search: the cover letter. Although the worker may have many questions regarding the purpose of the cover letter (e.g., if I already have presented all of my information in my résumé, what's the point?), they should clearly understand that an effective cover letter is often the difference between having a résumé thrown in the garbage or receiving a phone call for an interview.
- § Encourage workers to carefully read “10 Ways to Score a Job Offer” by Rachel Zupek and discuss the importance of having a clear career goal and the importance of “selling yourself” to potential employers.
- § Workers should understand that what most employers are looking for is the right “fit” for their business at that particular time. The cover letter therefore serves as a unique articulation of why you are the “right fit” for the job.



## The Cover Letter

### Benefits

- § Explain to the worker that the cover letter is not simply a one page document that says “here is my résumé,” rather a personalized explanation of why you are the best person for the job.
- § Develop an objective statement orally with your worker as a means of providing them with examples of important points to be included in the cover letter.
- § For example, a strong start to an objective statement could begin as follows:

*“I am highly motivated with a strong desire to utilize my strong organizational and interpersonal skills as an administrative assistant. My goal is to fulfill a role in which I can demonstrate my versatility and attention to detail in the working environment...”*

Resources:

\*Extracted from *Job Hunting For Dummies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., p.121.



## The Pitfalls

- § As with any important process or decision in life, it is important to adequately weigh the advantages and disadvantages. Explain to the worker that this is especially true when creating a cover letter.
- § It is important that workers are also aware of the various hazards of writing a cover letter and attaching it to their résumé. Go through the comparisons in the chart and discuss the various things that they should be aware of.
- § Also, explain that this is not an assumption by instructors that they will be making each error presented but simply a helpful tool to use as a guide throughout the writing process.
- § Some examples of problems associated with cover letters are: typos, boring the reader, formatting, misinformation, wrong phone number or email attached, etc.
- § Have workers brainstorm a list of problems that they think may be associated with cover letters and rank them in their preferred order of importance.

Resources:

\*Adapted from *Cover Letters for Dummies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., p.73-74.



- § Highlight the format of the cover letter example provided and read through it together.

546 Mountain View Rd. Washington, TN 28391	1. Header/Contact Information
May 13, 1999	2. Date Line
Mr. Tim Peters Manager, Customer Training ARC Inc. 431 Third Ave. Nashville, TN 28392	3. Inside Address
Dear Mr. Peters:	4. Salutation
I read with great interest your recent ad in the <i>Nashville Gazette</i> . From what I know about your company and the work you do in software training, I think I can bring a great deal to the position advertised.	5. Introduction
As you can see from the enclosed resume, I am currently working for Computers Anonymous, where I manage a staff of ten people, all of whom are involved on a day-to-day basis with customer training. What interested me about the opportunity you described in your ad was the diversity of products that your company manufactures.	6. Body
Because I am an incurable computer buff, I am very familiar with virtually all your software applications — even your newest database program, which I have just finished teaching myself. More important, though, I understand how intimidated people who are not as involved with computers as I am can be when they encounter a new program, and I work very hard to make the people I train sensitive to this sense of trepidation.	
I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person or to speak with you over the phone. In the meantime, I thank you for your time and your interest, and I hope to hear from you soon.	7. Conclusion
Sincerely,	8. Complimentary Closing
Helen Jobready	9. Signature
Helen Jobready	10. Signature Line/Typed Name

References:

\*Chapter 6 in *Career Focus Canada*, "Career Correspondence and Applications"

## Tailoring the Cover Letter

- § Cover letters should not be mass produced and sent aimlessly to individual employers. As discussed in previous units, each job opportunity carries with it unique responsibilities and required skills that employers are actively searching for.
- § Workers should therefore “tailor” their cover letter to each individual job that they are applying for. Although this sounds like much more work, it is important to explain to the worker that their chances of securing their desired position depends directly on the effort they put into tailoring their cover letter to specific advertisements.
- § Carefully review the cover letter DO’s and DON’T’s from page 3-15 of the Worker’s Handbook and highlight important examples on the board. For example, listing qualifications that are already included in the résumé, telling the employer what they can do for you, etc., are all important DON’T’s that workers should avoid.

