

5 Mistakes Most Job Seekers Make & How to Avoid Them

A Complete Guide to Help You Land Your Next Job



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What Can Mastering These 5 Techniques Do For You?

Quite simply, it can increase your chances of actually being called for an interview and ultimately receiving a job offer.

Regardless of whether you are a high school student applying for your very first job or a soon to be graduate from Harvard University, this guide will provide you with practical tips that will help increase your chances of landing the job.

The suggestions and techniques outlined in this guidebook are not based on theory, but rather real world experiences.

What's an Applicant Tracking System (ATS)?

To learn more about ATS's and how they can make or break your job prospects, see [10 Revolutionary Resume Tips](#).

The 5 Biggest Mistakes Most Job Seekers Make

I'm sure there are more than five mistakes that job seekers make when applying for a job; this guide can't possibly cover all of them. Rather, my goal is to highlight the 5 most common mistakes most job seekers make and how to avoid them.

So, what are the five most common mistakes most job seekers make?

Mistake #1 – The Wrong Attitude



Attitude is everything! I'm sure you've heard the cliché "You have only one chance to make a great first impression."

Well, this does not only apply to the actual interview but everything you do up to and including your interview and everything you do after the interview.

For example, do you proofread your cover letter, resume, and/or application before submitting it to the hiring company and/or organization for review? Do you take the time to identify the name of the person to whom you need to address your cover letter, or do you simply address it by stating, "To Whom It May Concern"?

If you fail to either ensure your grammar and punctuation



is correct or research the proper person to whom to address your cover letter, the first impression a reviewer may form of you before they ever meet you is that you are too "lazy" to take the extra step to identify the correct person or perform the simple task of spell checking your work.

If you don't invest the time into writing a good cover letter, for example, you are probably not

going to get the interview, regardless of how qualified you are. You must approach each step in the job seeking process with the right attitude.

It may not be fair but it is a cold reality; employers often make character assessments of job candidates before the job candidate ever has a chance to demonstrate to the employer why his/her skills or experience are a good match for the job.

Think about this for a minute...

An employer on average spends less than 45 seconds reviewing each application submitted for a job posting.

You have to remember that often an employer may receive 100's if not 1,000's of applications/resumes for just one job posting. They have to find some way to reduce their stack of applications to a manageable number and the

easiest way to do so is to eliminate those applications first that have some type of error or are not well

Employer Screening Guidelines

1. Check for grammatical errors
2. Check for applications that don't specifically address the requirements of the job
3. Check for the job candidate credentials; Do they meet the minimum requirements as stated in the job posting?

thought out.

This strategy will usually weed out at a minimum 30% or more of the job applicants (30 out of 100). So, remember, **your goal is NOT to be a part of that statistic!**

How does attitude play a role during the interview?

Attitude plays a major role during the interview and can also affect whether you get the job.

The single most common reason why job candidates get the job is because they are **"LIKEABLE"**.

The main thing you should remember when you interview for



a job is that each interviewer that sits across from you is a person just like you. Most interviewers are rooting for you because they themselves have sat in your seat at one time or another.

However, more importantly, they are often desperately seeking someone that they "LIKE".

Think of it this way, you will spend more hours in the day, and over the course of your lifetime, with your co-workers than you will with family members. Most people know this and therefore either consciously or subconsciously seek someone with whom they feel they can get along.

TABLE 1

<u>Action</u>	<u>Time Spent</u>	<u>Work Time</u>	<u>Family Time</u>	<u>Neutral Time</u>
Wake up:	6:30am			
Prepare for Work:	6:30am-8:00am		1 ½ Hr	
Travel To Work:	8:00am-8:30am			½ Hr
Work Time:	9:00am-5:00pm	8 Hrs		
Travel Home:	5:00pm-5:30pm			½ Hr
Unwind/Dinner:	6:00pm-6:30pm		½ Hr	
Family Time:	6:30pm-10:00pm		3 ½ Hrs	
Bedtime:	10:00pm-6:30am			8 ½ Hrs
TOTAL		8 Hrs	5 ½ Hrs	9 ½ Hrs

Example of a typical work day and the allocation of hours you spend with co-workers versus family members (unless you work with family of course).

