

Seminar on



# Job Application

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# Outline

- **Self assessment**
- **Job hunting strategies**
- **Application documents**
- **Interview preparation**

# Self Assessment

or

## Preparing your mind for the job search

- Self-assessment provides invaluable information to facilitate career decisions and to prepare you to market your background.
- Identification of your values, experience, skills, accomplishments, interests, and goals.
- You need to know what you want from a job and what you have to offer prospective employers.
- The clearer the vision of what you seek, the closer you are to finding it.
- Do not expect anyone else to see how great you are if you do not believe in yourself.

**Personal data file – Personal profile – Job profiles**

## **Personal data file**

- Name, address, date of birth, nationality, minority status, marital status, children
- Education: secondary school, dates, qualification
- Professional qualification, training courses
- Employment record: employer, dates, jobtitle, key tasks and responsibilities, skills
- Work experiences, career history
- Memberships of associations
- Soft skills (social competence, communication skills, languages, technology skills, ...)
- References
- Pastimes (hobbies, leisure pursuits, voluntary work, ...)

## **Who am I and what do I want**

- I am good at – I am bad at
  - I like – I hate
- ⇒ personal profile
- match with certain job descriptions or career profiles

## Personal profile

One basic truth about job hunting:

It begins with you and what you want out of your life, your agenda, your dreams.

- Identify your competences and skills, but also your weaknesses
- Identify your interests, wishes and goals
- Determine your level of proficiency
- List your credentials

- **Competences:** what you know as a result of education or training  
physics, special field, numerical methods, data analysis, ...
- **Skills:** what you do with what you know or application of knowledge,  
e.g. select, interpret, store and place information in a larger context,  
evaluation, advising, decision making
- **Transferable Skills:** imagination, creativity, managing, trouble-shooting,  
multi-tasking, problem solving, interpersonal skills
- **Interests:** What does motivate me most? What attracts me?
- Describe yourself, do not judge.  
Find examples out of your (professional) life.
- Be honest.
- Review: Ask colleagues, friends, family

## Weaknesses

Do not run behind what is usually thought of being an important skill for professional life if it is not yours.



Examples: communicative / indiscreet, team oriented / dependent on others

Think of positive aspects of a „weakness“ of you. Consider situations where this is advantageous.

## Job descriptions

- Research and explore career options: learn from lists, job descriptions, ...
- Find matches between your identified skills, interests and values and the demands of career fields and organisations
- Profession – career field
- Physics: basic research, applied research, software development, education, science writing, consulting, ...  
e.g. [www.physicstoday.org/jobs](http://www.physicstoday.org/jobs), [www.aip.org/tip/profiles.html](http://www.aip.org/tip/profiles.html), (industrial physicist profiles), ...
- Mirror method:  
Who's job would I most like to have? (2nd, 3rd)  
Why? What attracts me? List as many things as possible.  
Talk to that person or people in the same or similar position.
- Take a test. Hundreds available, e.g. [www.careerplanner.com](http://www.careerplanner.com), ...  
Just one test may be misleading.
- Be realistic.

## Working environment, ...

- **Working environment:**

indoors / outdoors, static / mobile, solitary / in a group,  
in the front line / behind the scenes, with your peer group /  
with a mixed age range, working with people / animals /  
products / money

- **Level of work:**

junior / qualified / supervisory /  
junior – middle – senior management / professional,  
status, title (administrative assissetant: clerk – committee administrator,  
finance officer: book keeper – financial advisor)

- **Job security**

- **Finances:**

minimum salary I can afford / salary I want, list of expenditure, lifestyle

- **Location:**

local (limited opportunities) – commuting (cost, time, car, public transport,  
daily/weekend) – relocation (independent, family)

