

Going Places

Guidebook for Minority Students

Minority students must be especially well prepared to tackle today's business world. Indeed, some would say that minority job seekers might need to be more prepared to face today's changing market.

This Guidebook is part of Business Week Careers and The Black Collegian magazines' GOING PLACES workshop. It is also a tool to assist you in your search. While your workshop leaders will make reference to the Guidebook during the workshop, it is also designed for your use throughout the entire job-hunting process.

The Guidebook contains specific sections on self-evaluation and assessment, composing a perfect resume, cover letter and follow-up letter, looking the part, how to handle the interview, and finally, a Resource section which includes some tips on networking.

Self Assessment

Whether getting that first interview or being offered the job, you are always selling yourself. You are a salesperson. Like any good salesperson, you must know your product—know yourself. If you don't know yourself, you can't sell yourself.

The purpose of this section is to take a good long look at yourself. Your aim: to determine who you are and what you want to do. Viewing yourself analytically, often critically, is not easy. But it will help you better market yourself.

Keep in mind that you're in the driver's seat. You decide what career to choose. Students often ask, "Suppose I don't know what I want to do?" In fact, many students don't but it's your responsibility to help solve that riddle.

The exercises on the next pages encourage you to begin the process of figuring out just what it is you want to do.

A Serious Self-Assessment

For starters, realize that you are not alone in not knowing what you want to do. It is the rare person indeed who has known from childhood exactly what job to get when the time comes. Most people don't know and they must search themselves to make a good career choice.

Often, due to historical factors and legal barriers, many minorities held jobs—rather than pursuing careers. Perhaps your grandparents or parents could choose only jobs rather than embarking on a career—a series of progressively more responsible, more challenging, better paying positions aimed at a specific goal. You are indeed fortunate that you have the opportunity for a career.

Should you make a mistake and choose a career that is not satisfying, it is not fatal. What's important here is to make yourself a marketable commodity, someone whom employers want to hire. You can change to something else that better suits you. At this stage it is crucial to identify your personal interests, attributes and goals so as to select a career that is compatible with those interests and aptitudes.

Remember, the more focused your career choice, the happier and more successful you're likely to be. A tight focus requires introspection—looking inside yourself—and developing a personal perspective.

Merely thinking about these things is not enough. Your ideas may be convincing when you think about them, but without committing them to paper, and fine-tuning them, you run the risk of sounding tentative, fuzzy, and unfocused in interviews. So you must write it down. This will help you focus your real feelings about your career goals. You will also be able to answer those interview questions about yourself and your interests.

Think of these ideas as serving a dual purpose: you begin learning more about yourself and you'll gain valuable practice expressing your career ideas confidently and coherently.

Just a reminder - When completing the Self-Assessment, be honest. This way the exercise will be most useful. Bear in mind that your self-assessment should be expressed in terms of careers. Be honest, imaginative, and realistic, but be careful not to underestimate your abilities.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Take stock of your personal qualities--your likes and dislikes that will determine your level of satisfaction on the job. First, focus on your general characteristics and preferences and move toward specific functional skills.

EXERCISE 1: Identify Your Likes and Dislikes

What do you like? Start with general interests—examples are reading and researching in the library, working on computers, or working in the language lab. List those daily activities you like as well as specific projects or experiences you've enjoyed. For the few who feel that they already know their career choice we recommend that you complete this exercise anyway. It will strengthen your ability to state your career goals when asked.

Interests You Enjoy

Why You Enjoy Activity

The second part of this exercise focuses on those activities you dislike. Again, we've asked you to note why you dislike a particular activity. Examples: public speaking, math courses.

Activities You Dislike

Why You Dislike Activity

EXERCISE 2: Your Accomplishments

A hint: It's helpful to think of your accomplishments in terms of securing a job. Regard your accomplishments this way even if you did them without being paid. Try to describe at least five significant accomplishments. Academic honors as well as prizes you've won can and should be included. Specific talents such as mastery of a musical instrument or membership in an orchestra or choral group can also be included.