As you can see from the example in Table 1, an average employee spends roughly 2 ½ hours more per day with co-workers than with family members. So, it's not hard to understand why most interviewers are seeking someone likeable.

The fact that an employer has selected you for an interview is confirmation that you meet the minimum requirements for the position. The interview then is

really a test of whether you will be a right "fit" for the company.

Let's now explore how you can overcome the first hurdle of the review process (applying for the job), and get to the next round; THE INTERVIEW!

Mistake #2 – Quantity vs. Quality

The way you approach the search process can have a significant impact not only on whether you

actually get a job, but whether you get the job you really want!

One of the biggest mistakes most job seekers make is that they scour over all the job sites locating all the jobs that interest them, and then they send out blast emails, or mailings, without taking the time to prepare an appropriate response to each employer's specific request for a qualified candidate.



I call this the **Shotgun Approach**.

Candidates typically spray their resumes out into the universe

hoping to ultimately hit a target.

What's wrong with the Shotgun Approach?

Well, for starters, most job candidates that take this approach usually submit a boilerplate cover letter and resume, with the same text and information to each job listing.

This is like ordering a hamburger with extra pickles and you get a hamburger with no pickles. How would you feel if that happened to you? The typical person would feel disappointed and a little annoyed because you've made a special request and you feel as if your request has been ignored.

Same with employers; it takes time to prepare a job posting, and to receive a resume that does not specifically demonstrate how the job candidate meets the requirements of the job is a little annoying.

This is not to say that you can't post a generic resume to job search engines or on LinkedIn so that recruiters and employers can find you. Rather, this really only applies when you are submitting an application for a specific job. If you do upload your resume to various job search engines like Monster.com or Careerboulder.com,

then you may want to consider using a service like [Resume Rabbit](#) which allows you to post your resume on up to 88 different job sites instantly saving you the trouble of having to upload your resume to each job site, ultimately saving you countless hours.

The reason I recommend you apply to only 2 job postings daily is because quality of your submissions is more important than the number of job postings to which you respond.

What's the alternative approach to the Shotgun Method?

My recommendation is that you spend up to one hour each day reviewing job postings until you find **2** job postings that best match your ideal job.

Statistically, the first few job postings you identify during your search are going to be the most relevant. If you spend too much time researching and applying to multiple job postings, generally, fatigue begins to set in and you are less likely to review the entire job posting. You are also more likely to spend less time on each application making sure it's customized to meet the specifications of a particular job announcement.

As a result, your cover letter and resume will likely not match up to the employer's requirements. The outcome; your application makes the "trash" pile and not the "interview" pile.

Additionally, it has been my experience that a typical job candidate will find between 10 to 20 truly relevant job postings a week. After a week, you will tend to find that the same job postings keep recycling and appearing in your

search results, or alternatively the employer will repost the same job announcement after a few weeks.

Thus, your time is better spent making sure the cover letter, resume, and application are perfectly customized and address each requirement spelled out in the job announcement.

Mistake #3 – Generic Cover Letter

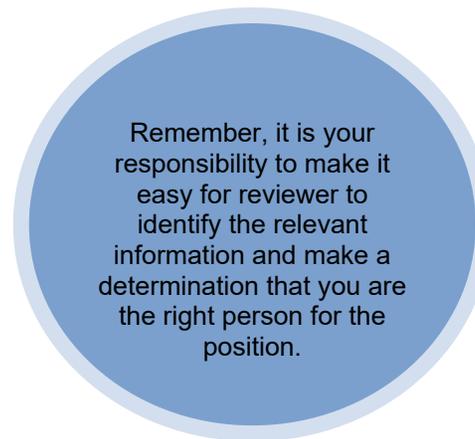
What is a cover letter? A cover letter is a written summary introducing you and your resume to potential employers or organizations you seek to join. It's usually the first document an employer sees and therefore is often the first impression you'll make.

