

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER



INTERVIEW HANDBOOK



CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER
50 PHELAN AVENUE • MUB 101 • SAN FRANCISCO, CA94112
415 239-3117 • careercenter@ccsf.edu

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Revised by: Jimmy Ly, Career Counselor 2/2018

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For further assistance with your interviewing skills, make an appointment to see a **Career Counselor** at the Career Development Center, Ocean Campus, MUB 101 or call (415) 239-3117.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

What is an interview?

A mutual exchange of information between two or more people for the purpose of making a sound employment decision.

What is the purpose of an interview?

For the interviewer:

- Gather information about your background, including education, experience, skills and accomplishments. Determine how well your qualifications match with job requirements.
- Find out whether you will “fit in” with the company.
- Promote the company and attract the best person for the job.

For the interviewee:

- Communicate information about yourself
- Obtain further information about the job and the company.
- Determine whether the job is suitable.
- Favorably impress the interviewer by selling your skills, abilities, and experience.

The focus of the interview is on “YOU.” Be prepared to talk about yourself, what you have accomplished, know your strengths, and what you want to contribute.

What is a typical interview like?

A typical (30-minute) interview session can be divided into three stages:

Introduction:

- Interviewer initiates with small talk to put you at ease and establish rapport.
- Sharing general information:
- Interviewer shifts to general information about you and the company. You may be asked to discuss your background, interests, and goals.
- Interviewer discusses the company and its goals and makes a “sales pitch.”

Narrowing the focus:

- Interviewer concentrates on the job and looks at how well you might fit in.
- You have an opportunity to present your skills and show how they match the job requirements and qualifications.

Closing:

- Interviewer summarizes what has been discussed and clarifies points in question.
- Interviewer explains how and when the next contact will be made.
- This is time to express your interest in the job, emphasize relevant skills, and thank the interviewer for his/her time and attention.

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

How can you prepare for the interview?

Know Yourself:

Why?

- To convince an employer to hire you.
- To increase the likelihood that you will be happy in the job.
- To respond appropriately to interviewer questions such as, “What are your strengths? Weaknesses? Or “Tell me about yourself.”

What do you need to know about yourself?

- What abilities and skills do you have?
- How well do your skills match the position you are applying for?
- Values/Needs: What is important to you in your line of work?
- What kinds of satisfactions/rewards do you want from work? EXAMPLES: Money? Helping people? Opportunities for advancement? Work independently?
- Interests: What kinds of activities do you enjoy?
- Personal Characteristics: How would you describe yourself as a person? EXAMPLES: Extroverted? Leader? Persistent? Motivated? Organized? Patient?
- What are your personal strengths and weaknesses? How have you tried to overcome your weaknesses?
- Preferred Work Environment: In what type of environment do you function best in? EXAMPLES: Fast paced? Structured? Laid-back?
- Immediate Goals: What do you want to be doing 5 years from now? What steps are you taking toward achieving those goals?
- Long-Term goals: What do you want to be doing 5 years from now? What steps are you taking towards achieving those goals?
- Accomplishments/Successes: What have you done that you can talk about with a feeling of pride? What have been some work/school problems that you have dealt successfully with? How can you know yourself better?

How can you know yourself better?

- Personal traits checklist
- Skills Inventory
- Career Development Classes:
 - ❖ CRER 60: Creating Career Options (3 unit)
 - ❖ CRER 61: Orientation to Career Success (1 unit)
 - ❖ CRER 62: Successful Job Search Techniques (1 unit)

****For course descriptions, please refer to CCSF catalog****

- Individual Career Counseling: Arrange an appointment with one of the career counselors at the Career Development Center, MUB 101 or call (415) 239-3117.

Know your work history, skills and abilities:

- Be prepared to discuss your work history with the interviewer.
- Analyze each job in terms of transferable, adaptive, and work content skills.
- Relate your skills and abilities to the job you're applying for.

Research the Organization/Company/Industry:

This will help you answer questions — and stand out from less-prepared candidates.

- Seek background information.
- Visit the organization's website to ensure that you understand the breadth of what they do.
- Review the organization's background and mission statement.
- Assess their products, services and client-base.
- Read recent press releases for insight on projected growth and stability.
- Get perspective. Review trade or business publications. Seek perspective and a glimpse into their industry standing.
- Develop a question list. Prepare to ask about the organization or position based on your research.