References:

*\*Cover Letters for Dummies, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., p.167.*

## Writer Beware!

- § This section is aimed at revealing some very common cover letter errors that workers may encounter.
- § Workers should thoroughly review the “10 Common Cover Letter Mistakes,” and make personalized notes for each point in their own words. This will allow them to internalize the content and apply specific suggestions directly to their own cover letter.
- § Workers should also consult the supplementary resources in *Cover Letters for Dummies, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed* for additional suggestions and points. Instructors should review the worker’s cover letter with them and highlight the more common errors.

### References:

\*From Robert Half International (CareerBuilder.com),

<http://www.careerbuilder.com/jobseeker/careerbytes/CBArticle.aspx?articleid=928&catid=>

\**Cover Letters for Dummies, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, “The Targeted Résumé Letter: All in One” (p.79) and “Close Your Letter with Freshness” (p.80).



## Critiquing a Cover Letter

§ Workers should recall the importance of “editing” to the cover letter process. Explain that both the “pre-writing” and “editing” stages are vital components of a successful cover letter. Refer workers back to the pie graph in their notes to illustrate this point (if you have not yet constructed a pie graph on the board, this would serve as an excellent opportunity to illustrate this point).

§ Exercise:

In preparation for editing their own cover letter, workers will review the example cover letter in the Worker's Handbook using Appendix A as a guide.

### Suggested Answers:

Cover Letter Criteria		Yes?	No?
1. The letter is properly dated.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How so?	It says “December 13, 2010.”		
2. The letter includes the sender's return address/contact information.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How so?	The address is “123 Lakeshore Crescent, Burlington.” It also includes the sender's name at top. It could also include the sender's phone number, although this is mentioned in the closing paragraph.		
3. The letter is addressed to a specific individual by name <i>and</i> title/company.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
How so?	The addressee is not specified in the recipient address or the salutation.		
4. The letter is addressed to someone in a position to make a hiring decision.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
How so?	The letter is addressed to no one in particular.		
5. The position sought is named in the first paragraph.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How so?	The applicant is applying to the position of administrative assistant.		
6. The letter mentions any previous contact, mutual acquaintances, and/or advertisement of the position.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How so?	The job was advertised in “yesterday's newspaper”, however, it does not mention <i>which</i> newspaper.		
7. The letter introduces the sender in an interesting, attention-grabbing way.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
How so?	It says his experience and personality make him a great fit for the position; however the statement is nothing out of the ordinary compared to other candidates.		
8. The letter indicates why the sender is interested in the position/company.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How so?	The last paragraph demonstrates interest, e.g., “I look forward to hearing from you”, as does his efforts to explain how his background matches the job requirements – he is interested because it's a perfect match! He also states, “I believe I can be that employee.”		
9. The letter highlights the relevant education/experience targeted to the job requirements.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How so?	Education is not mentioned, but probably is not relevant here. Experience is the focus of the second paragraph, and touched on in the third, targeted specifically the knowledge relevant to the position.		
10. The letter tells the employer how the sender is able to “get the job done.”		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How so?	His experience explains what he has done, and how this matches the job requirements.		

