

# Getting your foot in the media industry door

A guide to resumes and interviews compiled from the advice of journalists and media employees in New York and Washington D.C.

The job industry can be a scary place for aspiring journalists, but it doesn't have to be. There is no formula for ensuring that you are the one who gets the job; every interviewer is different. Still, there are some ways you can prepare yourself to enter the fray.

First of all, remember that nothing can replace real experience. If you can do an internship, or spend time volunteering in a way that relates, you will be one step closer to getting where you want to be.

Secondly, build up skills. Become familiar with the internet. Create your own blog, or work on using social networking sites. Learn how to shoot and edit video or put together audio slide shows. Find a friend

in computer science and learn a little HTML.

While you're doing all that, don't forget about traditional journalistic skills. Smoking Gun's founder and editor Bill Bastone advises students to work on writing skills.

"If you're a person who can write cleanly and concisely, you can find work," Bastone said.

A great way to do this is to read a lot of newspapers. Not only will you get a better idea of how news is written well, but it has the added bonus of preparing you to sound well-informed when your interviewer asks you about what is actually going on in the world.

Finally, utilize your resources and network. Most schools are more than happy to put you in touch with alumni who work in your field. Go and talk to them about their jobs, get to know them and let them get to know you. This not only helps you get a contact in your field, but also can be a great way of deciding if a specific job or company is right for you.

When you have good experience, it can shine through in your resume and interview, paving the way to employment.

## Acing the interview

### Do a little digging:

*Know what the company does.* Understand the industry they are in, and what problems they are facing. It's a good idea to know of something that happened in the news recently that relates to that company, and have examples ready of work in that field that you admire. Be able to answer the question, "Why this company?"

*Know what job you are applying for.* Know what skills and experience are necessary, and be ready to talk about how you are right for that job specifically. Be able to answer the question, "Why this job?"

*Prepare questions.* Have a couple of questions ready to ask about the company or position. Hopefully you will have genuine questions that arise during the course of the interview, but it's a good idea to have a couple ready just in case.

### Things to know before you go:

*Be on time.* If the interview is in an unfamiliar place or city, you might want to build in extra time or do a dry run before to make sure you can find where you are going. If it is over the phone make sure you have a quiet atmosphere where you won't be interrupted.

*Bring at least four copies of your resume.* The interviewer will probably want a copy of your resume in front of them, and it's not their job to make sure it gets there. Also, they may invite others to sit in on the interview. You'll look more professional if you have those copies ready, just in case. Remember, it should be updated and created just for this job and company.

*Bring examples of your work.* While a portfolio is great, it's good to have something that they can easily take with them to look at later. One idea is to put together a CD portfolio with relevant work. Make sure it's what you want your potential employer to look at. You can also make a website portfolio. This is especially good if your work has large file sizes that would be difficult to email or put on a CD.

*Dress professionally.* Remember, impressions are formed quickly, you want to show that you care about the interview.

### During the interview:

*Take notes.* This will show that you are interested, and that you came prepared. It also will be a great way for you to help yourself remember any questions you have during the course of the interview.

*Let your passion for the work show through.* This is your chance to show them that you are perfect for the job. Someone who is passionate about their work is much more likely to do well, so go ahead and let them see how excited you are about the position.

*Come with ideas.* This is a great time to demonstrate that you are proactive and think outside of the box. People who are self-starters are an asset to almost any company.

### After the interview

*Write a personalized thank you note.* Courtesy is not out of fashion, and writing a note is another little way to show you care about the job. Make sure that you write a message that is unique to the interview, perhaps referencing something that you talked about. Ask a question if you would like to continue communication with the interviewer.

### Contact Information

- 1.) If you're still in school, include both a school address and a permanent address.
- 2.) Your email address should be professional; a version of your name is preferable. Also, it should be an address that you check frequently.
- 3.) Make sure the phone number you give has an appropriate answering machine message.

### Education

- 1.) Include your GPA. If you don't include it, it will look like you are not proud of it.

### Honors and Awards

- 1.) Make sure to include only the most relevant.
- 2.) Relevant coursework should be included only if you do not have experience relating to the job.

### Cover Letter

- 1.) It should be tailored to the specific job. Every cover letter you write should be different.
- 2.) Be brief. Try to get your point across in no more than three short paragraphs.

**Newsie Paperton**  
 School Address: 123 E. 45<sup>th</sup> Road, City, ST 09876  
 Permanent Address: 123 W. 45<sup>th</sup> Ave., Town, ST 67890  
 (123)456.7890 • n.paperton@address.com

**Education**  
 News University - City, State  
 Major with specific Minor, May 2013  
 GPA 3.7

**Honors and Awards**

- Award, Date Received
- Award, Date Received
- Honor, Date Received

**Experience**  
 Most Recent Internship, Dates of internship  
 What you did during that internship. This should include specific duties performed and skills used. Highlight the ones that apply to the job or internship you are trying to get.

Job, Dates of job

- Ideally, the job would directly relate to what you are applying to. If not, you're still in luck. Most jobs can still display desirable traits, such as responsibility, dedication, or organizational skills.

Another internship, Dates of internship

- You really cannot have enough internships. You need internships to get jobs. But you also need internships to get many of the more prestigious internships, which will help you to get jobs.

**Skills**

- Experienced in working with Microsoft office products and the Adobe Suite.
- Working knowledge of HTML
- Experienced in the use of social media networking sites, Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare.

**Interests**

- Here's a good place for extracurriculars, especially if they relate. For example, if you wrote for the school paper, it would probably be good to write it here.
- If you have volunteer work that may be relevant, this is where it goes.
- If you have a personal blog that is appropriate, put it here. Remember, if you are putting it on this resume, it's pretty likely that it will be read.

### Work Experience

- 1.) You need internships. Not only are they important in applying for a job, but they also come into play when applying for other internships. Describe briefly your duties and the skills you acquired.
- 2.) You can include volunteer work if it relates. For example, if you did free public relations work for a non-profit, that would be very relevant in applying for a PR job or internship.

### Work Experience (continued)

- 3.) Include work experience that gave you skills relevant to the job, even if they aren't in the same field. For example, having a part-time job during school can show a work ethic and skills in working with people or staying organized, even if it's just at a coffee shop.

### Skills

- 1.) Include social media and technological skills. Experience with Facebook, Foursquare or other outlets as well as Microsoft products, Adobe and HTML can be useful.
- 2.) The last thing on your resume can be extracurricular activities. Here you can mention a blog if you have one (that is professional). You can also mention other interests that relate to the field.

## Resume editing checklist

1.) Edit your resume. Then have someone you trust edit it. Then edit it again. Typos and spelling and grammar errors look unprofessional, and often can be enough on their own to cost you a job. Keep an eye out for consistency as well. Employers usually have a lot of people to choose from, so make every effort to ensure that a simple mistake won't be putting you in the "no" pile.

2.) Try to keep it to a one page cover letter and a one page resume. This will keep you from cluttering your resume with irrelevant information, and be a relief to the person who is going through 200 resumes in one sitting.

3.) Your resume should be neat, organized, and easy to read. Don't put it in 8 point type in order to keep it to a page. You can be creative, but remember that if it's cumbersome or annoying to read, it probably won't be read. Make sure a reader can find the information they are looking for easily.

4.) Use key words. Unfortunately, if you are applying to a job that will have lots of applicants, a computer will probably look at your resume first. So, using key words is necessary. Don't forget, though, that if you get past the computer a human will look at it next.