EXERCISE 3: Your Interpersonal Skills

The purpose of this exercise is to determine how well you work with others. Inasmuch as many of you have limited experience in “real jobs,” your “people” skills are quite important. Some would say that interpersonal skills are the most important factor in the early stages of your career. Undoubtedly you will be judged on how you get along with others.

“Interpersonal Skills” include whether you’re a good listener, how well you get along with others, how well you communicate – verbally and in writing, whether you can work as a team with others.

Minority candidates may be asked questions about their abilities to work as a team with others and questions about how well they communicate. Don’t be defensive. Rather, be prepared for those questions.

List below your interpersonal skills. On the left enumerate those which you feel are skills where you are strong. On the right hand, list those where you feel you are not strong and may need improvement.

Strong Interpersonal Skills

Less Strong Interpersonal Skills

EXERCISE 4: Your Technical Skills

Possessing technical skills can greatly enhance your chances in the job market. Keep a few things in mind here. The first is that computer literacy is a must because so many jobs at the entry level and increasingly at the higher levels require that you be able to use a computer.

When evaluating your technical skills remember that many abilities and strengths mastered in a job context can be considered a technical skill. For translators, the ability to speak other languages is a skill. Examples of other technical skills include adaptability learned through extensive travel or residence in foreign countries, writing, special athletic abilities, programming, mathematical skills, and scientific capabilities.

List your technical skills.

Strong Technical Skills

Less Strong Technical Skills

EXERCISE 5: What's Important to You in a Job

The purpose of this exercise is to identify those elements that are most important to you in a job. What matters? These factors are several: salary, benefits, travel, growth opportunity, prestige, type of company, location of the job, working with other versus working alone. You can probably think of many more of these job factors.

List here what is important to you in a job. You should err on the side of being too specific rather than too general. If a temperature climate is important to you, by all means list it.

Job Factors:

Make an attempt now with the above factors in mind to describe your perfect job. What is your ideal job? Be as descriptive as possible.

My Perfect Job Is:

EXERCISE 6: Matching Your Profile with Specific Jobs

This is a wrap-up exercise in the sense that you will now take everything you learned in the previous five exercises and try to meld that information on attributes, skills, likes and dislikes, and job factors into possible career choices. The aim here is to match those personal preferences with an appropriate career choice. Choose at least three career possibilities, a primary one and two secondary choices. Later on you will develop a resume for your primary career choice.

List your three career targets here:

Career Target 1:

Career Target 2:

Career Target 3:

If your self-assessment exercise still did not lead you in the direction of a specific career choice, you may choose a career in which you have some interest. You might also consider going back and redoing the Self –Assessment exercises with an eye toward being more specific about yourself. Now’s the time to visit your Career Planning and Placement office. It’s still a good idea to continue the career search exercise and continue to the next section on creating an effective resume, which will be one of your strongest selling tools. After all, the idea we started out with was that you are selling yourself.

THE EFFECTIVE RESUME

A Persuasive Advertisement for Yourself

This is one of the most important sections of the Guidebook. Your resume is your calling card and it helps you get your foot in the door. It is designed to do one thing only: GET YOU INTERVIEWS. Just as you are an advertisement for yourself, so too is your resume.

The resume is a professional advertisement about yourself that states clearly what you've done in the past and what you want to do in the future. It should clearly and convincingly state your qualifications, demonstrate your ability to communicate, and speak the language of the field you seek to enter. Keep in mind that the resume must answer the question, "Why should an employer hire you?"

Let's work on developing our personal advertisements. But first, look at the sample resume on the next page and the **Resume Checklist**.