K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple Stupid)

The first thing to remember is that your cover letter should be simple and to the point. Recall that the person who initially reviews the

applications spends less than 45 seconds reviewing each application submitted. Thus, you have between 10 to 20 seconds in your cover letter to make a lasting impression.

How can I do this? Well, from my experience as a person responsible for reviewing applications and interviewing job candidates, I can tell you that the best cover letters I read were the ones that briefly



outlined/reiterated the requirements for the position and demonstrated how the candidate met or exceeded those requirements.

That is why it is important that you write a **unique** cover letter for each position for which you apply because you want to make sure your cover letter is directly related to the job posting.

What is the best way to organize my cover letter? There is no one way to structure your cover letter. However, there are certain elements that should be presented in your cover letter such as (1) why you are applying for the position, (2) why you are a good match for the position, and (3) how you can be contacted.

Generally, look at the job posting and identify the minimum requirements for the position. Next, list the minimum requirements/job criteria in your cover letter. Then, list the skills and experience you have that corresponds to and demonstrates how you meet the minimum requirements for that particular job.

Sample 1 - Cover Letter

January 1, 2345

Jane Smith
ABC, Inc.
456 Green St, Suite Y
Oz, NM 12345

SUBJECT: Executive Director at ABC, Inc.

Dear Jane Smith:

I wish to apply for the Executive Director position posted on Monster.com. At your convenience, I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the position and my candidacy with you. Please note that my resume is enclosed for your review.

Your Requirements

- Knowledge and experience in various social service delivery programs
- Familiar with technology and how to use technology to manage work
- Oversee the hiring, training, and management of staff
- Demonstrated experience working with public officials

My Qualifications

- Served as the Executive Director of a State funded Homeless Shelter responsible for administering Disability, Veteran's, and Social Security benefits to public and operating various job-training and educational programs
- Consulted on creation of a Records Management System developed for purpose of streamlining data management and file sharing for City of Oz service delivery programs. Further, assisted in the design and implementation of customized reporting templates to help program directors as well as department heads analyze and synthesize information for reporting, service delivery improvements, and efficiencies.
- Responsible for preparing job descriptions and job announcements, interviewing and selecting job candidates, and managing 60 full-time staff. Additionally, created a training manual for new hires and developing a staff training schedule which included identifying and securing trainers and training facilities.
- Developed, managed, and presented Annual Goals to Federal, State, and City Managers as well as City Council, State Assembly, and US Congressional Members and attended/ presented at various board & community meetings.

I appreciate your taking the time to review my credentials and experience, and I look forward to meeting and discussing in greater detail how I might be able to contribute to the success of ABC, Inc.

Sincerely,

John Doe

You can either address how your skills match the job in paragraph form or present the criteria and your qualifications in list form. See one example of a cover letter to the left.

What if I have never worked before? What information should I provide in the cover letter?



First, let's be real; if you have no previous work experience, then you are most likely seeking entry level jobs. If you are applying for anything above entry level, then you better have exceptional credentials in some other category. For purposes of this guide, let's assume you are applying for an entry level position.

Most employers understand that job candidates applying for an entry level job will have limited work experience and therefore are not as focused on previous experience. However, they are interested in

your skills and attitude. Are you trainable? Do you listen well? Are you a quick learner? Do you exhibit leadership qualities?

What is the best way to communicate that I have these qualities to an employer?

Let's engage in a short activity that will prove useful for when you are writing your cover letter, constructing your resume, as well as participating in the actual interview.

Below is a chart with two columns. The first column asks you to list a word (adjective) that best describes you. For example, "Responsible", "Leader", "Hard-worker", "Reliable", etc. The second column then asks you to list a personal example of a life experience that demonstrates how this word applies to you. See the example below.

Now, it is your turn. Think of three adjectives that best describe you

Exercise 1

Adjective That Best Describes You	Example That Demonstrates This Trait
<p><i>Example</i></p> <p><i>Leader</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>I have served as the team captain for the varsity basketball team for two consecutive years leading practices and helping motivate other team members.</i> 2. <i>I helped organize a community clean-up effort for members of my church recruiting volunteers, securing donations, and identifying a location with need.</i>

and then list at least one example that demonstrates this trait. I highly recommend that you provide at least 2 to 3 examples for each adjective listed; I will explain why later on in this guide.

Once you have completed the exercise above, you are now ready

to apply this information to the job search.

Going back to our example of writing a cover letter above, you are now going to utilize these skills or character traits you just listed to describe how you meet the requirements for the job.

Sample 2 – Cover Letter

January 1, 2345

Jane Smith
ABC, Inc.
456 Green St, Suite Y
Oz, NM 12345

SUBJECT: Sales Associate at XYZ, Inc.

Dear Jane Smith:

I wish to apply for the Sales Associate position posted on Monster.com. At your convenience, I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the position and my candidacy with you. Please note that my resume is enclosed for your review.

I understand that you are seeking someone with leadership qualities. I have served as the team captain for the varsity basketball team for two consecutive years leading practices and helping motivate other team members. Additionally, I helped organize a community clean-up effort for members of my church recruiting volunteers, securing donations, and identifying a location with need.

You will find that most entry level jobs will list certain traits they are looking for in applicants such as;

- Enjoy working with other people
- Self-starter
- Leadership qualities

So, again, similar to the cover letter Sample 1 above, you are going to list the “qualities” highlighted in the job posting. Next, you are going to list the skills you possess that relate to the “qualities” and provide examples.

I will demonstrate a little later in this guide how you can utilize this exercise during the actual interview as well. You will learn how to incorporate these adjectives and the examples as you answer the interviewer’s questions.

Mistake #4 – Boilerplate Resume

What is a resume? A resume is a summary of your skills and experiences



relevant to the field of work you are entering. It highlights your accomplishments to show a potential employer that you are qualified for the job. It is NOT a biography of everything you have done.

The mistake most job candidates make is to create one generic resume and list every experience or skill they have.

Why is this wrong? Remember, an average employer spends less than 45 seconds reviewing a job candidate's application which may include the cover letter, resume, and general application.

Usually an employer will first look at the cover letter, then the resume, and lastly the application. Once the employer has read the cover letter and determined that you meet the minimum requirements for the job, they next look at the resume to learn a little more about your past experience.

Where most job candidates drop the ball is by not customizing their resume to match the skills and experience highlighted in the job posting.

For instance, if you are applying for a marketing position and the job posting states that the employer is looking for someone with strong customer service skills, experience speaking in front of large groups,

and strong writing skills, then your resume needs to highlight these characteristics.

Let's dig deeper. Suppose you worked as an Assistant Manager at a fast food restaurant. Part of your duties included supervising staff, handling payroll, and balancing the end-of-day cash receipts. You are not going to lead with or highlight these skills as the job posting clearly stated they are interested in applicants with customer service, public speaking, and writing skills.

Notice how in sample 3 I made it easy for the employer to locate my previous education and work experience and quickly identify how my experience directly relates to the job.

I have not forced the employer to read through a bunch of text that is not relevant to their needs. Again, your job is to make the reviewers job easier and you do this by giving them what they're looking for.

Sample 3 – Resume

JOHN DOE
(555) 555-5555

EDUCATION

University of Oz

2007-2011

Degree: Business Administration

Relevant Course Work: Business Marketing, Journalism, Speech & Debate

EXPERIENCE

Assistant Manager

May 2010-Present

Silly's Fast Food

Customer Service: Greeted on average 200 customers per day, responded to and resolved 3-5 customer complaints daily, and trained 18 staff on conflict resolution

Public Speaking: Prepared presentations and presented to groups of 20 or more attendees at various job recruiting workshops and conducted trainings for staff of 18 employees

Writing Skills: Prepared written quarterly and annual sales reports for management staff and helped create a "new hire" policy manual for store

This one little step is going to set your resume apart from all the others that the employer may review ultimately creating a lasting impression in the employer's mind. This is exactly what you want.

Mistake #5 – Not Prepared For the Interview

You've made it past the first hurdle. You followed the suggestions in this guide and you wrote a relevant and well prepared cover letter and resume. The employer concluded that you could be a right fit for the job and has invited you in for an interview.

Now What? Now you must prepare yourself for the interview. And, just like everything else in life, *"Practice Makes Perfect"*. Virtually no one has gotten to where they are without a lot of practice.

Think of riding a bike for instance. Chances are you did not hop on a bike for the first time and start

popping wheelies. No, it takes practice and persistence before you are able to master staying upright without falling off the bike. Moreover, as you become more accustomed to riding you grow more confident and are more encouraged to attempt various tricks.

Same concept applies to interviewing. To become a job candidate that interviews well, you need to practice for the interview until you feel comfortable with the process. Once you begin feeling comfortable you will notice that your confidence level increases.

What is the best way to prepare for an interview? The best way to prepare for an interview is to try and attempt to anticipate the types of questions you will be asked during the interview and then prepare responses to those questions. Now, there is no way you can anticipate with 100% accuracy all



the questions you will be asked or be completely prepared for every question you might be asked.

With that said, the overwhelming majority of all interviews share certain universal truths regardless of the employer. I will show you a few tricks in a moment that you can use to help tackle certain questions.

What are the universal truths of interviewing? Well, for starters, you will find during most interviews that the employer at some point may ask a question or series of questions such as “Tell me about yourself?” or “Why did you apply for this position?” or “Tell me about your strengths?” or “Why should we hire you?”

TIP Notice how for each of the two questions presented I discuss my leadership qualities. However, remember when I said above in Exercise 1 that you should prepare **more than one** example for each adjective on the list? This is the reason

The trick is realizing that these questions generally ask for the same information. For example

“Tell me about yourself” really is asking you to share your strongest skills that are related to the job for

which you’re interviewing. Another way to ask this question is by simply saying “What are your strengths?”

So, when an employer asks a job candidate “Tell me about yourself?”, they do not want you to go into a long history about where you were born, where you’ve traveled, etc. but rather they want you to tell them about your strengths and how do these skills relate to the job?

Following is an example showing how the same answer can be applied to different questions. Also note that I am using one of the skills (“leadership”) I listed above in the exercise we conducted to answer the questions below.

For example, one response might be “I understand that ABC, Inc. is seeking a person with leadership skills. Well, I have served as the team captain for my school basketball team for the past two years leading practices and helping

So, when an employer asks a job candidate “Tell me about yourself?”, they do not want you to go into a long history about where you were born, etc. but rather they want you to tell them about your strengths and how do these skills relate to the job?

motivate my team members. I am very comfortable performing in pressure situations and that is why my team members look to me when the game is close and we need to execute a plan.”

Or, if asked about your strengths, one might answer “I consider myself a leader. Let me give you an example. I helped organize a community clean-up for my community church. Some of my many responsibilities included recruiting volunteers, securing donations to purchase tools for the

clean-up, and scouting possible locations that really needed cleaning and coordinating with the property owners a time to host the clean-up.”

Often during an interview, you may be asked multiple questions that generally ask for the same information. As an example, the first question an employer may ask you is “Tell me about yourself”. In your response you are going to state 3 or more adjectives that describe you (i.e. leader, responsible, hard-worker) and then you are going to give an example that demonstrates how the adjective applies to you as we just did above.

The employer may ask later during the same interview for you to “Describe your strengths”.

WAIT...Didn't you just list your strengths in that first response such as being a leader? The answer is yes but this is ok.

You are going to restate that same skill, for example “leadership”, and then you are going to provide a different example of how being a “leader” applies to you as well as sharing the other adjectives that describe you along with examples.

Know What's in the Job Posting

So, you were very good about carefully reading the job posting and understanding the requirements for the position. Accordingly, you can expect that the employer is going to ask you about your experience or skills that demonstrate how you meet a particular job requirement.

Your job is to prepare a response for each requirement listed in the job posting. This should be easy since you have already highlighted the job requirements in your cover letter and provided an example of how you satisfy each requirement.

What else can you expect?

Sometimes, employers want to see how well you reason through a problem you might face on the job. Don't stress, you can anticipate some of these questions and prepare for them in advanced as well. This requires some common sense thinking on your part. For instance, if you are applying for a management position where you will have to supervise other staff, an employer may ask “*How would you address an employee who has poor work performance?*” Or, “*How would you handle a situation where two employees are involved in an argument while on the job?*”

The easiest way to prepare for these types of questions is to first identify the type of job for which you are applying (i.e. Manager, Sales Associate, etc.), think about and list the possible problems you might encounter while on the job, and then prepare in advance responses to the questions. Nowadays, you

can simply “Google” a term such as “How to handle an irate customer” and find an appropriate response to a question or hypothetical situation related to your topic.

As you can see, it is fairly simple to imagine what possible issues you may encounter on the job depending on the type of job for which you are applying.

Will an employer ask such questions during the interview? Simple answer is I don’t know. However, imagine if you complete this exercise, identify some possible scenarios you might face while on the job, prepare an answer in advance, and then **BAM**, the employer asks you one of the questions during the interview. How do you think you are going to feel when that question does come up and you are prepared to answer it? Chances are you are going to feel empowered, confident, and you

EXAMPLE – Potential Job Related Problems

Job-Type	Potential Job-Related Problems
Manager	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Two or more employees fighting on the job 2. Employee’s poor work performance 3. You suspect an employee is stealing from the job 4. Your team is not meeting sales goals
Customer Service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You encounter an angry customer or member of the public 2. Customer does not speak English or speaks limited English 3. Customer asks a question for which you do not have the answer

will likely sound like an expert in your answer.

Most employers generally ask these types of questions to see how well a job candidate thinks while under pressure. By anticipating and preparing for such questions, you will once again stand above the rest of the job candidates if you are able to answer such questions with confidence and conviction.

What types of questions should I ask during the interview? At the end of the interview, the employer will most likely ask a job candidate

“Do you have questions for us?”

When asked this question, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, lead with “What is the Salary?” or “How Much Does the Job Pay?”

Appropriate questions include “To whom will I report?” or “What kind of training does the company provide?” or “What are your expectations for the person who is hired?” You want the questions to be directly related to the job.

The appropriate time to discuss money and benefits is once the employer actually makes you the

job offer. At this point, you know that the employer has identified you as the best candidate for the job.

If this was a game of poker, you could say that the employer has “tipped” their hand which puts you in a better position to bargain a higher salary.

Now, this principle generally applies only to upper level positions. Most employers will not negotiate entry level salaries. However, it never hurts to ask.

CONCLUSION

So that's it! If you follow these simple techniques, you'll surely increase your chances of being called for the interview and **LANDING THAT NEXT JOB!**

There is plenty of other information regarding cover letters, resumes, and interviewing strategies at www.oyeacademy.org and I

recommend you research these resources for additional assistance.

The purpose of this guide is simply to provide you with additional insight into what Employer's generally seek in Job Candidates and spell out for you some tips and tricks that you can use to increase your chances for success.

GOOD LUCK!

Cord Bailey
www.oyeAcademy.org

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