Know the requirements of the job:

What do you need to know about the job?

- What skills are needed?
- Is this an existing position or newly created?
- How does this position fit within the department or overall organization?
- What is the salary?

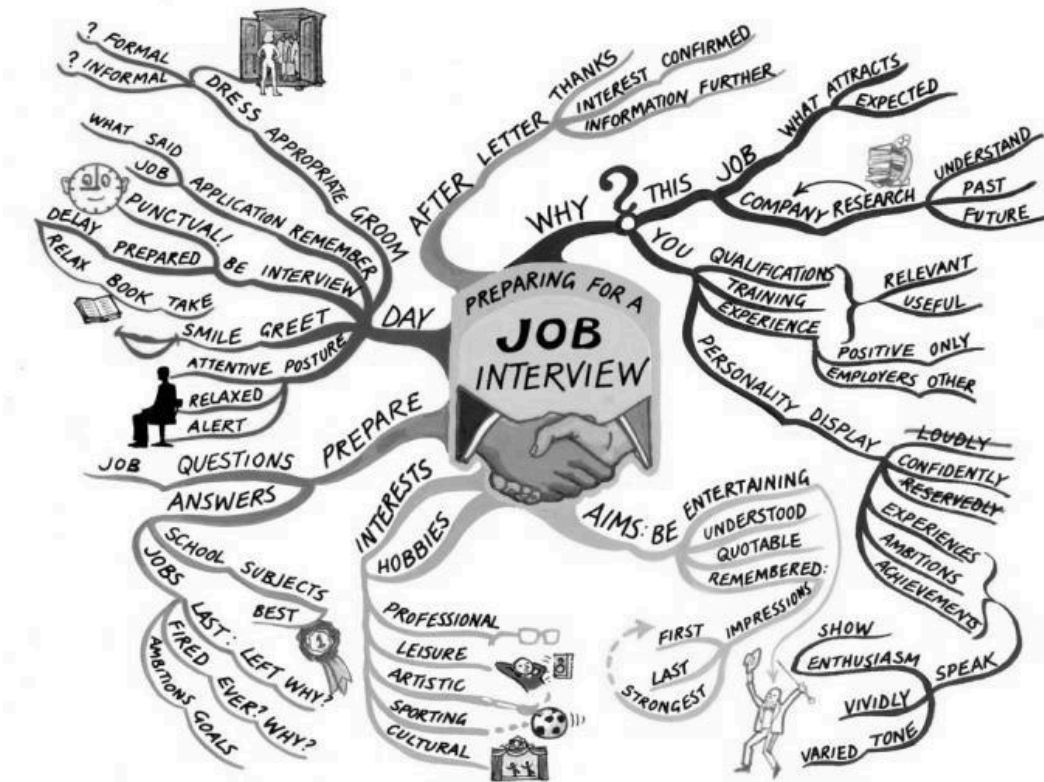
How can you find out about job requirements?

- Request a copy of the job description from the employer before the interview.
- Refer to the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* and/or *The Occupations Outlook Handbook*, both publications by the U.S. Department of Labor.
- Search for job descriptions on Indeed, LinkedIn, Glassdoor, etc.
- Talk to people who are doing that type of work or conduct an *Informational Interview*
- Use Eureka, a computerized career information system, available at the CDC and the Rosenberg Library.

Have the following information/materials ready to bring with you to the interview:

- Social security number
 - Military records (if applicable)
 - Names and addresses of present/past employers:
 - Exact dates of employment
 - Former/present supervisors' names, titles and phone numbers
 - Names of references with complete addresses
- Resume: Have extra copies of your resume with you.

- Bring pen and paper; you may wish to take notes.
- ❖ Notes: If you have prepared notes on questions to ask, important points to cover in the interview, etc., it is acceptable to refer to them occasionally during the interview.
- ❖ Letter of Recommendations: If you have copies of your letter of recommendations from past employers, bring them with you to the interview. You may want to offer these to the interviewer and attach to your file.



