

CharityVillage Handbook for Job Seekers

Your Step-by-Step Guide to Job Search Success

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SECTION 1:

Introduction

If you've found yourself in the market for a new job this year, you aren't alone! Whether you are looking for your first job, have found yourself recently unemployed, or are ready to move on to greener pastures at a new organization, you're joining the many Canadians who are on the hunt for new career opportunities.

Job searching can be an exciting time, filled with new opportunities and adventures. But job searching can also be an incredibly stressful, difficult time, especially if you've recently been laid off or are trying to move on from a toxic workplace. There's a saying out there that "job searching is a full-time job" and it can easily feel overwhelming or draining.

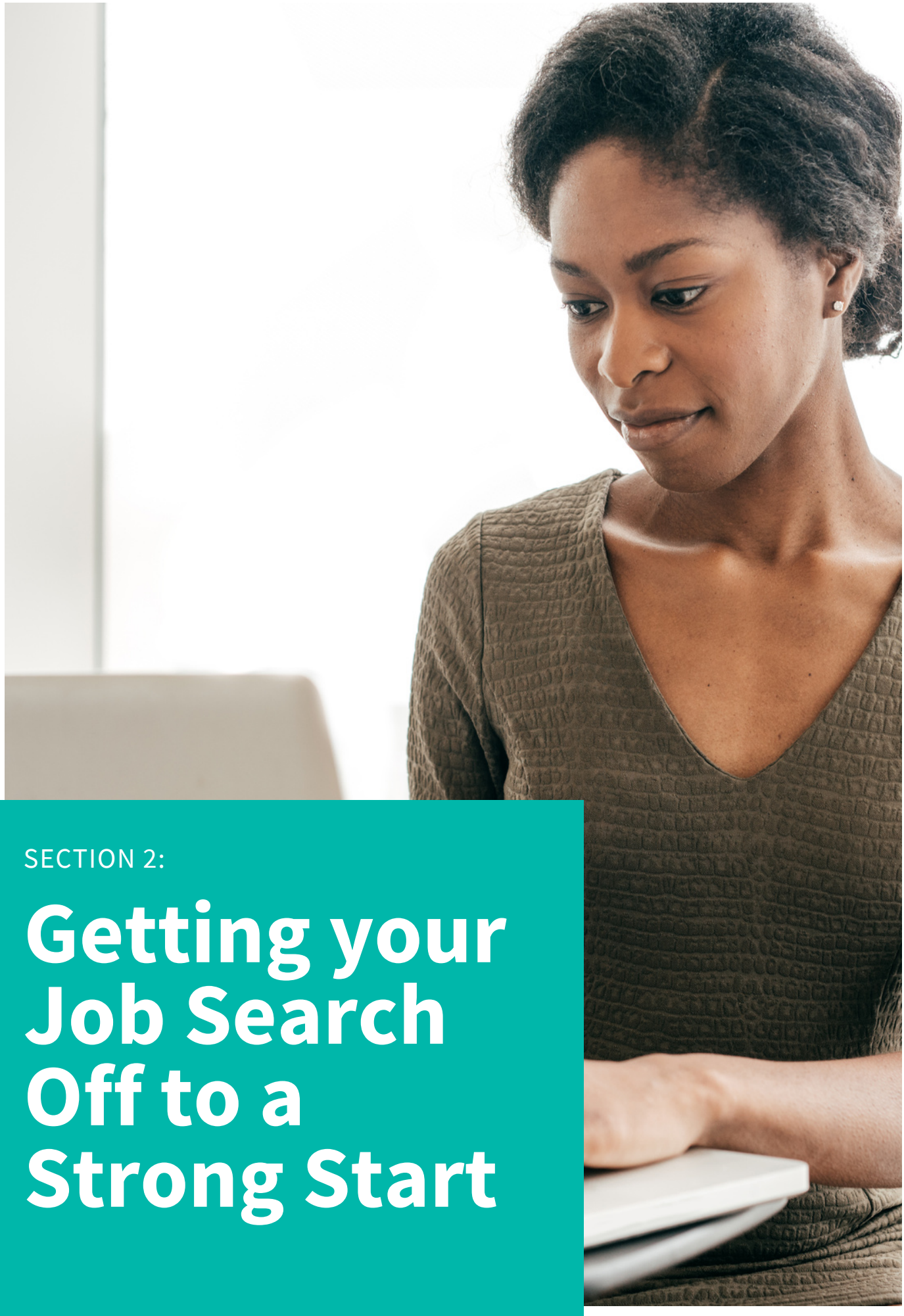
We're here to help with the **CharityVillage Handbook for Job Seekers**. This guide walks you through the job search process, from getting started and organized to negotiating your job offer and setting yourself up for success on your first day.

As you read through the handbook, you'll find step-by-step guidance on all parts of your job search, including on how to determine which jobs to apply for, writing your resume and cover letter, and preparing for job interviews, Throughout the guide, you'll also find email templates and a helpful strategy you can use to successfully answer any interview question.

We hope you find the **CharityVillage Handbook for Job Seekers** to be a useful tool as you search for work this year.

Now let's go get that job!





SECTION 2:

Getting your Job Search Off to a Strong Start

Finding a new job can be stressful. But it doesn't have to be!

