**Build a Network of Professionals in Your Field:**

1. Casual networks: You already have a network of friends and family, but look for other ways to build connections. For example, volunteering with community organizations can put you in touch with members of your local business community.
2. Professional networks: Attend regular meetings of professional organizations, and introduce yourself to others at the meetings
3. Online networks: Discussion lists and social networking sites for professionals are a good way to make initial contact with others in your field. Look for discussion lists that are sponsored by professional organizations such as the Society for Technical Communication and professional networking sites such as LinkedIn.

**Interview Someone in Your Field of Interest:**

You can usually locate people to interview through your

1. college placement office
2. college alumni association
3. college major adviser
4. own network of family and friends

**Find Information on Companies in Your Field:**

**Do Intensive Research on a Selected List of Potential Employers:**

1. Annual reports (often available at company Web sites and in your library or placement office): How does the firm describe its year’s activities to stockholders? What

are its products or services?

1. Web sites or media kits (available online or from public relations offices): How

does the firm portray itself to the public? What can you infer about the firm’s corporate culture?

1. Personnel manuals and other policy guidelines: What are features of the firm’s

corporate culture? How committed is the firm to training? What are the benefits and

retirement programs? Where are its branches? What are its customary career paths?

1. Graduates of your college or university now working for the firm: What

sort of reputation does your school have among decision makers at the firm?

1. Company newsletters and in-house magazines: How open and informative is
2. the firm’s internal communication?
3. Business sections of newspapers and magazines: What kind of news gets
4. generated about the firm?
5. Professional organizations or associations: Is the firm active within its profession?
6. Stock reports: Is the firm making money? How has it done in the past five years?
7. Accrediting agencies or organizations: How has the firm fared during peer
8. evaluations?
9. Former employees of the company: Why have people left the firm?
10. Current employees of the company: What do employees like, or dislike, about
11. the company? Why do they stay?

**The Readers’ Needs:**

1. They Read Job Letters in Stacks
2. They Are Impatient
3. They Are Tired
4. They Become Picky Grammarians
5. They Want Attention Grabbers but Not Slickness

**ABC Format: Job Letters:**

**ABSTRACT:**

1. Apply for a specific job
2. Refer to ad, mutual friend, or other source of information about the job
3. Briefly state how you can meet the main need of your potential employer

**BODY:**

1. Specify your understanding of the reader’s main needs
2. Provide your main qualifications that satisfy these needs (but only highlight points from your résumé—do not simply repeat all résumé information)
3. Address specific qualifications mentioned in a job announcement
4. Discuss skills or experience listed on the résumé that are directly related to the job announcement
5. Avoid mentioning weak points or deficiencies
6. Keep body paragraphs to six or fewer lines
7. Use a bulleted or numbered list if it helps draw attention to three or four main points
8. Maintain the “you” attitude throughout

**CONCLUSION:**

1. Tie the letter together with one main theme or selling point, as you would a sales letter
2. Refer to your résumé
3. Explain how and when the reader can contact you for an interview

**Résumés:**

1. **Emphasis:** You should select just a few major points of emphasis from your personal and professional life. Avoid the tendency to include college and employment details best left for the interview.
2. **Length:** You usually should use only one page. For individuals with extensive experience, a two-page résumé is acceptable—if it is arranged evenly over both pages.
3. **Arrangement:** You should arrange information so that it is pleasing to the eye and easy to scan . Prospective employers spend less than a minute assessing your application. They may even use computers to scan résumés, taking even less time

If you are writing a résumé that may be read by a computer, you may want to

* use white or very light-colored paper
* focus on keywords—especially job skills—that might be picked up by the computer scan
* avoid design features that might present obstacles to the scan, such as italics, fancy typefaces, and graphics.

**Education:**

1. Grade point average: Include it if you are proud of it; do not if it fails to help your case.
2. Honors: List anything that sets you apart from the crowd—such as dean’s list or individual awards in your major department. If you have many, include a separate “Recognitions” heading toward the end of the résumé.
3. Minors: Highlight any minors or degree options, whether they are inside or outside your major field. Employers place value on this specialized training, even if (and sometimes especially if) it is outside your major field.
4. Key courses: When there is room, provide a short list of courses you consider most appropriate for the kind of position you are seeking.