INTERVIEWING HANDBOOK: TIPS FOR SUCCESS

1. Dress for success! Business or business casual dress code is usually preferred. Do a little pampering-looking your best helps you feel your best. If that means you need a facial, haircut, razor shave, or even a new interview outfit, then by all means do it! Feeling good about yourself will boost your confidence—and we probably don't have to tell you that confidence is key to landing your dream job.
2. Prep a go-to interview kit for your purse or briefcase. It should be large enough to hold your everyday essentials, plus your interview musts, such as extra resumes and a pen, notepad, and copies of your reference list. Everything you need should be neatly organized and readily accessible. The less you have to rifle through your bag, the better.
3. Spend a few hours learning everything you can about the company—from as many sources as you can. Talk to friends and contacts, read current news releases, and, yes, spend some time on Google. Often, candidates just look at the information a company is pushing out via the website and social media, but fail to look more in depth at what others are saying. By doing so, you'll get the larger picture about the company (along with any negative press).
4. No matter what role you're interviewing for—engineering, sales, marketing—you should always use the product before your first interview (and ideally, a few times). If hired, your goal will be to create value for the people who use that product, and being a user yourself is the first step.
5. Different firms use different interview formats, so ask what you'll be faced with. For example, some companies will ask case questions or brain teasers while others will give a standard set of typical interview and leadership questions. Asking the recruiter or HR contact about the interview format ahead of time is totally fair game. And once you know, investing time to become familiar with this style can make a huge difference.
6. Even if you're a well-oiled interviewing machine, it's essential to spend time thinking carefully about what skills, accomplishments, and interview answers will resonate with your interviewers most. Your management abilities? Your creativity? The examples you share will probably be slightly different everywhere you interview.
7. Don't forget about the numbers! Finding some numbers, percentages, increases, or quotas you can use when talking about your responsibilities and accomplishments really sweetens the deal and helps you tell a hiring manager why you're so awesome.
8. Spend the most time before the interview not rehearsing questions, but reflecting on your career chronology to date. When you know your story inside and out, it's much easier to apply examples to just about any interview question.
9. Compile all the details you need to remember, jot down notes about what you want to say and ask, and check off all the essentials you need to bring. Print one out for every interview, read it over the morning of, and you'll be good to go!
10. Get a good night's rest. Sleep deprivation can affect you both mentally and physically. Getting a full night of rest can help you stay sharp and focused during the interview process.

HANDLING THE INTERVIEW

How should you conduct yourself in an interview?

- Be on time. Promptness communicates interest, enthusiasm and responsibility.
- You should have written down the name of the company, location, and time of the interview, and interviewer's name.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early.
- Treat all employees, including receptionists, security personnel and custodial staff in a polite and business-like manner. They may be asked for an opinion of you; their opinion might make a difference.
- Greet the interviewer by name.
- Take your cues from the interviewer.
- Be sure your handshake is firm. Many people no longer extend a hand for a handshake. Take the cue from the interviewer.
- Dress in appropriate business-like attire. When in doubt, be conservative. How you dress reflects your level of maturity and sense of judgment.
- Be aware of body language. How you say it is as important as what you say:
 - ➔ Maintain eye contact.
 - ➔ Look alert and interested.
 - ➔ Avoid nervous gestures.
 - ➔ Do not cross arms.
 - ➔ Smile at appropriate times.
- Show enthusiasm and interest. This could be the tie-breaker.
- Be positive. Be a good listener. Listen carefully to the interviewer's questions and statements to pick up clues about the position and the type of person they are looking for. Be alerted to non-verbal cues indicating when you should start or stop talking.
- Sell yourself --- but don't come across as a boastful-know-it-all.
- Emphasize your strengths.
- Discuss ways you can contribute to the organization. Let the interviewer know how you can meet or solve a problem.
- Be assertive and confident.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FROM THE EMPLOYER

Openers:

- Why are you interested in joining our company in this job?
- Why do you feel qualified for this job?
- Tell me about your experience?

Regarding motivation:

- Why do you want to change jobs?
- What caused you to enter this career field?
- Where do you see yourself five years from now?
- What would you like to gain from this job?

Regarding education:

- Describe your education for me.
- Why did you choose to study this major?
- What were your most important accomplishments?

Regarding experience:

- Why should I hire you?
- How do you fit the requirements for this job?
- What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses for this job?
- Describe your relationship with former supervisors.
- What are your greatest accomplishments to date?
- Describe a problem/challenge at work and how you resolved/overcome it?
- Can you explain the gap in your employment history?
- Why did you leave your previous job?

Other questions:

- Do you belong to any professional organization?
- Will you be able to put in extensive overtime or travel extensively on the job?
- May we check your references?