MARIA SINCLAIR

(e-mail)

Permanent Address
999 East 55th Street
Overland, NY 11012
(827)555-9922

College Address
2251 Sherman, Apt. #2
Washington, DC 20001
(202)723-8888

EDUCATION: **HOWARD UNIVERSITY**, Washington, DC
Major: Accounting BBA: May 1997
G.P.A. : Enter only if above 3.0 Scholarships

COMPUTER SKILLS: Enter only skills you can explain and demonstrate competency in. Companies will ask questions and test your skills.

EXPERIENCE:

Jan 94 - Present

SMITH COMPANY, INC., Washington, DC

Telemarketing Sales Representative

- Retail \$1000 in widely known publications on a weekly basis, contributing to division's regional success
- Utilize predictive computer dialers to update client's files and analyze data, contributing to the operation's efficiency
- Develop good customer relations by responding to complex questions and complaints
- Success in reaching above bonus level of sales, increasing division's production by 15%

Summer 1994

HARLEM HOSPITAL, Harlem, NY

Interim Executive Secretary

- Researched and analyzed quality management information for the Director
- Compiled and distributed executive materials for 8 divisions of Quality management
- Selected to participate in Senior Executive meetings, where major contributions were acknowledged and accepted
- Developed excellent relationship with 10-15 Senior Executives

AHF MARKETING RESEARCH, INC., New York, NY

Marketing Research Interviewer

- Conducted market research studies with 100-150 executives of various corporations using computer system
- Assessed and compiled research data into comprehensive reports, which were disseminated to over 17 regional offices
- Recognized in top 10% survey completion

Jan 94 - May 94

CEDAR LANE PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES, Bethesda, MA

Office Assistant

- Managed 25-30 accounts receivable transactions valued at over \$100,000
- Updated and created confidential patient files
- Maintained good relationship as liaison between private practice and 4-6 third party reimbursement insurance companies
- Updated business documents and revised \$5,000 in contractual agreements

May 92 - Aug 93

UNITED ARTIST THEATER, INC., Brooklyn, NY

Customer Relations Sales Rep.

- Managed \$5,000 in cash weekly, contributing to the overall revenues of \$80,000
- Utilizing excellent communication skills to greet 1300 to 1500 customers upon entering theater
- Prepared refreshments for customer enjoyment, while improving the teams feedback rate
- Selected as Interim Supervisor over 10 employees

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- National Association of Black Accountants (Howard student chapter)
- Center for Banking and Insurance
- Accounting, Math, Tutoring, and Music

Resume Checklist and Guidelines

What follows are some “do’s” and “don’t” of assembling the most effective resume for you. Following these rules will help you develop the most effective advertisement for you.

1. Choose a format which best highlights your qualifications. If you have had extensive experience in your chosen field or impressive educational credentials, that information should be displayed prominently on your resume.
2. Know your audience. It is crucial that you speak the language of your employer. To that end it is critical that you describe your qualifications in terms of what a company may be looking for or the types of jobs that you know that company has.
3. Use only quality 8 ½” x 11” white, ivory or light gray bond paper for both resume and cover letter. Colored papers and decorative typescript have no place on a resume for a job in business. You can buy quality paper at any stationary or office supply store. Usually there will also be matching envelopes.
4. Do not exceed one page. Most employers will not read a resume longer than one page.
5. A good typewriter or letter quality printer is a must and the ribbon or printer must be sufficiently dark.
6. Highlight your skills, capabilities and accomplishments. Tell the employer what you can do and what results you have achieved.
7. Use underlining and bullets to emphasize your skills and results. In the ample resume on the previous page, notice the use of these devices.
8. Emphasize your accomplishments. The resume gets you the interview, but the accomplishments will show how well you can do the job. You should stress your accomplishments from relevant paid and non-paid experiences, especially internships.
9. Use action verbs to describe your accomplishments. A list of action verbs follows this checklist.
10. Cite numbers and accomplishments whenever possible. This gives the employer a more precise view of just what you did in your previous employment.
11. Avoid using personal pronouns, especially the word “I” in the resume.
12. Avoid self-flattering descriptions. A savvy employer can see right through the overly complimentary description. It can only serve to make you look ridiculous.
13. Be honest and accurate. Never claim honors or awards that you did not actually earn. Don’t lie about your grade point average. These things can be easily checked. Many employers today are screening candidates using the services of private security companies to validate all claims made.