Regardless of the reason that has led you to find a new role, it is important to remain active in your job-hunting journey. Follow these steps to get started.

STEP 1: REFLECT ON WHY YOU ARE SEEKING A NEW ROLE

In addition to being laid off, people change roles for many reasons. These can include:



- Wanting a new challenge
- Leaving a toxic workplace
- Finding a higher paying role
- Changing fields
- Relocating cities

Therefore, if you are deciding to leave your career voluntarily, critically reflect on your main motivation. This will help you decide what types of roles you should apply for and accept. For example, if your work has become mundane, consider what types of jobs could properly challenge you in the short and long-term.

STEP 2: DETERMINE YOUR JOB-HUNTING OBJECTIVE

Based on your answer in Step 1, create a clear and defined **job-hunting objective**. This is your main goal when finding a new role. It can either be about the role itself, or about what you want the role to accomplish.



Examples:

- *“I want to find an office position to expand my knowledge about office administration.”*
- *“I want to find a new job that pays over $27/hour.”*
- *“I want to find a philanthropic role that will allow me to make a positive impact in my community.”*



STEP 3: DETERMINE YOUR JOB REQUIREMENTS AND PREFERENCES

Next, determine what qualities you are looking for in a role. In other words, think about what aspects of a job would be a requirement for you to apply and which ones would be preferred but not dealbreakers. Job qualities to consider include:

- Salary
- Commute time
- Field of work
- Hours
- Benefits
- Flexibility
- Ability for growth



Here is an example job-hunting checklist statement:

- Required items - “I will only apply and/or accept a role that pays at least $20-$22/hour and is less than a 45-minute commute.”
- Preferred items - “I would highly prefer a role in the healthcare field that is part time (15-25 hours per week) and allows for career growth.”

Of course, while it is important to have boundaries when deciding whether to apply for a role or not, it is also important to not be too close minded. After all, you never know what opportunities might unexpectedly entice you.

STEP 4: DETERMINE YOUR JOB-HUNTING TIMELINE

Once you have defined your job-hunting objective, requirements, and preferences, determine your job-hunting timeline. In other words, choose your ideal start date and work backwards to build in time for your job search and the application process. This will be decided by your own financial and professional situation, and can be more flexible (e.g. 3-6 months) or more urgent (e.g. 1-3 months).

STEP 5: START YOUR RESEARCH

Go online and research organizations and opportunities in your desired field(s) and role(s). Use keywords when searching (e.g. “office administrator in Whitehorse”). Begin noting potential organizations that interest you. This way, when you officially begin searching, you have compiled a list of job boards and organizations’ career page links that you can routinely check for new postings.





SECTION 3:

If You've Lost Your Job

Being laid off is something that unfortunately many people will experience in their career.

For whatever reason(s) that has led you to lose your job, there are still many things you can do to keep on track:

1. Focus on your mental health. Losing a job can be traumatic, so ensure that you take some time to process the experience. Caring for your mental health is important, so build in time for activities that you enjoy and connecting with your loved ones.

2. **Show your value**. When applying for roles, ensure that your application demonstrates your passion, expertise, and transferable skills to hiring managers.