Employers CANNOT ask about: Age, race, ethnicity, color, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, birth place, religion, disability, marital or family status, pregnancy, previous salary, and criminal history.

Examples:

- How old are you?
- When did you graduate from high school/college?
- Are you a U.S. citizen?
- What does your spouse do for a living?
- What arrangements are you able to make for child care while you work?
- Where did you live while you were growing up?
- Will you need personal time for particular religious holidays?
- Are you comfortable working for a female boss?

- Do you have any mental/physical disabilities?
- Have you experienced any serious illnesses in the past year?

10 Most Common Interview Questions

(Guide to answer questions by: Jimmy Ly)

1) Tell me about yourself

This means: “Give me a broad overview of who you are, professionally speaking, before we dive into specifics.” You should prepare about a one-minute answer that summarizes where you are in your career/education and what you’re especially good at. Emphasis on your most recent job(s). Keep your personal life out of it; your interviewer isn’t asking to hear about your family, hobbies or where you grew up.

2) What interests you about this job?

Focus on the substance of the role and how it interests you. Are you passionate about the industry or job? Why did you get into this line of work? Don't talk about benefits, salary, the short commute or anything unrelated to what you'll be doing, or you'll signal that you're not particularly enthusiastic about the work itself. Interviewers want to hire people who have carefully considered whether this is a job they'd be glad to do every day, and that means focusing on the work itself – not what the job can do for you.

3) What do you know about our company?

Interviewers don't want you to simply regurgitate facts about the company; they're probing to see if you have a general sense of what it's all about. What makes the company different from its competition? What is it known for? Has it been in the news lately? Do your research online. Familiarize yourself with the company website. The interviewer will wonder how interested you are and if you understand what the company does.

4) Describe a conflict or challenge you've had at work with a client or colleague. How did you resolve it?

These may be situations when you had to take initiative, deal with a difficult customer or solve a problem for a client. Prepare for these questions so you're not struggling to think of real examples. Brainstorm the skills you'll likely need in the job and what challenges you'll likely face. Then think about examples from past work that show you can meet those needs. When constructing your answer, discuss the challenge you faced, how you responded and the outcome you achieved.

5) What's are some important goals for you in a new position?

Interviewers want to understand your career goals and whether this job will fulfill them. After all, if you're looking for a job with lots of public contact and a highly collaborative culture, and this job is mostly solo work, it might not be the right fit for you. It's in your best interest to be candid and specific when you answer this so you land in a job that aligns with what will make you happiest.

6) Can you explain the employment gap in your work history?

Don't attempt to hide the gaps. Everyone has to deal with employment gaps so don't get worked up about it. Have an acceptable reason for leaving every job you have held. "I've never been without a job that long before. I had no idea it would be this long, it took me months to realize just how much everything to do with job hunting has changed and then another 6 months to educate myself and get up to speed. That kick-started my job search, and here I am, proof positive of my determination and persistence."

7) What are your strengths and weaknesses?

This is the most dreaded question of all. Handle it by minimizing your weakness and emphasizing your strengths. Stay away from personal qualities and concentrate on professional traits: For example, maybe you've never been strong at public speaking, but over the past few years, you've taken on leadership roles and volunteered to run meetings to help you be more comfortable when addressing a crowd. "My strength is that I'm a problem solver. I love taking a problem and looking at it from every angle. I enjoy work that challenges me and pushes me to think outside the box." "**My weakness** is sometimes I have a difficulty letting a project go or sharing a task with others because I'm always convinced that I can do it all on my own and that asking for help will be taken as a sign of weakness."

8) What are three positive things your last boss would say about you?

It's time to pull out your old performance appraisals and boss's quotes. This is a great way to brag about yourself through someone else's words: "My boss has told me that I am the best designer he has ever had. He knows he can rely on me, and he likes my sense of humor."

9) What Is Your Greatest Accomplishment?

You want to pick an accomplishment that shows you have the qualities that the company puts value in and that are desirable for the position you're interviewing for. The fact is you may have several accomplishments you could pick from. Pick one that will have the most impact. Talk about an accomplishment that exhibits how you will be a perfect fit for the company and for the position you're interviewing for. Try and show some genuine passion when you're talking about your accomplishment.

10)What questions do you have for me?