14. Eliminate personal information. Limit information to that which describes skills and abilities to do the job. For example, the color of your eyes, marital status and other personal characteristics have nothing to do with getting the job.
15. Don't include references. Wait until they are requested.
16. Always include a cover letter. Your resume is your advertisement and calling card. It is the cover letter that aims the resume toward the right person. The cover letter is discussed in detail in the section following this one.
17. Review the final draft with a college counselor or friend. A final review by another person can pinpoint flaws you may not have noticed. The feedback from an objective party is always useful.
18. Proofread the final product to eliminate any errors. The best advice is to read it and read it again to avoid any errors. Get it critiqued by a professional and/or a professor.
19. Reproduce your resume professionally by offset printing or other quality reproduction.
20. Proofread your resume and cover letter again. Remember, errors can close the door on you immediately.

RESUME WRITING EXERCISE

This exercise is designed to train you in describing experiences in terms that are appropriate for the business resume. Try whenever possible to start each description with an action verb. You should strive to be clear, concise and accurate about your own level of responsibility on your resume, but for this exercise, add details as you see fit to make the result of your ordinary duties sound more like they belong on a solid on a solid business resume.

Examples:

Before: Worked in lawyer's office; involved with paralegals doing research.

After: Research legal issues as assigned by senior paralegals in law firm; wrote preliminary research reports during three-month summer clerkship.

Before: Computer typist for large company.

After: Word processor for Fortune 500 company

Before: Cashier at department store.

After:

Before: Editor of school newspaper.

After:

Before: Political campaign volunteer.

After:

Translate some of your own activities and accomplishments into resume descriptions. Refer back to Self-Assessment.

Activities/ Accomplishment

Resume Description

DISCUSSION NOTES ON RESUME

THE COVER LETTER

Once you have completed a resume, the next step is putting that advertisement for yourself into the hands of the right person. No matter how effective your resume, unless it gets to the right people, you're wasting your time. That's where the cover letter comes in. A cover letter targets your resume to a specific person in a company. It is therefore not a good idea to send out resumes cold to hundreds of companies where you don't know anyone. Spend your time wisely researching particular individuals and customizing you cover letters appropriately.

The simplest solution is sometimes the best. If you don't know the name and title of the appropriate person, call the company before you send your cover letter to determine whom you should write to. If you do not know a name, send your letter to the president of the company. A resume will filter down to the appropriate person in the organization--but seldom up.

Before you send your resume use your college placement facilities and library to generate a workable list of persons and companies to whom your resume should be directed. All libraries are an enormous source of information. Most libraries have telephone directories from different cities, industry magazines and journals, and national business publications.

A SAMPLE COVER LETTER

720 Maryland Avenue
Hampton, VA 22312
November 2, 1987

Mr. Daniel Steele
Vice President, Personnel
General Information Corporation
200 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Steele:

I heard your remarks at a conference in Washington last month on corporate initiatives in minority education. Your talk was impressive. I was hoping to introduce myself after the panel, but since you left early, I am writing you this letter.

Next June I will graduate from Hampton University, which I learned from your remarks, is one of the adopted schools of General Information Corporation. As a Business/Management Information major, I am interested in securing a job in the information systems area. I would like to know whether it would be possible for me to join the Minority College Intern program sponsored by GIC. I would like to arrange an interview with you or, if it is more appropriate with GIC's Human Resource Department.

My grade point average is 3., and I have had experience working in the information management setting at the University Registrar's office and at a small business during the summers. My resume, which provides more detailed information, is enclosed.

I will call your office next week to see if I can arrange an interview.