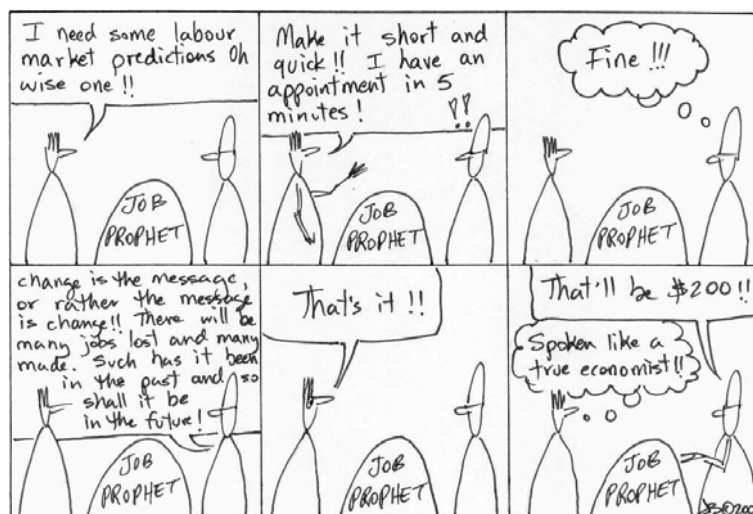
## Most important credentials in academic job application

- PhD in hand
- Deep roots in your field of research
- Good publication record
- Teaching experience / presentation skills
- Recognition of your work (citations, invited reviews, honours,  
successful grant proposals)
- Evidence of connectedness (SOC, panels, ...)
- Administrative abilities (service in committees, organisation of  
conferences, academic advising, ...)
- Collegiality („lunch test“)
- Firm plans for future research in a field of long-term perspective

## Skills needed in industry jobs

- Wide spectrum of knowledge
- „Shallow roots“ in many fields of research
- Applied research
- Problem solving skills
- Leadership and management skills
- Communication and team working skills
- Organisation and market knowledge
- Initiative
- Adaptability
- Ability to work with milestones / meet deadlines
- Ability to stay focussed

## Job Hunting Strategies



I can not tell you how you will find your job – there is no golden rule.

There are bad and ugly ways and there are good ways of job hunting.

Only about 20% of the jobs get advertised. The majority of jobs is in the hidden job market.

The majority of job seekers apply for the advertised positions, therefore making it very competitive.

The hidden job market:

- positions listed internally
- positions that are filled by hiring someone that knows someone.

## **The classical ways of job hunting**

Search for job openings in the internet,  
classified ads in newspapers,  
professional journals, ...

## **Networking**

Connection matters

- Make a list of people and let them know that you are looking for employment opportunities
- Talk to friends, relatives, work contacts
- Work contacts: professors, former employers, colleagues, professional organisations, people in the information business, alumni, ...
- Contact by phone: offer a personal introduction, identify your purpose for seeking an appointment, arrange a mutually convenient time
- Contact by letter (and resume): introduce yourself, specify the reason why you are approaching them, let them know that you would like to be notified should any employment opportunity arise in the near future, ask for confidentially
- In case of decline: thank them for their time and ask if they know 2 or 3 people that you could contact



Attend conferences and career fairs

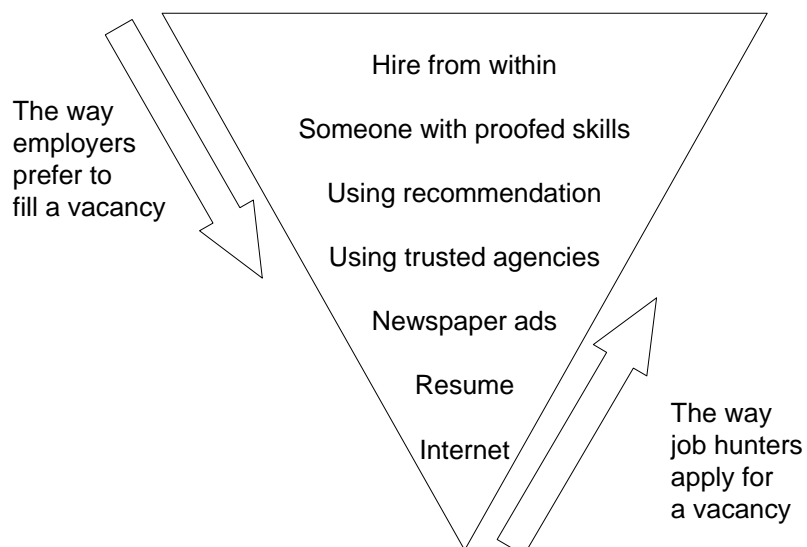
Present poster, give talks, talk to speakers, ..., get known

Research on small and medium sized enterprises ...