11. The letter speaks of <i>skills</i> , not just responsibilities, specific to job requirements.	✓	
<i>How so?</i> Skills from previous experience, like answering phones and trip/appointment scheduling, are mentioned.		
12. The letter mentions <i>measurable</i> achievement (real #'s, %'s or \$'s) to support skills.		✓
<i>How so?</i> In this one area this cover letter is weak; there is no real mention of measurables: what size of an office did this person work in? how many people did he supervise? How large of an inventory did he maintain?		
13. The letter makes reference to some of the sender's personality or behavioural traits related to the job.	✓	
<i>How so?</i> The sender mentions his outgoing and friendly persona, and his enthusiasm for the job clearly comes through.		
14. The letter is employer-centred, with information about the sender targeting the employer's interest.	✓	
<i>How so?</i> He mentions how the company is planning to expand, and how his skills would suit this expansion. He also talks about past supervisors.		
15. The letter shows the sender has done background research and has familiarity with the industry/company.	✓	
<i>How so?</i> The sender knows that the company is expanding, but doesn't mention too much else about the company. He does demonstrate that he knows the industry and what is involved in this position.		
16. The letter indicates a résumé is attached or follows but doesn't take the résumé's place.	✓	
<i>How so?</i> It says, "As you can see in my enclosed résumé," pointing to but not replacing the content there.		
17. The letter thanks the recipient for his/her time and interest.	✓	
<i>How so?</i> He says, "Thank you very much for the opportunity ..."		
18. The letter includes telephone numbers where the recipient can be reached.	✓	
<i>How so?</i> He says, "I can be reached at 905-555-8080."		
19. The letter indicates <i>active</i> follow-up or 'next steps' that will be taken.		✓
<i>How so?</i> The applicant does not state, "I will contact you in the near future to arrange a meeting", or something similar. He is resigned to sitting by the telephone and waiting to hear from the employer.		
20. Overall, the letter uses powerful, selling words and phrases.	✓	
<i>How so?</i> He is direct, outlines how he is a match, and uses <i>some</i> strong words/phrases like "excellent fit", "worked extensively", "very interested", and "excelled at".		

## References:

\*Excerpts adapted from *Cover Letters for Dummies, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, p.147-149 & 160-162

## § Exercise:

After reviewing the answers to the last Exercise, the worker can then begin editing their own cover letter using Appendix A. Ensure that the worker takes their time reading over their own cover letter, as it will eventually serve as the final draft that is sent to potential employers.

# Appendix A

COVER LETTER CRITERIA				
Criteria	Sample Letter		Your Letter	
	Y?	N?	Y?	N?
1. The letter is properly dated.				
2. The letter includes the sender's return address/contact information.				
3. The letter is addressed to a specific individual by name <i>and</i> title/company.				
4. The letter is addressed to someone in a position to make a hiring decision.				
5. The letter introduces the sender in an attention-grabbing way.				
6. The letter lists who referred the sender and the objective in the first line.				
7. The position sought is named in the first paragraph.				
8. The letter mentions any previous contact, mutual acquaintances, and/or advertisement of the position.				
9. The letter highlights the relevant qualifications of the sender.				
10. The letter tells the employer how the sender is able to "get the job done."				
11. The letter is employer-centred, with information about the sender targeting the employer's interest.				
12. The letter speaks of <i>skills</i> , not just responsibilities, specific to job requirements.				
13. The letter mentions <i>measurable</i> achievement (real #'s, %'s or \$'s) to support skills.				
14. The letter mentions education and training targeted to the job requirements.				
15. The letter shows that the sender has done background research and has familiarity with the industry.				
16. The letter makes reference to some of the sender's personality or behavioural traits related to the job.				
17. The letter indicates a résumé is attached or follows but doesn't take the résumé's place.				
18. The letter thanks the recipient for his/her time and interest.				
19. The letter indicates follow-up or 'next steps' that will be undertaken.				
20. Overall, the letter uses powerful, selling words and phrases.				
RATING:		/20		/20
*Excerpts adapted from <i>Cover Letters for Dummies</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ed., p.147-149 & 160-162.				

## **Job Search Training Program**

# **Unit 3: Mastering the Interview**

## **Teacher's Guide**





# Unit 3: Mastering the Interview

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**Purpose Statement:**

This unit will teach the workers what to expect in an interview, and how to use interviews to get the job they want.

**Unit Objective:**

Upon completion of this module, the workers will understand the interview process, and be confident and well-prepared for future job interviews.

**Specific Objectives:**

Upon completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe what it takes to be successful in an interview.
- Understand the importance of researching companies, and how to do company research.
- Anticipate typical employer questions and effectively respond to them.
- Enhance your responses to interview questions with relevant proof stories.
- Understand the interview process, and be confident and well-prepared for future job interviews.

**Resources:**

- § *Student Guide*
- § *Career Focus Canada, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., Chapters 8-9.*
- § *Internet Access.*
- § *Job Interviews for Dummies, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.*

**Evaluation:**

Formative: Reflection, Interview Preparation, The Question-and-Answer Stage

Summative: Assignment

**Length:**

3 hours – 4 hours

## Table of Contents/Unit Activity Checklist (for the corresponding Student Guide):

As the workers progress through the module, they should check off each activity in this table.