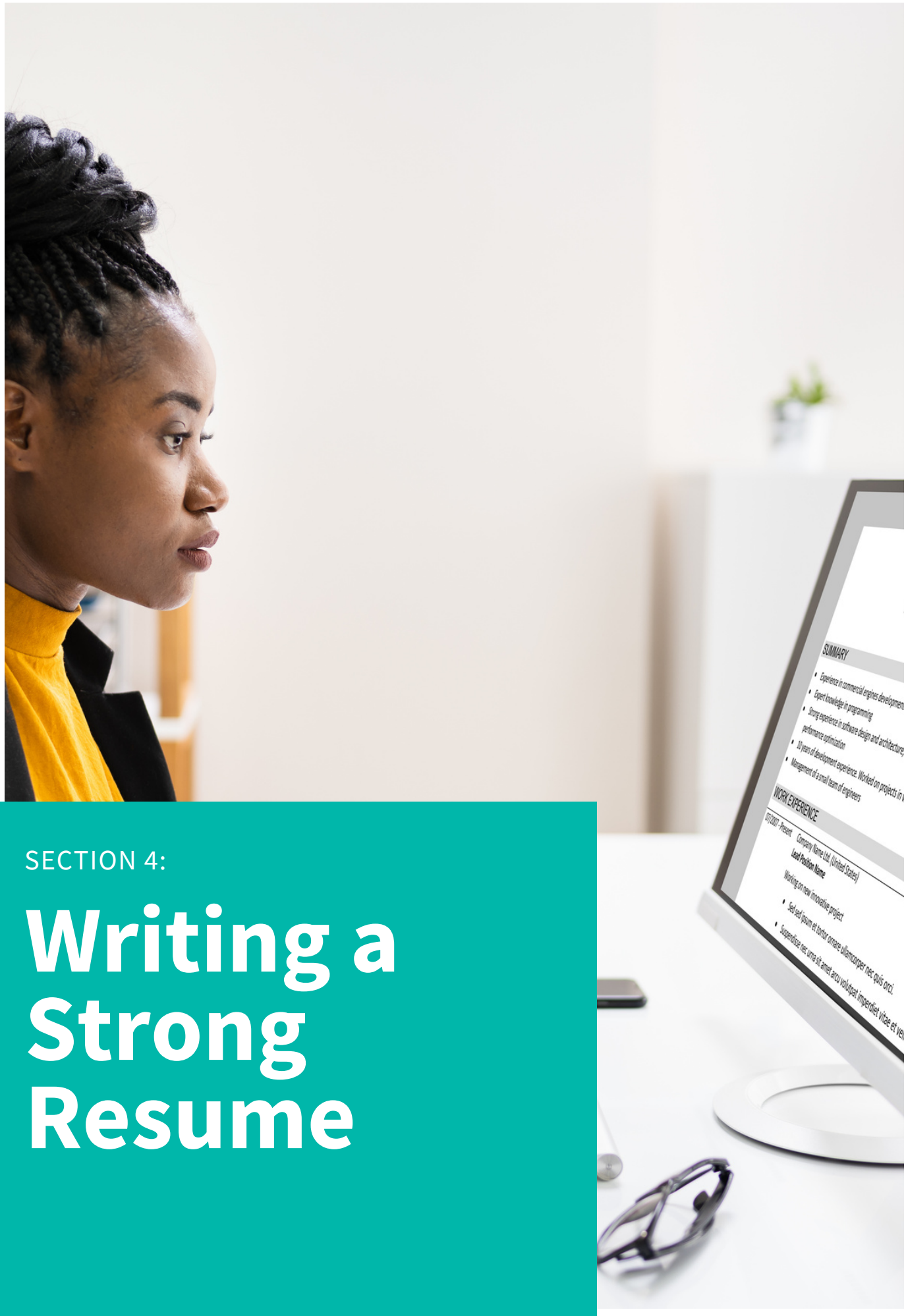
3. **Be prepared to address your employment gap**. While not all hiring managers will ask this in an interview, it is important to know what to say if they do. If you were laid off, a simple reply like "due to organizational changes I was let go" is fine. If you were fired, a reply like "the organization was moving in a direction that shifted from my original hired skills and interests, so it was an amicable parting" is also a good response.



4. Know your job-hunting timeline. Because you are searching for a role without a current job, know what your current finances are and how that affects your job-hunting strategy.

5. **Network**. Connect with old and new professional colleagues. Many jobs are not posted online, so it never hurts to ask around.





SECTION 4:

Writing a Strong Resume

Resumes are an essential aspect of the job-hunting process.

A **resume** is a document that summarizes your professional, educational, and skill background. Typically 1-3 pages in length, a resume is one of the first things a hiring manager will see, so you want to make it count!

If you already have a resume written…

STEP 1: REVISE YOUR CURRENT RESUME

Use the following 3 steps to refresh your resume:

1) Reflect…

- On your professional identity. Critically reflect on what you want to be known for as a working professional. In other words, your professional brand. For example, “experienced computer programmer”, “personable leader”, or “proactive legal aid”. This will help guide how you frame your entire resume.



2) Review…

- **Your current resume**. Read your resume and note any objective errors (e.g. grammar, spelling, outdated information, formatting inconsistencies, etc.) and incomplete areas (e.g. missing applicable work experience).

- **Outside perspectives**. Ask a trusted mentor, friend, colleague, or family member to read your resume. Ask them to note any objective errors you missed (e.g. spelling) and to give feedback on what they feel is your professional identity.

- **Other sources**. Review resumes from a variety of online sources. While reading, note what is effective or ineffective in the resume, and allow that to inform your own resume revision(s).

3) Revise…

- **Your resume**. Use the information from the first two stages to upgrade your resume.

- **Your mindset**. Remind yourself that no resume will ever be 'perfect'. Also, a resume is only one aspect of the entire hiring process.



<u>If you are writing a resume from scratch or with major edits…</u>

STEP 1: THINK ABOUT WHAT MAKES YOU UNIQUE

The first step in writing any resume is knowing what makes you different and how you are perfectly suited for each role.

STEP 2: DECIDE WHAT RESUME FORMAT YOU WANT TO USE

There are 3 main resume formats:

(1) **Chronological** - a resume written with your experiences in reverse chronological order starting with your current or last role.



(2) **Functional** - a resume which prioritizes summarizing experience as statements of skills versus connecting skills and accomplishments only to specific jobs.

(3) **Combination** - a resume written with qualities of both a chronological and functional resume.

STEP 3: MAKE A ‘BASE’ RESUME

Because you should edit your resume slightly for each job posting, it is most effective to create a ‘base’ resume. This is a general resume with all your work history and skills, which can be quickly revised to suit each application.



Here are the main things to include in your resume:

Contact Information (header)

- Your full name
- City and province
- Cell number
- Email
- Link to any relevant professional websites

Professional Summary

- A **professional summary** is a brief paragraph near the top of your resume that summarizes your expertise. This is different from an objective statement, which is largely regarded as outdated now. Here is a professional summary example:

  Dedicated and knowledgeable Office Administrator with over 20 years of diverse experience in the sector. Expertise in organizational adaptability with the goal of maximizing office efficiency.