Sincerely,

Sharon Jenkins

DEBRIEFING SHARON'S LETTER

Let's take a look at Sharon's letter to see all the things she did right.

- She included her complete return address so that if the company wanted to contact her they could do so. This is crucial information.
- She directed her letter to a specific person. Moreover, she found out his appropriate title and included it in the letter.
- She addressed him correctly as "Mr. Steele."
- She used the proper business letter format.
- In her first paragraph she establishes a connection between herself and Daniel Steele. This is good because it shows that she's done some preparation and she knows who he is and what he thinks. Keep in mind that most of your letters will not be written to people whom you've ever heard speak. In that case you create a connection in that first paragraph. Examples: "I am writing to you at the suggestion of my placement counselor". "In a recent article I learned that GIC was seeking minority college graduates."
- Sharon mentions her graduation and the special hiring program in the second paragraph. She mentions, too, her major and just how that connects with the business at GIC.
- She requests an interview and states she will take the initiative to arrange it.
- She states an impressive grade point average. Obviously it's not necessary to do this unless your G.P.A is a good one.
- She states that she is enclosing her resume as well. You will notice that she does not restate all her experience from the resume in her cover letter, rather she summarizes selected accomplishments.
- She doesn't leave it open-ended. Instead, she builds in a role for selling herself by telling Mr. Steele that she will call him back and she states she will call.
- She closes her letter appropriately.

One final point..... If you are unsure of how to spell a name, particularly one which can be spelt in a variety of ways, (such as Steel, Steele) call the company and ask.

With various changes for the different individuals and industries you may be interested in, let this letter serve as an example of the kind of cover letter you should send.

THE INTERVIEW

YOUR BEST CHANCE TO SHINE

The interview is the goal you've trained for. It is the best form of salesmanship because in the interview you're given the opportunity to show an employer "one on one" why the employer should hire you. You usually get one chance to make a favorable impression on your potential employer. This section discusses how you can turn that opportunity to your best advantage to clear up questions the employer may have about your abilities to strengthen certain weak qualifications, and to convince the employer you are the right person for the job.

The impression you make during the interview will determine in most cases whether you get the job. Despite outstanding qualifications and excellent preparation you will not be hired if the interviewer is really uncomfortable with you. Therefore, you should strive to create a comfortable rapport with the interviewer, even when you sense that the interviewer may not be totally comfortable with you. It is incumbent upon you to make a favorable impression and to leave no room for doubt about your abilities.

Students often ask what they should do if the interviewer seems biased or prejudiced. Of course, without someone making a declaration of their feelings toward you, it's hard to know for certain. Should you sense what you think is a bias or prejudice against you, proceed with the interview with your goal being to impress the interviewer with how good you can be at the job. Keep in mind too, that in the modern corporation, interviews may be conducted in a department, which has nothing to do with the department where you want to work. So, even if you dislike the interviewer, you may still want the job and want to make a good impression.

The key to creating a comfortable rapport with your interviewer lies in developing a positive, enthusiastic, self-confident interviewing style. You will accomplish this through four major things: preparation, and practice, practice and more practice. There is no substitute for thorough preparation for each interview. Equally important is that you maintain eye contact with the person who interviews you.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Listed below are some sample interview questions, some of which you are likely to be asked. Make sure you can answer them comfortably, but don't memorize your answers. Memorized answers to questions can turn off an interviewer.

1. Tell me about yourself?
2. What made you choose this field?
3. What have you done that you're most proud of/
4. What are your greatest strengths?
5. What are your weaknesses?
6. What contributions could you make to this job?
7. Tell me why I should hire you?
8. Give me an example of a major problem you've solved?
9. What is more important, the salary or the job itself?
10. Would you relocate if the company asked you to?
11. Where do you see yourself five years from now?
12. What do you do in your spare time?
13. Have you ever supervised other people? Can you do it?
14. Are you willing to travel?
15. What is your ideal job? Describe it to me
16. What are your long-term goals?
17. How quickly will you be able to contribute to this department?
18. What were you grades in college?
19. Why were they so low?
20. Name some people you admire.
21. This job requires some skill working with computers, how do you feel about working with computers and other technical equipment?
22. Why didn't you return to the company you worked for last summer?
23. What is your minimum salary requirement?
24. Why did you want to interview with this company?
25. What did you think of this interview?