Section/Subsection	Page	Activity	Completion Details	ü
<b>Getting Started</b>		Reading	Tim & Tom Interviews	q
		Reflection	Reflection questions.	q
<b>Let the Hard Work Begin!</b>				q
<b>Interview Preparation</b>				q
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**UNIT GUIDE**

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**Getting Started**

- § Throughout this unit, refer to *Job Interviews for Dummies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. as an excellent source of useful information. You may ask the workers to read some sections if time permits.
- § The interview scenarios present two obvious ends of the spectrum: there is Tim, the one most of us probably relate to, given our haphazard and unpracticed interview skills, and then there is Tom, the ideal that we strive toward. However, Tom is *more* than an ideal—he is the prototype of what we would look like if we actually took the time to fully prepare and ready ourselves for the interviews we face!
- § In this module, the workers have the opportunity to be a “Tom in training.” Reinforce for your workers that, through time and practice, “Tom” is more a *real possibility* than a far-fetched ideal. That is precisely what this module is about!
- § The questions following the Tim/Tom scenarios are for reflection purposes and should be assessed for completion. They are designed to get the workers thinking about the interview and what they *already know*. You may want to spend some time talking through the questions if it suits your workers’ needs. See the table below to make sure the student is on the right track for their reflection.

Reflection on Tim and Tom’s Interviews	
Tim	Tom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Late</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arrives early chats with receptionist</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rushed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finds common ground/interest with interviewer</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaning back in his chair</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leans forward in his chair and uses listening noises/words to indicate he is actively listening</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staring blankly at the interviewer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has conducted research on the company, is able to speak to their recent successes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has no questions prepared for the interviewer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asks clarifying questions about the job duties</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appears eager to leave</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides answers that are thoughtful and relates past experiences</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not provide thoughtful answers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a story to illustrate how he has overcome challenges in the past</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask more questions at the end of the interview</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asks if he can follow up with an email in a few days</li> </ul>

## Let the Hard Work Begin!

- § While job search effectiveness and success is tied to hard work *throughout* the job search process, the interview deserves special attention because it is what will “make or break” the employer’s impressions of a candidate.
- § Depending on your workers, you may need to ‘play up’ or ‘play down’ the nature of the interviewing stage.

Your workers may find the thought of interviews daunting and be quite fearful. Your workers may have never had a job interview before, may be shy or afraid of certain questions, or may feel that they are under-qualified for the position. In many cases, this fear is driven by concerns about being laid off or injured.

- ü Ease their concern and reassure them through the reading of “Confessions of Hiring Experts” that a “destined to succeed” attitude will bring success (and visa versa)!
- ü Remind them that the interviewer is also a human being. Sometimes it is easier to think, “I’m just a person going to talk to another person.”
- ü Explain that they may feel less nervous if they are better prepared. Have them write down or articulate their biggest concerns, and make a battle-plan to address them. In some cases, you may need to skip ahead in this module to address major concerns, such as explaining why they left their last job. That way, your workers can move past the fear and develop better coping strategies.

Your workers may be over-confident if they have previously secured employment without a formal interview, have extensive previous work experience or feel that the job is “below” them in terms of their skills. If this is the case, play up the interview.

- ü Remind them that the interview has “make or break” potential.
- ü Explain that you are here to help them prepare for the “worst case scenario,” and that casual interviews are the ‘luck of the draw.’ Just in case they encounter that formal interview or do not have immediate chemistry with the interviewer, they need to be well-prepared.
- ü Make sure your workers understand that having good skills and knowledge are not enough. The interview is about *communicating* those qualities to the interviewer effectively.
- ü If your workers feel they are “above” this line of work, explain that no matter how they feel, the person in charge of hiring probably feels the position is difficult and the company is fantastic. Your workers will need to communicate enthusiasm in the interview.
- § Regardless of your workers’ confidence, the focus should constantly be on the pragmatics of interview success: *being prepared, appearing confident, presenting your likable personality and impressing from the first.*

- § “Confessions of Hiring Experts” is an excellent article that looks at interviewing from the perspective of employers—as the article reveals, they are more forgiving and on ‘our side’ than one might think! You may want to discuss this reading with the workers afterward to see where their level of ‘interview anxiety’ stands.