Education

- Schools graduated from
- Certificates
- Scholarships
- Completed coursework

Work Experience



- Role names
- Organization names
- Organization locations (city and province)
- Start and end dates
- Summary of accomplishments

Skills

One of the hardest parts of writing a resume is summarizing your skills, especially as related to each of your jobs. The key to this is focusing on your accomplishments, which demonstrate your skills, as opposed to simply listing your skills or the job description of the role you held. Remember, show employers how you put your skills to work to create success in your past jobs.

These are the types of skills you should consider including:



- **Hard Skills** - skills learned on the job (e.g. computer and programming software, Excel, Word,PowerPoint, Outlook, languages spoken, project management, report writing, etc.).
- **Soft Skills** - transferable, non-job specific skills (e.g. critical thinking, time management, office organization, leadership, collaboration, critical decision-making, etc.).

Formatting Considerations

- Page numbers in the footer (e.g. “Page 1 of 3”)
- Professional and easy-to-read font (e.g. Arial, Times New Roman, Calibri etc.) and font size (e.g. size 10-12 for body and 12-16 for headers)
- 1-inch margins

General Resume Tips

- **Get feedback** from trusted people on what they think of your resume.
- **Proofread** your resume multiple times.
- **Think of where you want to be**, not where you've been.
- **Focus on transferable skills**.
- **Focus on quality over quantity**. Be detailed in your resume, but not excessive. For example, very few resumes should warrant 3 pages or more.



- **Make it "easy to read"**. Don't choose a font size too small or hard to read.
- **Be creative**! When appropriate, add your personality throughout your resume (e.g. easy to read coloured headings).
- **Feel free to move sections around, where it makes sense.** For example, you can have skills at the end of a resume versus on the first page which is typically more traditional.

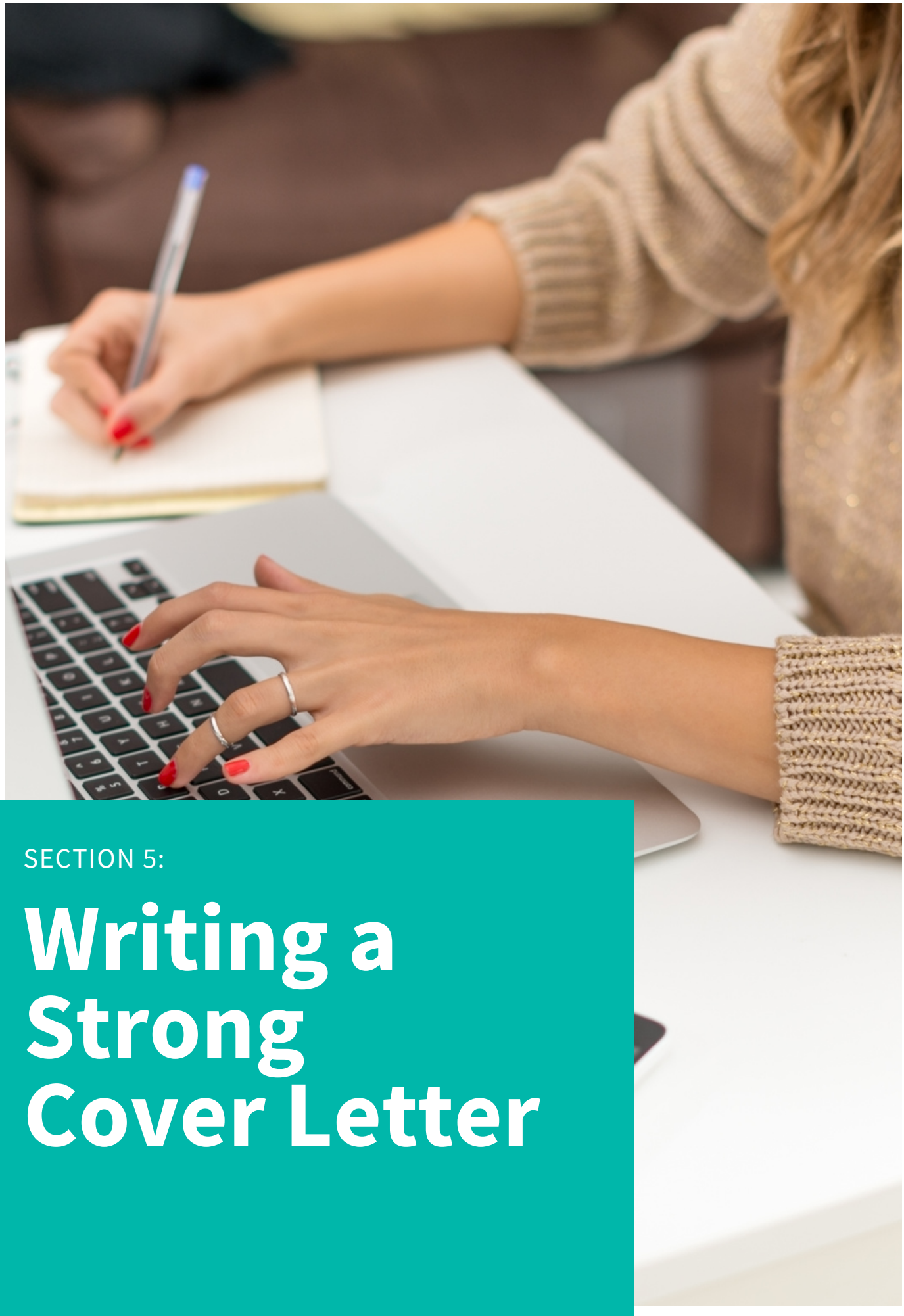


- **Adapt your resume to the industry**. For example, a receptionist resume for a law office *should* look different to a receptionist resume for an arts studio, even if it is the same applicant.