- Search the internet
  - Contact the desired regions's chamber of industry and commerce
  - Yellow pages
  - ...
- ... and contact them directly

Employment agencies

## The other side



## Job hunting can be very frustrating

No  
No  
No  
No  
No No

The worst outcome of your job hunt is not that you do not find a job,  
but that you loose your self-esteem.

Statistics can help to overcome the rejection shock:

No  
No  
No  
No  
No Yes

## Every job hunter has a handicap

I am just graduating.

I graduated too long ago.

I have never worked in industry.

I have only worked in industry.

I have a gap in my CV.

I was too long in one place.

I have been in a big institute.

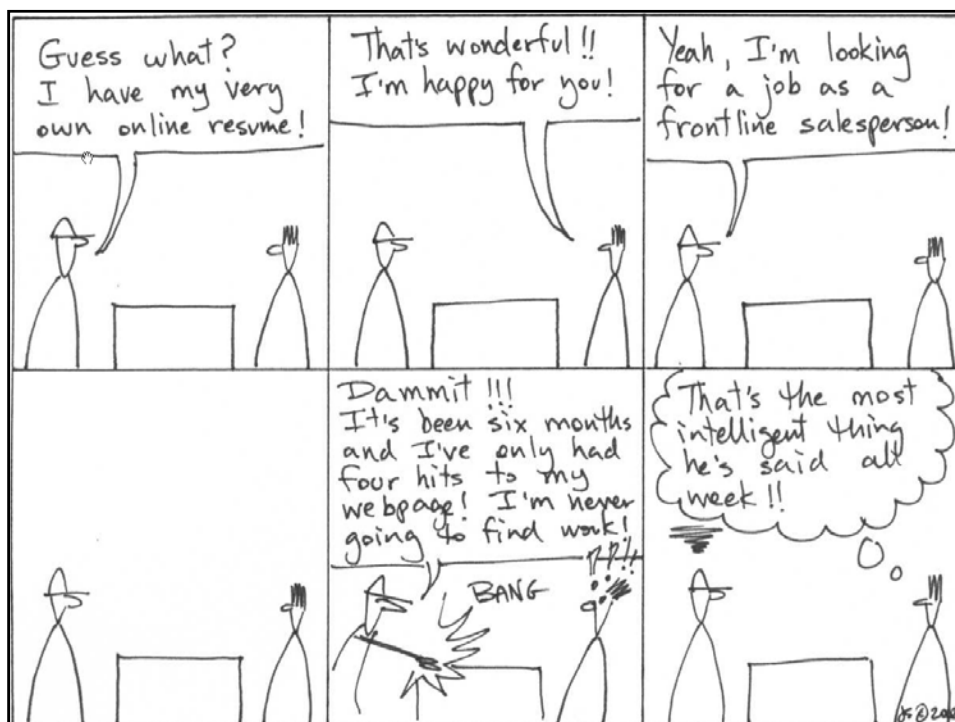
I have been in a small institute.

I have not been abroad.

I am a foreigner.

I come from another planet.

It does not matter what skills you don't have as long as the skills  
you have match the ones that are needed.



### The ugly ...

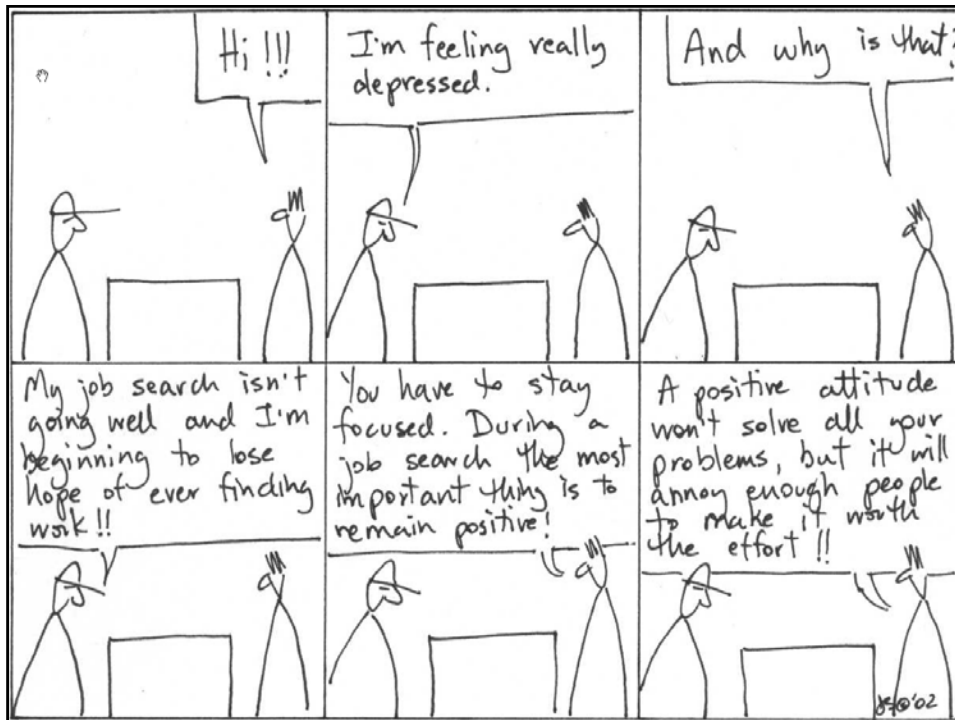
### The good ...

### ... ways of job hunting

- |                                 |                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Applying through the internet | • Talk to people            |
| • Mailing out resumes at random | • Networking                |
| • Posting your resume           | • Spread the word           |
| • Going to search firms         | • Conferences, career fairs |
| • Answering local newspaper ads | • Knocking at doors         |
|                                 | • Call people by phone      |
|                                 | • Use more than one method  |

## Some tips for job hunting

- If you want a job, go out and hunt for it – no one owes you a job.
- The more you try, the more likely it is that you find your job.
- Be flexible, successful job hunting requires willingness to change the tactics.
- Talk to successful job hunters and learn what they did.
- Tell everyone that you are looking and what you are looking for.
- Find support (colleagues, friends, family, ...)
- Be prepared that it takes longer than expected.
- Keep going until you find a job. Continue searching until the day you sign the contract.
- Do not stop if you had a bad experience. Go right ahead.



## Online job sites for scientists

<http://jobs.uni-hd.de>  
<http://www.jobrobot.de>  
<http://www.job-world.de>  
<http://www.cesar.de>  
<http://www.stellenboersen.de>  
<http://www.stellenanzeigen.de>  
<http://zeit.academics.de>  
<http://www.newscientistjobs.com>  
<http://www.nature.com/naturejobs>  
<http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org>  
<http://www.post-docs.com>  
<http://www.jobs-in-europe.net>  
<http://www.jobs.ac.uk>  
<http://www.telejob.ch>  
<http://www.sciencejobs.ch>  
<http://careerone.com.au>

<http://jobs.phds.org>  
<http://members.aas.org/JobReg/Jobregister.cfm>  
<http://physicsweb.org/jobs>  
<http://www.aps.org>  
<http://www.physicstoday.org/jobs>

## Job search resources

<http://www.job-hunt.org>  
<http://www.careerbuilder.com>  
<http://www.rileyguide.com>  
<http://www.jobhuntersbible.com>  
<http://www.cvtips.com>  
<http://jobstar.org>  
<http://www.jobweb.com>  
<http://www.udel.edu/CSC/guide.html>  
<http://www.phds.org>  
...

## **Job record file**

For every application keep record of

- the job advertisement
- any documents relating to the job or the organisation
- all sent application documents
- all correspondence
- all relevant notes

Progress sheet (for all applications, e.g. in form of a table)

You do need some of the documents at a later date,  
e.g. for the interview.

Receiving the same file three-times is very annoying  
and says a lot about how careful you work.

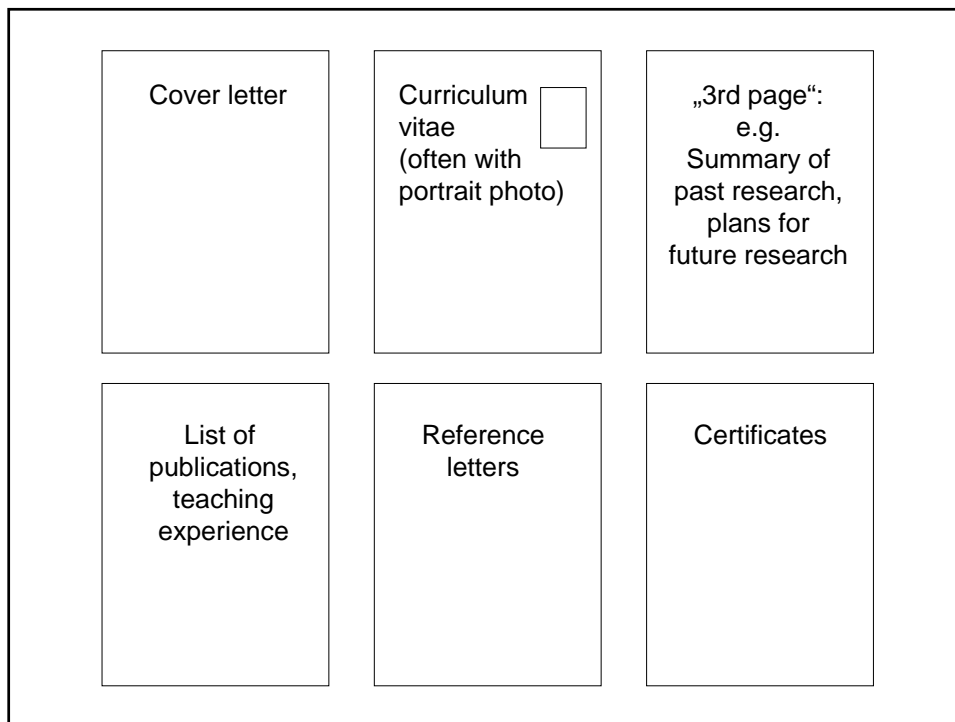
# **Application Documents**

Your application documents are a first sample of how you work.

Application is advertising yourself.

Present the chocolate side of you and leave a good impression.

Demonstrate professionalism. Use business writing style.



## Formalities

Various folders for application documents on market (e.g. [www.bewerbungsmappen.de](http://www.bewerbungsmappen.de)).

Use white paper, single paged, 90 g/m<sup>2</sup>.

Use same fonts and paper for cover letter and CV.

Clear copies, no transparent files.

Stiff white envelope, typed address sticker.

Regular shipping (correct postage, no express letter, no recorded delivery within Germany).

# Cover Letter

Purpose: Get the employer to read your CV and to invite you for an interview

## Writing style

- Take the time to research each employer's organisation and personalise each letter. Indicating that you know something about the company shows that you are careful and interested in the employer.
- Analyse your reader by considering his/her requirements and needs.
- Put yourself in the reader's situation to better understand his needs.
- Plan your letter accordingly, placing the most important items first, supported by facts.

- Write your letter demonstrating how your background, training, work experience and abilities can meet those needs.
- Persuade the reader that you are a good match for the position and that he/she should interview you,
- Remember that you are responsible for explicitly communicating your value to the employer.
- Back up general statements with specific facts or examples.
- Highlight one or two of your most significant accomplishments or abilities to show you are an above average candidate.
- Do not overstate your experience or skills. Stick to the facts and tell the truth by emphasising your strengths.
- Structure your letter logically. Remember it is your responsibility to organise the information for the reader.



- Be brief. Try to stay within 1 page, at most 1.5 pages. Demonstrate that you understand the value of the readers time.
- Use a polite, formal style that strikes a balance between confidence in yourself and respect for the employer. Be clear, objective and persuasive rather than simply descriptive.
- Be positive in tone, content and expectations.
- Use active voice and powerful action verbs.
- Avoid jargon, cliches, and phrases.
- Professional letter layout, margins, balanced paragraphs, black fonts on white paper
- Signature with blue or black ink, no ballpen
- Triple check orthography, esp. employer's organisation and name

## **Don'ts**

- No cover letter at all.
- Standard letter with address field in different font, on a sticker, or even hand written.
- Cover email with address as fifth cc.
- Standard letter without reference to position.
- Dear Sir or Madam, enclosed please find my application documents.  
Sincerely, A. N. Applicant
- Letter containing essentially only list of appendices.
- Careless or sketchy letter written in a hurry with lots of typos.

## Layout

Your name, address, telephone, email (only private, never business)

Correct employer's address

Reference

Date

Dear Mr./Mrs. Name,

Creative first sentence

Clearly structured main part

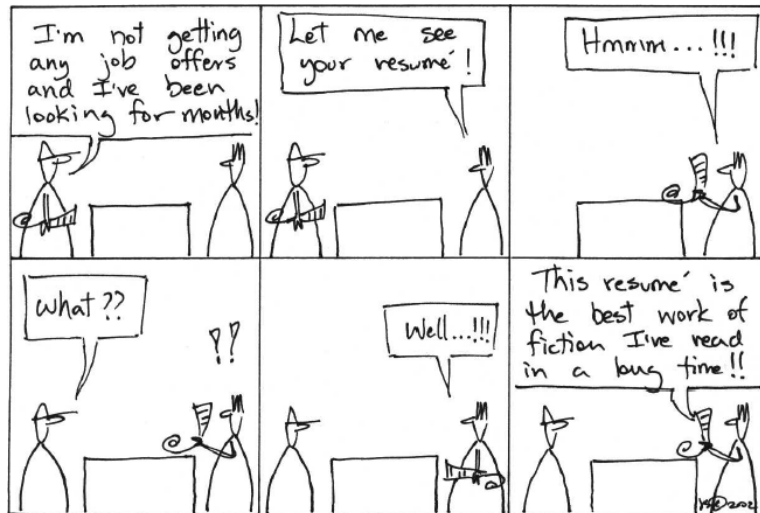
Closing sentence

Sincerely,  
Signature  
Typed Name

## Academic job cover letter

- your basic field
- summary of past research
- plans for future research
- teaching experience and interests
- what you can do for the particular institution you are applying for

# Curriculum Vitae



## CV / Resume

- A CV/resume should be a concise summary of the high points of your education, work experience and other qualifications relevant to your audience's needs and your employment interests.
- It is not a complete history of your life.
- Customize the high points to your specific application.
- A CV is the part of the application documents where you should find yourself best represented. It needs to show your personality.
- You are unique. I would not use a standardised CV (e.g. EU CV form), except when explicitly asked for.
- Everything said for cover letters also applies here.



## Style and format

- Proofread to eliminate all spelling, typographical and grammatical errors
- Font style and size, sufficient margins and white space between sections
- Well designed and balanced, visually appealing, inviting to read
- Do not overdo boldface, italics, underlining
- Easy to read with most important information eye-catching
- Concise, 1 – 2 pages, bulleted lists
- Avoid repeating words or phrases. Leave out unnecessary words.
- Do not use the first person „I“.
- Avoid self-flattering terms such as „highly skilled“, „outstanding“, „excellent“. Describe your accomplishments effectively and let readers decide for themselves that you are well qualified.
- Be honest and accurate, but not overly modest.

## Main building blocks

### Personal data

Objective

### Education

### Employment

### Experiences and skills

Scientific interests

Voluntary work, hobbies

Professional memberships

References

## Example

### Employment

<b>Company</b>	Position
	Dates
	- Description of responsibility
	- Skills, action
	- Achievements

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### Employment

Dates	Company
	Position
	- Description of responsibility
	- ...

## **English CV**

- title „Curriculum Vitae“ or „Resume“
- in industry: short, 1-2 pages / in academics: often several pages
- most recent dates first
- no date, no signature, no photo, not date of birth

## **German CV**

- title „Lebenslauf“
- application photo (except when stated otherwise)
- date of birth (except when stated otherwise)
- usually 1, maximum 2 pages
- relatively strict format
- chronologically ordered, dates with month and year
- no whole sentences, keywords but still descriptive
- date, signature

## **French CV**

- no title, but your name
- usually 1-2 pages
- most recent dates first
- no date, no signature, but photo

## **Application photo**

In Germany, France and many European countries a professional application photo is usually required. However, some companies explicitly do not want to see an application photo.

In USA and UK usually no photo.

Check what is usual in the country you are applying.

Size 4.5 x 6 cm, no pass photo, portrait, recent, professional photographer.

Professionally dressed, decent make-up and jewelry.

Friendly smile right into the camera.

In paper version application, use a paper photo. Write your name on the back and glue it onto your CV or the cover page. Do not print the photo on your CV, except on online versions.

## **Additional page(s)**

Academic application:

Summary of past research, plans for future research

Industry jobs:

My motivation, what is important for me, ...

Keep it short and to the point.

List of publication

Teaching experience

Reference letters

Certificates

# Online Application

- Easy search, specialised job sites, home pages, newspaper – however overwhelming offers, many out-dated job postings
- Find out if online application welcome (info@...) – find out which documents wished (all documents, only CV, application form)
- Same care like classical application
- Cover letter as plain email text, special character problem
- Attachments (#, format, size)
- Private email address (serious name), subject line, cc
- Online application forms (not only keywords, descriptive additional info)
- Homepage (only info relevant for application, clearly laid out, not too many clicks, no fancy applications)

# Interview

- Congratulation, you made it on top of dozens of other competitors
- From your application papers, you are considered as qualified.
- Now your personality is asked: team work, communication skills motivation, enthusiasm, dedication, curiosity, flexibility, sympathy

Preparation, self-presentation, interview structure, typical questions, questions by applicant, informal talks



## Preparation

- Well-groomed appearance, formal dress, timeliness, stress-free travel, car
- Take with you: complete copy of application documents, papers, ...
- Research on organisation/company, its objectives, its products, its customers
- Be prepared to introduce yourself: 1-2 min, 3-5 min, 10 min
- Which of your skills are valuable to them, always use examples which demonstrate a specific skill
- Who are your interview partner:  
head of personal – motivation  
technical specialist – qualification  
manager, owner – flexibility, effectiveness

## Interview structure

- Warm-up: greeting, thank for invitation, small talk as ice breaker
- Information exchange:  
self presentation of applicant  
in academic jobs: seminar talk  
questions regarding qualification and personality  
short presentation of organisation and working conditions
- Wrap-up:  
questions by applicant  
follow-up procedure  
thank the interviewers for their time

## Self-Presentation

Presentation of current job – Relationship to new job – Professional formation

### Don'ts

- phrases like „creative“, „flexible“, „motivated“ without examples or evidence
- negative formulations
- showing no profile
- overconfidence, arrogance

### Dos

- identify technical demands
- show activity
- describe individual skills
- examples of personal skills
- describe, do not value
- use key words

## Attitude

Employers will notice the minute you walk in

- if you are open-minded or absorbed with yourself
- if you are energetic or unmotivated
- if you are communicative or not
- if you are persistent or not

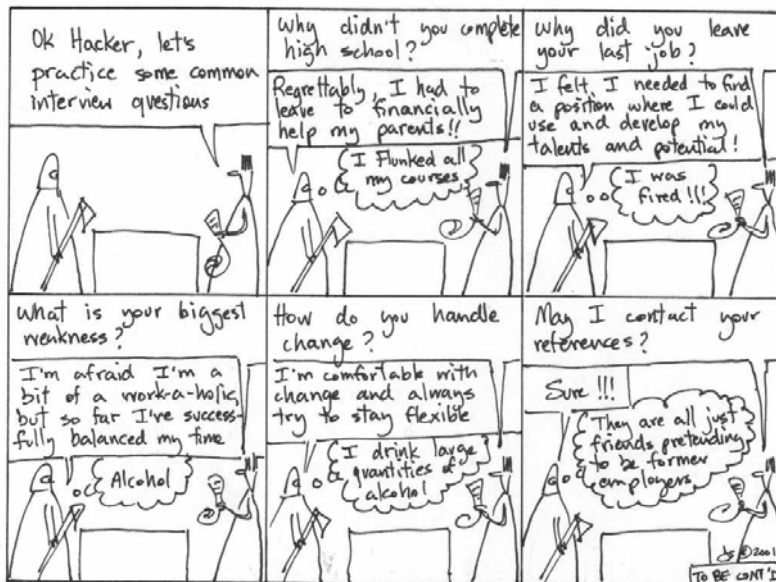
and many things more.

Your attitude can be your greatest weakness, but also your greatest power.

Modest applicant → self-confident personality

Don't be shy. Don't be arrogant.  
Try to relax and be yourself.  
Smile and show professionalism.

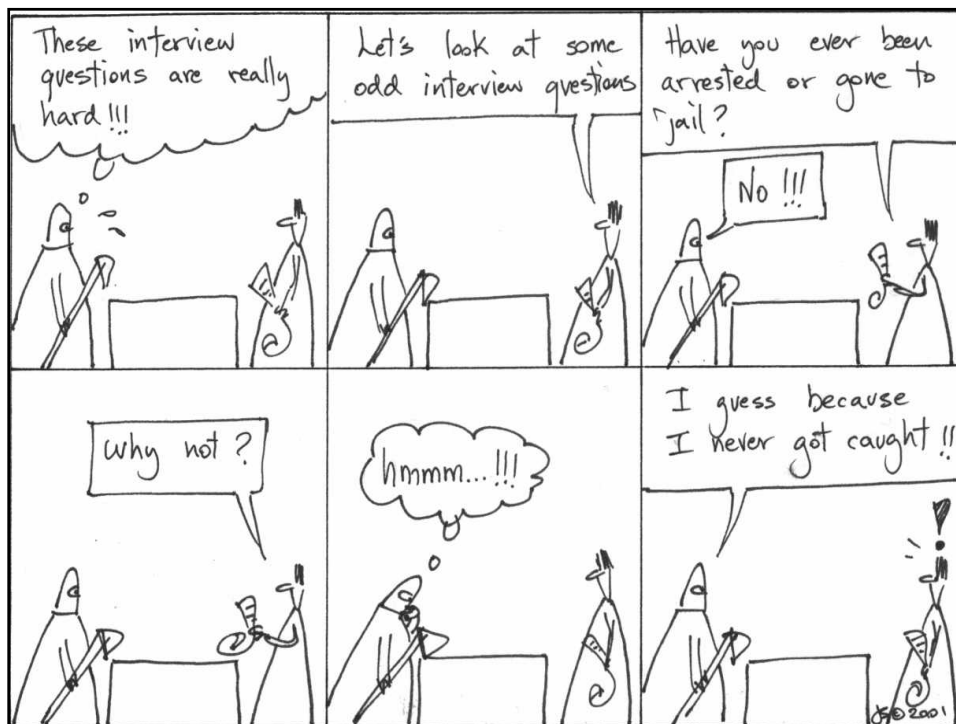
## Typical questions



## Typical questions

Motivation and efficiency, career, social background, competence and qualification

- Why have you applied? Why do you want to work here?
- Tell us more about you. Characterize yourself.
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- Why should we choose you? What makes you perfect for this position?
- What have you to offer? How would you handle this job?
- What are your strengths and what are your weaknesses?
- What was your greatest accomplishment?

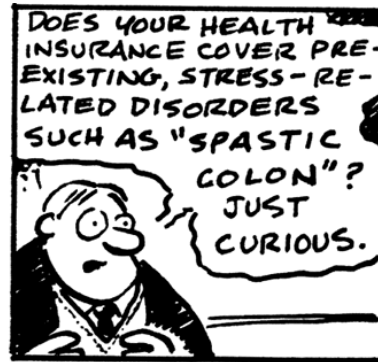


## More typical questions

- Why do you want to change your position?
- What salary do you expect?
- What does your partner think about your professional plans?
- How will you handle the separation?
- What do you feel about this interview?
- ...

## Questions by applicant

- Usually offered towards end of interview. If not, ask yourself.
- With your questions you demonstrate your interest and motivation.
- Therefore most important: Have some questions prepared.



- Do not begin with to ask after benefits like private use of business car, vacation days, ...
- Do not ask trivial questions or questions already touched or answered during the interview.
- Area of responsibility and competence, colleagues, global salary, ...
- Is an initial training phase planned? Who is my contact person?
- Who is the direct superior and what is his/her position within the institution?
- With whom / with which department would I work together?
- Do you have a complete job description for this post?
- What are the proportions of the various responsibilities?
- Is this a new position? If not: How long has the predecessor worked on this position?
- Does an organigram of the institution exist?

## **Informal talks, lunch, institution tour**

- There is never a time when you are not interviewed.
- Exercise good manners.
- Display collegiality.
- Be interested, ask questions.
- Watch your possible future colleagues and ask yourself whether you want to work with them.

## **Following Up**

- Be persistent: follow up the status of your application  
show your continuous enthusiasm and interest  
reapply on another occasion
- Analyse your success rate
- Revise tactics, try a new strategy
- Broaden your horizon, gain additional skills
- Reconsider your expectations

# Literature

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