## Interview Preparation

- § Remind the workers that “Preparation is the key to success.”
- § The workers are asked to read p.110 in *Career Focus Canada, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed.* and the interview preparation checklist in the Worker’s Guide.
- § Review each item on the checklist with the workers and have them explain what is involved with each item.

## The Questions-and-Answers Stage

- § This stage in the interview process will demand a great deal of advanced preparation in order for the workers to feel confident.
- § Try to help your workers tackle their fears. Follow the guidelines for appropriate responses in the Worker’s Guide. Many workers are afraid of being asked why they left their last jobs, so they should spend some time preparing a response for that question and any other question that raises anxieties.
- § Let your workers know that it is okay to say something ‘negative’ like “I was laid off,” so long as they follow it up with something positive: “I was laid off, so I took the opportunity to do some further training and am excited to start my new career.”
- § The worker will prepare responses to typical interview questions; remind the workers that having a clear idea of what to say doesn’t involve reciting a memorized response, which would make them sound robotic and dull. The purpose is to make them comfortable and confident, not make them worry about reciting their prepared answers.

## Standard Questions

- § Standard questions refer to the questions most commonly asked during interviews. They are used to open the interview and help the interviewer get to know the worker as a person. Remind the workers that the interviewer not only listens to their responses, but also *how* they respond: their attitude and their body language.
- § As the workers read “Questions Asked during the Interview” on p.118-120, they should make notes of their initial thoughts in preparation for more comprehensive responses in Exercise 9. C in the Worker’s Guide.

### **ANSWER KEY – EXERCISE**

- § For each of the following standard interview questions, the Student Guide provides

some insight into the *purpose* behind the question (“What does this question do?”) and *advice on formulating a response* (“How do you answer it?”).

- § The workers may refer to *Job Interviews for Dummies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., “Part IV: Lights, Camera, Talk! Answering Questions” (“Part V: Rave Answers to Interview Questions” in 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) for further guidance in preparing responses.

Responses to each of the following questions will vary; assess based on completion, according to the criteria in each section’s “How do you answer it?” in the Worker’s Guide.

A) *“Tell me about yourself.”*

Your workers should discuss their strongest work-related assets without revealing personal information.

Worker completes a personal commercial that is:

- approximately 1 minute long
- sells their strong points (why they should hire them)
- does not focus on personal items such as age, marital status, children, religion
- focusses on skills, previous work experience and achievements that are related to the position

B) *“Why should I hire you?”*

Your workers should provide three reasons why they are better than the rest. The worker should use examples that are relevant to the position to illustrate their reasons.

C) *“What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?”*

Your workers should provide three to five relevant strengths. Your workers should also choose a unique yet truthful weakness and provide the strategies they are using to overcome it.

D) *“This position can be stressful. How do you handle stressful situations?”*

Your workers should use a proof story from previous work experience and fully develop their response. Illustrations are properly structured and show a positive outcome. Worker discusses what they do to relax and refresh.

E) *“Why are you interested in working for our company? / Why are you applying for this position?”*

This is where their company research really helps. Your workers should provide information gleaned from their research. They should construct a response from the employer’s perspective; how will they help the employer. Worker should link their interests/values with those of the company and links training/qualifications with what the company is looking for in employees if possible.

F) “*What are your short- and long-term goals?*”

Goals should be work-related and not include personal aspirations. Goals are ambitious but attainable. Worker describes a plan to achieve the goals and explains how the position will help them achieve their goals.

## Behaviour-Based Questions & Proof Stories

- § In wrapping your mind (and your workers' mind!) around behaviour-based questions, think of these questions as concentrating on *job-related scenarios*—questions about how you would act and achieve success in a given situation. They help the interviewer assess how the worker would act or interact on the job based on past behaviour.
- § Behaviour-based questions are often the hardest questions to answer in an interview; make sure you read over pages 120-124 of *Career Focus Canada, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed.* Help the workers come up with some proof stories for the qualities they say they have. For example, if they say they are a team player how can they prove that to an interviewer. Maybe they had to work together on an assembly line to produce a daily quota or complete an order on time.