Things Not to Include

- **Unnecessary information** that could be used to discriminate against you (e.g. your age, graduation year, headshot, etc.)
- **Irrelevant hobbies**
- **'Buzz' words** (e.g. "synergy")
- **Your role duties** instead of your role accomplishments
- Extremely **outdated or irrelevant work experiences**
- **Your full home address**
- **The work email address** of a current role in your contact information
- **An unprofessional or outdated email address**
- **References** or a statement like "References available upon request". Only give this information when asked.





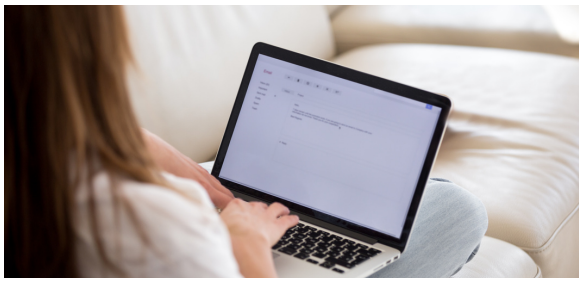
SECTION 5:

Writing a Strong Cover Letter

Just like your resume, cover letters are still an important aspect of job-hunting in the 21st century, especially when an organization asks for one to be submitted as part of the application process.

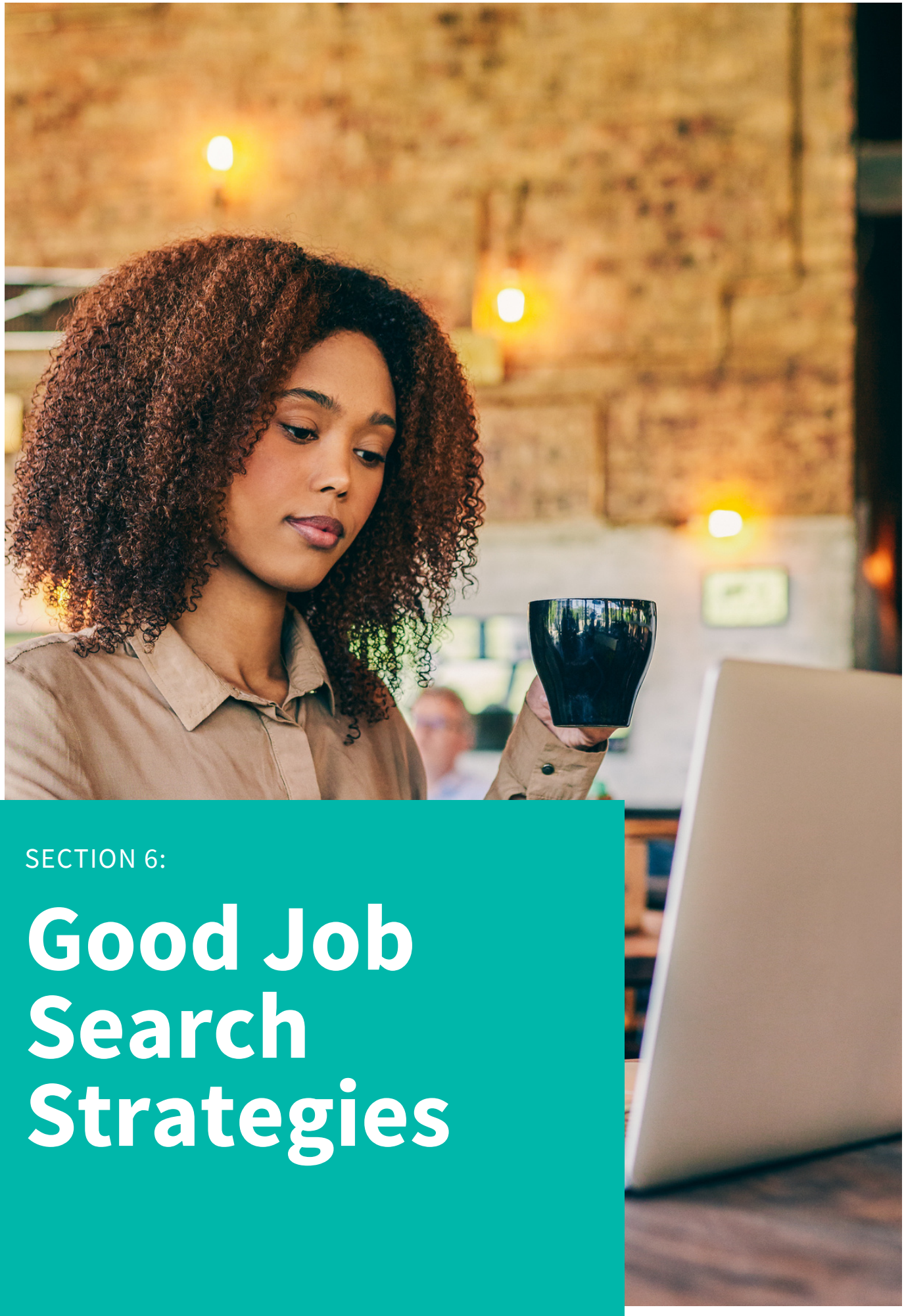
A **cover letter** is a document that expands on your professional background and aptitudes. Specifically, it more directly explains to a hiring manager why you are interested in the role and highlights the qualities that make you a good fit.

Here are some cover letter tips:



- Use the same format as your resume (e.g. headers, font, style etc.) to ensure the two documents visually look connected.
- Include your contact information.
- Directly reference what organization and role you are applying for. The hiring managers may be screening for multiple openings, so a simple sentence in your first paragraph, such as, “I am applying for the role of Event Planner at ABC Planning Inc”, will help them quickly identify what role you are interested in.
- If known, address a specific person (e.g. “Dear Mr. Jones”) instead of “To whom it may concern”. If unknown, “Dear Hiring Team” will also suffice.
- Make your cover letter 1 page long. A standard length is 200-350 words or 3 to 4 paragraphs.
- Show passion for the role and knowledge of the industry and organization. Directly explain why you are excited for the role.
- Like your resume, make a ‘base’ cover letter and then edit it for each role.

Thank the hiring managers in the final paragraph and include a note that you are looking forward to hearing from them (e.g. “Thank you for taking the time to consider me for this exciting opportunity. I look forward to hearing from you soon and hope to have the opportunity to discuss my qualifications more during an interview at a mutually agreeable time.”)



SECTION 6:

Good Job Search Strategies

Finding a new job can be exhausting.

That is why it is important to have good job-hunting habits. Not only will this help direct your search, but it will also help keep you on the right track.

Here are some tips:

- **Avoid job-hunting burn out**. Allocate time to apply to roles each week (e.g. 2-4 hours) and don't try to search every day, which is an unsustainable approach.

- Apply wisely and focus on **quality over quantity**. In other words, it is better to apply to 10 roles that you connect with and can write targeted resumes and cover letters for, instead of applying to 100 random job postings all with the same resume and cover letter.





- **Be proactive**. Network with colleagues and (if appropriate) show your interest in their organizations, even if they do not have an official posting online.

- **Practice your interview skills**. You never know when you will be offered a job interview, so always practice answering interview questions. A good tip is to use cue cards with interview questions on them to test yourself.

- **Accept disappointment and rejection**. While being rejected from a role hurts, take a deep breath, mourn the loss, and find a way to continue searching.

- **Update** or create **your professional websites** (e.g. LinkedIn).

- **Build on your skills** and continue to find new opportunities to learn.

- **Track your job applications**. It is important to track your job search. Not only will this help keep you organized, but you can also reference back to important information later (e.g. if a job posting gets taken down). Whether using an Excel spreadsheet with key stats about each role you apply for (e.g. application deadlines) or simply saving PDFs of job postings on your computer, your future self will thank you!



- **Organize your job application resources**. This is essential in case you need to reference something in the future. This includes:
  - Resumes and cover letters created for each role
  - Previous work samples



SECTION 7:

Winning Interviews

You got an interview, that's great!

While interviews can be very nerve racking for many, with the proper preparation and skills you can ace your next job interview.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- **Print and organize your application resources** (e.g. extra copies of your resume, cover letter, and work portfolio if applicable).

- **Research** the organization and role fully.



- **Rehearse interview questions**. Practice answers to common interview questions (e.g. "*tell me about yourself*") and questions related to your field. In interviews, there are 4 main types of questions you should be ready to answer:

    - **Clarifying or 'house-keeping' questions**: basic questions typically asked at the beginning of an interview used to gather clarifying information about a candidate (e.g. *"what is your availability", "tell me about yourself", "what about your background as it relates to this role makes you a strong fit for this opportunity", "why are you interested in this position"* etc.).

    - **Behavioural questions**: questions based on the interviewee's lived past experiences. (i.e. *"tell me about a time when…"*).

    - **Situational questions**: questions based on a hypothetical future situation (i.e. *"what would you do if..."*).

    - **Job specific questions**: questions to test industry-specific knowledge (e.g. *"what fundraising strategy do you find the most effective and why?"*).

Helpful tip: Come to an interview ready with several past work experience stories that you can use to answer common interview questions. For example, think of a time when…

- You had to solve a conflict at work
- You mentored someone
- You came up with a creative solution to a problem
- You had an interpersonal issue with a colleague
- You led a team
- You managed your time well
- You accomplished a project that you were proud of
- You made a mistake and what you learned from it



Refer to the next section on how you can use the STARF method to guide your answers in an interview.

- **Prepare an interview-appropriate outfit** (e.g. blazer, skirt, pants, and/or crisp shirt). Because some companies will have more rigid dress-codes than others, try to research the organizational culture beforehand. When in doubt, dress up versus down.

- **Get a good night's sleep!**



Helpful tip: Come to an interview ready with several past work experience stories that you can use to answer common interview questions. For example, think of a time when…

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Interview dos



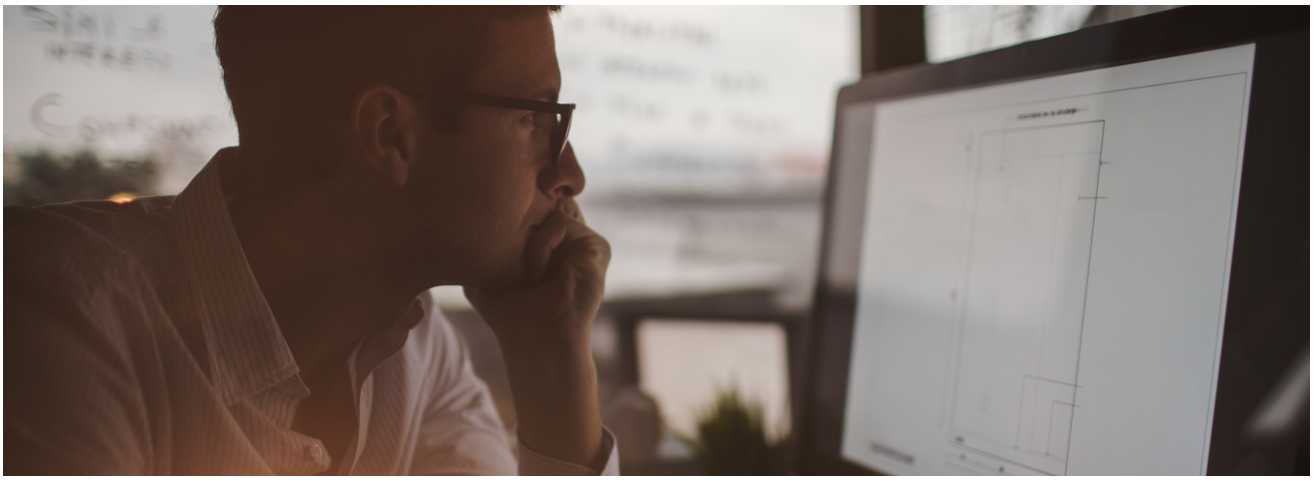
- Come prepared
- Arrive early
- Restate your name
- Be friendly
- Write notes
- Be concise
- Connect your answers back to the job posting
- Answer questions use the STARF method drawing from your past experiences:
    - **Situation** - What was the situation?
    - **Task** - What were your responsibilities?
    - **Action** - What actions did you take to solve the issue?
    - **Result** - What was the result?
    - **Follow-up** - What follow up was done?



- Ask questions at the end of the interview. When asked, *"Do you have any questions for us"*, say *"yes"*! Here are 5 useful questions to ask:

    - **Typical day** - "Can you elaborate more on what a typical day looks like for this role?"

    - **Hour expectations** - "From the job posting I see that this role is advertised as 30 hours per week. Can you elaborate more on what specific shifts you are hoping the successful candidate will fill?"



    - **Challenges and opportunities** - "What are some of the main challenges and opportunities that your organization is currently facing, and how can this role help to address those issues?"

    - **Workplace culture and values** - "Can you tell me about an employee you recently promoted? What about them and their performance did you value?"

    - **Final touch base** - "Do you have any remaining concerns regarding my experience in regard to my suitability for this role that I can help to address now?"

- Thank them!

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

The interview is over, phew! You're done right? Not yet. After you leave a job interview, follow these steps:

1. Send a thank you email to the hiring team (refer to next section).

2. Collect and organize your interview resources. This can include any notes you took during the interview, and your resume and cover letter.

3. Continue to research and reflect on the role. This way if you are offered the position, you can more critically decide if the position is the right fit for you at this time.





SECTION 8:

Post-Interview Emails

An often-overlooked aspect of the application process is post-interview correspondence. Follow these guidelines to help you with this process.

24 Hours Post-Interview

Send the hiring manager(s) a thank you email. Include a statement of gratitude, reiterate your interest, and include your references and work samples (if applicable).

Example:

Subject Line: [Position Name] Thank You Email – [Your Full Name]

Hello [Hiring Manager's Name],

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me regarding the [position name] opening with [organization]! I really enjoyed our conversation, particularly, [brief description of some aspect of the job or organization you found intriguing].

Attached to this email you will find [list of documents attached to the email (e.g., "my references and several work examples from my past roles, including the grant proposal I wrote which I referenced during our interview")]. Hopefully, these documents can help give you more insight into the types of expertise I can bring to this role.

I am very excited about this opportunity, and I look forward to the next steps!

All the best,
[Your full name]
[Your number]
[Your email]
[Link to your website]

1 Day to 2 Weeks Post-Interview

Continue to research the role, organization, and total compensation package (if known). This information, along with self-reflection, will help you determine if the role fits into your short and/or long-term career goals. That way, if you get offered the role, you are more prepared to respond with an informed decision.

2 Weeks+ Post-Interview with No Update

If you haven't heard back from an organization for 2 weeks, and the position is a role that you are genuinely interested in, send a follow-up email. This email serves to gently reiterate your interest in the role, and touch base about a decision timeline.

Example:

Subject Line: [Position Name] Follow Up – [Your Full Name]

Hello [Hiring Manager's Name],

I wanted to touch base to see if there have been any updates regarding the [position name] role with [organization] that I interviewed for on [date of interview].

I am still very interested in the role, and I am excited to hear about next steps. So, any information you can share on your end would be great!

Cheers,
[Your full name]
[Your number]
[Your email]
[Link to your website]

If You Are Rejected Over Email

While rejection is disappointing, remain professional, brief, and gracious. It is always important to maintain positive professional relationships.



Example:

Hello [Hiring Manager's Name],

Thank you for informing me of the hiring team's decision. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to be considered and I wish the best to the successful candidate!

Cheers,
[Your full name]
[Your number]
[Your email]
[Link to your website]

If You Are Offered a Job…

Over the Phone

Here is some controversial advice: never answer the phone if you know or suspect the call is a job offer. Instead, wait for the call to go to voicemail, write down a quick response script, then call the hiring manager back in 10-20 minutes. This will allow you to collect your thoughts and more professionally engage with the offer.

Example response script:

Hi! This is [your name]. I'm returning your voice message from 10 minutes ago about the [role name] opening.

[discuss the offer]

Thank you so much for this offer! I am really excited about this position and the idea of joining your team. I'd love to take a few days to fully consider the offer, is that okay?

[discuss]

Before we end the call, I had a few final questions about the role. [insert applicable questions].

[final pleasantries]

Thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to connecting soon, have a great week!



Over Email

If responding to an offer over email, here is a template you can use:

Hello [Hiring Manager's Name],

Thank you so much for offering me the role of [position name] at [organisation]! I am very excited about this opportunity and believe that my [notable skills, experiences, or qualities] will make me an invaluable member of your team.

Before accepting the role, however, I would like to ask some final questions about the role. [Insert questions].

Thank you once again. I look forward to learning more about the offer at your earliest convenience!

Best,
[Your full name]
[Your number]
[Your email]
[Link to your website]

Helpful Tip:

Whether responding to an offer over the phone or email, **always ask for a few days to think the offer through**, even if you already know your response. Fully sleeping on an offer will help reassure you in the long run that you made the best decision.

Also, ask for the following information:

- Your decision deadline
- Total compensation package
- How salary is determined for the role
- Any additional information you need to make an informed decision

If You Accept the Offer

Congratulations! Accepting a new role is very exciting.

Unless all your correspondences have been digital thus far, most professionals recommend calling a hiring manager back versus emailing to accept a role. Therefore, before officially signing any hiring paperwork, be sure to:

(1) ask any remaining questions
(2) negotiate your salary and offer (refer to next section)





SECTION 9:

Negotiating an Offer

Before accepting any position, carefully consider the offer. This includes both your salary and total compensation package.

Salary is the compensation an employee receives based on fixed parameters. **Total compensation package**, however, is the entire compensation associated with a role. This includes salary, benefits, time off, vacation days, retirement plans, bonuses, profit-sharing, and such.

Therefore, while salary is the most common aspect of a job offer to negotiate, you are actually able to negotiate lots of things including:

- Salary
- Hours
- Flexibility/work-life balance
- Benefits
- Vacation days
- Mental and physical health support
- Professional development



Before negotiating an offer, understand the following 2 things:

1. What is the industry standard salary and total compensation package for comparable roles in comparable locations?

2. What expertise and background do you bring that will impact your worth (e.g. years in field, certifications, specialized industry knowledge etc.)?

When negotiating, be respectful and don't be greedy.

Similarly, understand when to say no. For example, it is okay to walk away if you feel that the offer is not reasonable.

Wondering how to discover industry-accepted salary ranges, or the right salary expectation for your job level and region? The CharityVillage Canadian Nonprofit Sector Salary & Benefits Report provides detailed salary information (including benefit plans) to help you negotiate your offer with confidence. Click here to learn more.





SECTION 10:

Starting your New Role

Beginning a new job is both exciting and terrifying!

In this new environment, you will need to quickly settle in, understand your work, and figure out how you fit into the workplace culture. Use these tips to help guide you in the first months of your new position.

- **Make a good first impression**. Be enthusiastic, kind, and ready for your first day. This includes dressing appropriately for the workplace's culture and introducing yourself to all your new colleagues.

- **Understand the role and organization**. Ask everyone questions! Your manager, colleagues, and administration team are all great resources. If available, even see if someone is willing to be your formal or informal mentor.

- **Make connections** and build positive relationships with your co-workers. Find common interests and focus on learning about your colleagues versus just telling them about you.

- **Be organized**. For example, file any onboarding and hiring documents. Also, have a notebook to write down all information given (e.g. dates, names, protocols, phone numbers, codes etc.). This will help you work more independently faster.

- **Develop a routine**. Find the best and most effective work routine for you that also fits into your organizational needs. Good workplace habits should start on day one.

Now you are all ready for your first day. Good luck on your new adventure!