Work on the practice interview with someone else. Take turns playing the role of the interviewer and the interviewee. When you are finished answering these questions, you should have the interviewer evaluate your performance at the mock interview. Use the form on the following page to rate this interviewee's skill.

RATE THE INTERVIEWEE'S INTERVIEWING SKILL

Your practice interviewer should rate your performance with this rating form.

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Very Poor</u>
1. Did the interviewee seem relaxed and self-confident?	-----	-----	-----	-----
2. How well did the interviewee communicate skills and capabilities?	-----	-----	-----	-----
3. How well did the interviewee present his/her accomplishments in future job-related terms?	-----	-----	-----	-----
4. Was the interviewee prepared with knowledge of job and industry?	-----	-----	-----	-----
5. Did applicant appear comfortable in terms of non-verbal mannerisms such as body language, etc?	-----	-----	-----	-----
6. How well did the interviewee Present his/her pat job-related experience?	-----	-----	-----	-----
7. Did interviewee appear qualified for the position?	-----	-----	-----	-----

FURTHER TIPS ON INTERVIEWS

Your objectives are best served when you observe the following guidelines. The hints below are designed to improve your interviewing techniques and build confidence. Review these tips each time you go into an interview.

A few words are in order here about the on-campus interview. Many major corporations recruit students on campus. They send specific interviewers to campuses to do interviews and determine who looks promising. The on-campus interviewers are like talent scouts. Many students discount the importance of the on-campus interview, but it is crucial and not to be discounted. Doing well in this interview will determine if you get a second interview or not.

- **RESEARCH THE COMPANY**

Learn as much as possible about the industry and the company before the interview. You should, when possible, request and read a copy of the company's annual report. This document tells about the company's losses and gains in the previous year. A call to the corporate secretary's office (a high level position every corporation must have by law) will get you an annual report. Find a way of mentioning something from the annual report in your interview. It shows preparedness and knowledge. You should also know the size of the company, its dollar volume and number of employees, the kinds of products, and the scope of its business. Annual reports supply much of this information. Learn the latest company developments through journals, news publications and media broadcasts.

- **BE AWARE OF GENERAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENTS**

Begin reading *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*. You should be conversant with the language of business. You may have to have lunch with an interviewer and it's useful to know some general information about the state of business and current events. Such knowledge shows that you know the sources of information and that you read the same materials that other professionals do.

- **APPEARANCE IS CRUCIAL**

You must be well groomed and well tailored. People are more likely to want to have a rapport with you when you are. Conservative suits and a tailored, businesslike appearance for men and women are a must.

- **TIMELINESS**

Arrive on time. Nothing excuses being tardy. Lateness undermines you. Allow yourself ample transportation time. Plan to arrive fifteen to twenty minutes before the appointment.

- **EXTRA COPIES OF YOUR RESUME**

Have extra copies of your resume in the event it has been lost or mislaid. Bring extra copies of your work or writing samples.

- **BE COURTEOUS AND POLITE TO EVERYBODY**

You should be respectful and courteous to everyone along the way especially the secretary and the receptionist. They are the gatekeepers who control whether you even get access to their boss.

- **WORK WITH THE INTERVIEWERS TO DEVELOP A RAPPORT**

Help the interviewer feel comfortable. Being relaxed and confident about yourself is one way to do this.

- **BE ARTICULATE**

Speak so you can be heard. Don't slump in the chair as if you're tired. Look alert and answer questions directly. Don't mumble or look away when you are spoken to. You should look at the interviewer and make eye contact.