## Conclusion

- § Encourage the workers to review the final reminders and tips before going for an interview.
- § Review the list of employer turn-offs with the workers and discuss and clarify some of the items to ensure the workers will be their most confident, best self in the interview. Try to note these during the mock interview.

## Summative Assignment

- § In this assignment, your workers will prepare for, complete and reflect upon a mock interview. In most cases, the instructor will act as the interviewer. This means that the instructor will have to do some preparation ahead of time to make the interview as realistic as possible.
- § Choose interview questions for your mock interview carefully.
  - ü Try not to use the exact questions your worker is expecting.
  - ü Choose 5-10 questions that are a mix of standard, behaviour-based and other miscellaneous questions (i.e. more specific to the job duties).
  - ü Be sure that your questions address a variety of topics and are relevant to the occupation.
  - ü You may choose to ask an illegal question or weave one into the small talk at the

beginning of the interview.

- § Just as you ask your worker to behave professionally that day, so should you. Try to be a little more formal than normal during the interview. Both you and the worker should dress appropriately for the interview
- § Write down the worker's responses and anything notable that takes place during the interview. Be sure to make notes on personal appearance, body language and manner of speaking, as well as on the worker's responses.
- § Remember to ask the worker if he/she has any questions for you after you have finished asking yours.
- § After the interview, the workers should reflect on their performance, and you should provide some detailed constructive feedback as well.
- § By all means, be creative and make the most of this exercise—after all, how often do you get to be the one sitting on the *other* side of the interview table?



# Summative Assignment Rubric

## PART ONE – BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

	1 UNSATISFACTORY	2 SATISFACTORY	3 VERY GOOD	4 HONOURS
<i>Quality of Research</i>	No company research completed.	Completed very little research.	Completed required research.	Research is complete, thorough and in-depth.
<i>Quality of Prepared Responses</i>	Prepared responses are unacceptable.	Prepared responses need improvement.	Prepared responses are acceptable.	Prepared responses are excellent.
<i>Quality of Questions to Ask Employer</i>	Questions are unacceptable.	Questions could use additional consideration.	Questions are acceptable for a job interview.	Questions are well-thought out and excellent.
<i>Overall Preparation</i>	Not adequately prepared.	Lacks some elements of preparedness.	Prepared for mock interview.	Very prepared for mock interview.
			<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>/16</b>

## PART TWO – THE INTERVIEW

	1 UNSATISFACTORY	2 SATISFACTORY	3 VERY GOOD	4 HONOURS
<i>Punctual</i>	Not punctual	Right on time	Punctual	Punctual
<i>Professional Attitude</i>	Unprofessional manner, unacceptable attitude	Somewhat professional, neutral attitude.	Professional, positive attitude.	Very professional, great positive attitude.
<i>Motivation Confidence Interest</i>	Lack of motivation, confidence and interest in position.	Some evidence of motivation, confidence and interest.	Motivation, confidence and interest evident.	Strong evidence of motivation, confidence and interest.
<i>Suitability Experience</i>	Not suitable in many areas. No experience	Suitable in most areas Some related experience.	Suitable in all areas. Related experience	Suitability and experience are exceptional.
<i>Body Language</i>	Unacceptable	Improvement needed	Acceptable	Exceptional
<i>Overall Impression</i>	Not adequately prepared.	Lacks some elements of preparedness.	Prepared for mock interview.	Very prepared for mock interview.
			<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>/24</b>

## PART THREE: AFTER THE INTERVIEW

	1 UNSATISFACTORY	2 SATISFACTORY	3 VERY GOOD	4 HONOURS
<i>Quality of Reflection</i>	Not adequately evaluated.	Minimal reflection and evaluation.	Effective reflection and evaluation.	Accurate and thorough evaluation.
<i>Identification of Areas of Improvement</i>	Lacking or absent identification.	Limited degree of identification.	Effectively identifies areas.	Consistently and accurately identifies areas
			<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>/8</b>

<b>UNIT THREE SUMMATIVE ASSIGNMENT</b>	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>/48</b>
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Positive Comments / Recommendations for Growth: