

PFL Academy

Teacher Guide: Chapter 15.3 — Job Application Process

OVERVIEW

TIME	MATERIALS	PREREQUISITES
45-50 Minutes	Student Activity Packet, Application Simulator	Chapter 15.2 (Resume Building)

LESSON FLOW

5 min THE CHALLENGE

- Read Alex's job search transformation story aloud or have students read silently.
- Discussion prompt: "Have you or someone you know ever applied to many jobs without hearing back? What do you think went wrong?"
- Preview how strategic application approaches dramatically improve success rates.

10 min CORE CONCEPTS

- Review the 5 key terms. Emphasize that ATS systems filter most applications before humans see them.
- Discuss the 70-80% networking statistic—most jobs are never publicly posted.
- Quick check: Ask students why they think companies use ATS systems (efficiency, standardization, managing volume).

25-30 min APPLY IT

- **Part A (10 min):** Job Description Analysis. Walk through the sample posting together, then have students identify keywords. Discuss required vs. preferred qualifications.
- **Part B (10 min):** ATS Optimization Scenarios. Students evaluate each scenario. Discuss why simple formatting beats creative design for ATS.
- **Part C (5-10 min):** Networking Strategy. Students brainstorm approaches for their field of interest.

10 min CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- Complete in class or assign as homework.
- Review Q3 (why tailoring matters) and Q5 (personal strategy) to assess application of concepts.
- Preview Day 2 Learning Lab: Creating cover letters, using application simulators, and peer review.

DIFFERENTIATION

Support

- Provide a highlighted version of the job description with keywords already identified.
- Create a checklist for ATS optimization that students can reference.
- Offer networking strategy templates (e.g., "Join ____ association," "Attend ____ events").

Extension

- Have students find real job postings in their field and conduct keyword analysis.
- Research a company and draft a follow-up email after a hypothetical application.
- Create an application tracking spreadsheet with all necessary fields.

- Pair students for the scenario analysis activity.

ANSWER KEY

Part A: Job Description Analysis

1. Keywords (any 5): Digital marketing, social media management, content creation, campaign management, analytics, SEO, communication skills, Google Analytics, email marketing, Adobe Creative Suite.

2. Required qualifications are must-have attributes; lacking these may disqualify you. Preferred qualifications are nice-to-have that give competitive advantage. Yes, apply if you meet ~70-80% of requirements, especially the essential ones.

Part B: ATS Optimization Scenarios

Scenario 1: HURTS. Graphics, text boxes, and creative layouts can confuse ATS systems. They may not parse information correctly, causing the application to be rejected or poorly scored.

Scenario 2: HELPS. Using exact keywords from the job description increases keyword match scores. ATS systems look for these specific terms when ranking applications.

Scenario 3: HURTS. Non-standard section headings (like "My Journey") may not be recognized by ATS as "Experience." Also, unprofessional file naming doesn't follow best practices (should be: "Emily_Smith_Resume.pdf").

Part C: Networking Strategy

Responses will vary. Look for specific, actionable strategies such as: joining professional associations, attending industry meetups/conferences, conducting informational interviews, utilizing LinkedIn connections, reaching out to alumni, job shadowing, attending job fairs, or joining online professional communities.

Check Your Understanding

1. B (To efficiently filter and rank large numbers of applications)

2. B (Apply if you meet about 70-80% of requirements, especially the essential ones)

3. Tailored applications are more effective because: (1) They include keywords specific to each job, improving ATS scores, (2) They highlight relevant experiences for each position, (3) They demonstrate genuine interest and research about the company, (4) They show the employer how you specifically fit their needs.

4. Timing: Wait 1-2 weeks after application deadline. Tone: Professional, polite, and brief. Should express continued interest, reference the specific position, and offer to provide additional information.

5. *Responses will vary. Look for: combination of online strategies (job boards, company websites, LinkedIn) AND networking approaches (professional associations, informational interviews, alumni connections). Should include specifics about keyword research, tailoring materials, and follow-up plans.*

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Misconception	Clarification
"Applying to more jobs always increases my chances."	Quality beats quantity. 10 tailored applications typically outperform 50 generic ones. Strategic, customized applications have significantly higher response rates.
"Creative resume designs help me stand out."	Creative designs may hurt you with ATS systems. Clean, simple formatting with standard headings is most effective for passing automated screening.
"Networking is only for people who are outgoing."	Networking can take many forms—informational interviews, online communities, professional associations. Introverts often excel at building deeper one-on-one professional relationships.