- **FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE LASTING**

A firm handshake, a friendly smile, and a polite greeting get an interview off to a good start.

- **ELIMINATE NERVOUS MANNERISMS**

Rid yourself of nervous habits, such as fidgeting, playing with your hair or a pencil, and any other mannerisms. They only make people know that you are uncomfortable.

- **NAMES ARE IMPORTANT**

Make sure you know the correct spelling and pronunciation of the interviewer's name. Confirm it before the interview or with the interviewer's secretary if you are not sure

- **SMOKING MAY BE HARMFUL**

Be careful about smoking. Make sure you ask before lighting a cigarette. If you are not a smoker, do not be negative or critical if the interviewer offers you a cigarette. Many corporations are working with employees to help them stop smoking.

- **SHOW SELF-CONFIDENCE**

Don't be intimidated by differences in age, background, ethnicity or job level. Act self-assured and convey a sense of your worth, but don't act smug or brash. Don't let rejection shatter your self-confidence. One bad interview is not the end of the world.

- **LET THE INTERVIEWER CONTROL THE FIRST INTERVIEW**

In the initial interview, let the interviewer choose the subjects and steer the conversation. Avoid questions about salary, benefits, and vacations. If an employer wants you for the job, those questions will be answered. After a job offer is made, you control the next round.

- **NEVER SPEAK NEGATIVELY ABOUT ANYONE**

Don't make negative comments about other employers or companies.

- **RETAIN CONTROL OF YOUR EMOTIONS**

If by chance the interviewer says something offensive, illegal or outrageous maintain your composure. Self-control is the key to professionalism. You will have an opportunity to address the grievance later.

- **SPEAK OUT WHEN NECESSARY**

If you have an objection to something said in the interview, do speak up. But be careful how you do this. Avoid seeming too argumentative.

- **ANTICIPATE OBJECTIONS TO YOUR QUALIFICATIONS**

Handle objections smoothly. Here too, you should try to maintain your self-control. Anticipating objections to your qualifications permits you to develop effective replies. Always strive to put negative features in positive terms. When asked why your G.P.A is so low, an appropriate response might be that you took almost all hard sciences courses and worked every semester. Emphasize the positive aspect that you paid for your own education.

- **DON'T ATTEMPT TO BE HUMOROUS**

Getting a job is a serious business. Leave the jokes to the interviewer.

- **NEVER TURN DOWN A JOB OFFER IN THE INTERVIEW**

When you are offered a job in an interview, never turn it down. There is always time to reject the employer's offer, but it is all but impossible to revive an offer that you have rejected out of hand. It may not be the job or the salary that you think you want, but with a little reflection, you can always go back and accept the position.

- **FOLLOW UP**

Always send a follow-up thank you letter immediately after each and every interview—even those where you don't think you performed well.

- **VOICEMAIL MESSAGES**

Ensure that your voicemail message is professional. Voicemail messages are considered apart of the interview process.

- **WEB PAGES**

MySpace, Facebook and other web pages are viewed before final decisions are made. Make sure, if you have one, that it doesn't reflect negatively your personality.

- **PRACTICE, PRACTICE, AND MORE PRACTICE**

Keep practicing your interviewing skills. They can only improve.

THE VALUE OF FOLLOW UP

The Most Powerful Job Search Tactic

The value of a follow-up call or letter cannot be underestimated. Sending a follow-up letter or making a follow-up phone call distinguishes you from the vast majority of job seekers as someone who possesses a sense of professionalism and who is destined for success. Moreover, the follow-up gesture generates untold goodwill toward you and it may well influence a hiring decision in your favor.

Every interview should be followed-up with a letter or phone call. Letters are preferable because they create a record of your thoughtfulness and good business practice. Someone may forget to mention the fact that you called.

The follow-up letter like the cover letter is typed legibly on quality stationery. Your aim in the follow-up letter is to mention something from your previous contact with the employer. A sincere respectful approach works best.

Students often ask whether they should send a follow-up letter when they felt that the interview went poorly or when the interviewer made it clear that there were no immediate job openings. Yes. You should always send a follow-up letter. In the case of the weak interview, the letter may serve to change the interviewer's impression of you. Where there are no current openings, there may be some in the future. A follow-up letter will serve to keep you in the forefront of the employer's mind.

On the following page, take a look at the follow-up letter Sharon Jenkins sent to Brenda Borden, Vice President for management Information Systems, after she was interviewed.

A SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP LETTER

720 Maryland Avenue
Hampton, VA
December 4, 1987

Ms. Brenda Borden
Vice President
Management Information Systems
General Information Corporation
200 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Dear Ms. Borden:

Thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule to meet with me yesterday. Discussing GIC's plans for becoming the leader in the information technology field was most fascinating.

After speaking with you I am more convinced about the contributions I could make to GIC. As part of my Management major, I took several courses in the latest information technologies, including the newest system GIC pioneered. As we discussed, my previous experience handling personnel information in the university's registrar's office should prove quite useful in a career at GIC.

Again, I appreciated the opportunity to interview at your company and I look forward to hearing from you. If I don't hear from you within the time frame we discussed, I will correspond with your office.

Sincerely,

Sharon Jenkins

RESUME REVIEW

Things you should remember about your resume:

1. The **Purpose** of the resume is to, “**get you an interview.**”
2. Equate or treat your resume as your **annual report.**
3. A “**One Page**” resume is most effective.
4. Use a **Bullet Format** (do not use a paragraph format).
5. Always try to identify what you have **accomplished** in past positions or what **impact** you made while in a position.
6. Speak the language of the industry you are pursuing.
7. Have a **Quantified** resume (i.e., use \$, #, %). You can also **translate inventory** that you have managed into dollars.
8. Use **ranges** when unsure of exact numbers (e.g., 25-30).
9. Use **action verbs** that emphasize your accomplishments (List Provided).
10. Also use **adverbs** periodically at the beginning of your bullets (e.g., Effectively, Efficiently, Creatively, Successfully, etc.).
11. Try **not** to use personal pronouns (e.g., I, my, etc.).
12. **Transferable Skills** should always be noted (i.e., anytime you have **supervised, managed, or trained** anyone).
13. **When identifying dates of employment** use month and year (e.g., 1/01 – 5/02 or Jan. 2001 to May 2002). **Do not** indicate that you worked in a position from 2001 to 2002.
14. If you are paying for your College Education, indicate this information in your Education category and indicate by what percentage (e.g., **Financing 100% of College Education**). By the same token, indicate any major scholarships you are receiving in this same area.
15. **Transition Verbiage** should be utilized as often as possible (i.e., after identifying what you have accomplished in the first part of the bullet, indicate how what you accomplished impacted where you were working (e.g., Effectively managed \$20,000 in products weekly, **impacting \$100,000 in revenues generated for the entire store.**). Other key transition verbiage could be – *increasing...or decreasing...or saving the company...*
16. Don't forget, sometimes the **Volunteer Jobs** that you have had, may have entailed you handling more money or handling greater responsibilities, than in your paid positions. So, don't discount Volunteer positions you've had in your past.
17. Leave out periods behind State abbreviations (i.e., DC, MD) – be consistent.
18. Dates can be on the left or right side.
19. Spaces between jobs can be reduced to maximize space, also narrow margins.
20. Schools attended do not have to be listed chronologically – they can be side-by-side, with Howard on the left.
21. Freshmen can have high schools on their resumes, but when they become sophomores, they should drop the high school information, unless it is very significant and can be justified.
22. Skills do not have to be only computer skills (e.g., language skills, etc.), and can be listed at the top or bottom of resume.
23. It isn't mandatory to put “Financing Education” on the resume but encouraged.
24. If you have several scholarships, you don't have to list all scholarships, you can simply state, “education financed through various scholarships.