**Option 1: Chronological Format:**

* List relevant full-time or part-time experience, including internships, in reverse chronological order.
* Be specific about your job responsibilities while still being brief.
* Be selective if you have had more jobs than can fit on a one-page résumé.
* Include nonprofessional tasks (such as working on the campus custodial staff) if it helps your case (e.g., the employer might want to know that you worked your way through college).
* Remember that if you leave out some jobs, the interview will give you the chance to elaborate on your work experience.
* Select a readable format with appropriate white space.
* Use action verbs and lists to emphasize what you did or what you learned at jobs

**Option 2: Functional Format:**

This approach works best if (1) you wish to emphasize the skills and strengths you have developed in your career rather than specific jobs you have had, or (2) you have had “gaps” in your work history that would be obvious if you used the chronological format.

**Option 3: Combined Format:**The combined format uses features of both chronological and functional formats. This format works best when you want to emphasize the skills you have developed while still giving limited information on the chronology of your employment.

**Activities, Recognitions, and Interests:**

1. Activities: Selected items that show your involvement in your college or your community or both.
2. Recognitions: Awards and other specific honors that set you apart from other applicants. (Do not include awards that might appear obscure, meaningless, or dated to the reader, such as most high-school honors.)
3. Interests: Hobbies or other interests that give the reader a brief look at the “other” you.

**References:**

1. Writing “Available upon request” at the end of the page
2. Listing names, addresses, and phone numbers at the end of the résumé or on a separate page.

The first approach assumes that the reader prefers the intermediate step of contacting you before references are sent or solicited. The second approach assumes that the reader prefers to call or write references directly, without having to contact you first.

**Job Interviews**

* Do Your Homework on the Organization
* Prepare Portfolio Materials, If Appropriate for the Position
* Write Out Answers to the Questions You Consider Likely
* Do Mock Interviews
* Be Physically Prepared for the Interview
* Do your homework on the organization: Learn about the company’s services, products, ownership, and financial health – it shows your interest in that company
* Write out answers to the questions you consider likely: it will give you a level of confidence unmatched by candidates who only ponder possible questions that might come their way
* Rehearse the interview: You can improve your chances considerably by practicing for job interviews and the best technique for it is role-playing
* Be prompt at arriving: If you are late for the interview, the interviewer will conclude that you are likely to be late for work. Give yourself extra time in travel to cover any possible traffic problems.
* Maintain eye contact while you speak: Be alert, look at the interviewer, and listen actively. Company representatives are likely to consider eye contact and postures as clues to your self-confidence.
* Dress appropriately: You want to make a good impression, so it is important that you look neat, clean and appropriate.
* Take an assertive approach: Be positive, direct, and calm. Use every question as a springboard to show your capabilities and interest, rather than waiting for point-blank questions about your qualifications.
* Although you do not want to sound too “pushy”, you would take the right opportunities to sell yourself and your abilities.
* Reinforce Main Points
* Use the First Few Minutes to Set the Tone
* Be Specific in the Body of the Interview
* Do not hesitate
* Reinforce Main Points

**Follow-up Letters:**

1. Write no more than one page.
2. Use a short first paragraph to express appreciation for the interview.
3. Use the middle paragraph(s) to (a) reinforce a few reasons why you would be the right choice for the position or (b) express interest in something specific about the organization.
4. Use a short last paragraph to restate your interest in the job and to provide a hopeful closing.

Dear Ms. Ferguson:

I enjoyed meeting with you yesterday about the career possibilities at Klub Kola’s district headquarters. The growth that you are experiencing makes Klub an especially exciting company to join.

As I mentioned, my marketing background at Seville College has prepared me for the challenge of working in your new Business Development Department. Several courses last semester focused specifically on sales strategies for consumer goods. In addition, an internship this semester has given me the chance to try out marketing strategies in the context of a local firm.

Again, thank you for the chance to learn about your firm’s current success and promising future. I remain very interested in joining the Klub Kola team.

Sincerely,

Marcia B. Mahoney

>>> Chapter Summary

* College Libraries can provide basic information about career opportunities and professional fields.
* College placement offices can help students find job opportunities and prepare for job interviews.
* Networking is a valuable tool in professional development. Students should cultivate the informal networks that they already have, such as family and friends, and they should build more formal networks through professional organizations and online groups.
* Interviews with professionals and research on companies can provide important information for the job search.
* Effective job application letters take into account the needs of the reader.
* The ABC format provides a clear organization for application letters and résumés.
* Résumés should include information about the applicant’s career objectives, education, experience, and appropriate activities, recognitions, and interests. They may include a list of references or offer to make references “available upon request”.
* Résumés may use a chronological format, a functional format, or a combined format.
* Prepare for a job interview by learning about the organization, writing out answers to possible interview questions, and practicing beforehand.
* Portfolios allow technical communicators to demonstrate their abilities through sample projects.
* During an interview, present a professional image, be assertive, and offer specific answers to questions. Follow up an interview with a thank you letter.