At the end of every job interview, you'll likely be asked if you have any questions. At this stage, ask open-ended questions about office culture and those that clarify the role. Also ask about next steps in the hiring process and the employer's timeline for getting back to you. Do not ask for information that can be found on the organization's website or job description. Avoid questions about benefits and pay; hold those for once you have an offer.

This information was gathered from the following resources:

- <http://money.usnews.com/money/careers/slideshows/the-10-most-common-interview-questions>
- <http://theinterviewguys.com/top-10-job-interview-questions/>
- <http://www.job-hunt.org/recruiters/smart-job-interview-answers.shtml>

QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS AFTER THE INTERVIEW

1. What are the traits and skills of people who are the most successful within the organization?
2. Can you describe the company's (or division's or department's) management style?
3. Can you discuss your take on the company's corporate culture?
4. How would you describe the company's values?
5. Can you describe a typical day for someone in this position?
6. What is the top priority of the person who accepts this job?
7. How will my leadership responsibilities and performance be measured? And by whom? How often?
8. How would you characterize the management philosophy of this organization? Of your department?
9. Does the organization support ongoing training, education, or professional development for employees to stay current in their fields?
10. What do you think is the greatest opportunity or challenge facing the organization in the near future?
11. Why did you come to work here? What keeps you here?
12. Is there a formal process for advancement within the organization?
13. What is the biggest challenge facing your organization/staff now?
14. Is there anything else I can tell you about my qualifications?
15. Regarding benefits: Could you tell me briefly about your benefits program? (Vacation, insurance, retirement, etc.) *Ask Human Resources Dept. only after you have been offered or accepted the job*



AFTER THE INTERVIEW

After the interview, what's the next step?

- Thank the interviewer by writing a thank you letter and sending it out immediately following the interview.
- Within two weeks after the interview, follow up on the status of your application.
- Evaluate your performance in the interview. Look at ways in which you can improve your interview presentation.

How important is the thank you letter?

- It will help the employer to remember you.
- It is a way for you to express interest in the job you're seeking.

What information is included in the thank you letter?

- State your interest in the position.
- Refer to a topic that was discussed.
- Provide more indicators of how you will fit in.
- Include additional information about your qualifications.



PERSONAL TRAITS CHECKLIST

Accurate	Dedicated	Independent	Positive	Strong
Active	rate	Industrious	cal	Supportive
Achievement Oriented	dable	Initiative	e	g
Adaptable	ed	Innovative	pled	ortive
Adventurous	nined	Insightful	sional	l
Affectionate	nt	Intelligente	essive	player
Aggressive	natic	Introspective	-spirited	ious
Ambitious		ive	ual	ugh
Amicable	lined	ledgeable	seful	y
Analytical	et	r	nal	nt
Artistic	nic	ple	tic	worthy
Assertive		al	tive	ile
Bright	oing		ent	s well alone
Broad-minded	ive	re	rceful	
Business-like	ent	odical	nsible	
Calm	thic	ulous	aker	
Capable	etic	ated	onfident	
Careful	prising	tive	isciplined	
Cautious	siastic	mindend	eliant	
Clear thinker	ssive	istic	arter	
Competent	mindend	ized	ole	
Confident	le	nal	ive	
Conscientious	lly	ing	as	
Consistent	lirective	t	e-Oriented	
Cooperative	ul	otive	e	
Courageous	t	tent	ole	
Creative	rous	nable	aneous	
Curious	stic	asive		

Decisive	native	nt	ht-forward	
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SKILLS IDENTIFICATION

One way to view skills is to classify these specific talents and skills under three headings:

- A. *Transferable Skills*: skills people are born with or have developed that are transferable to almost any field or job.
- B. *Adaptive Skills*: skills which seem almost like “personality traits” and that are related to environments – help determine where you can or cannot be happy or most effective.
- C. *Work Content Skills*: skills related to the knowledge required to perform a job or a task in a particular field or occupation.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Using Hands: assembling, building, operating tools or machinery, fixing, repairing, typing, showing dexterity or speed, making models, constructing

Using Whole Body: creating, planning, doing outdoor activities; physical education, sports, camping, hiking, skiing, playing, traveling

Mind: problem-solving, trouble-shooting, researching, analyzing, organizing, systemizing, remembering, judging, evaluating, diagnosing, appraising, assessing

Intuition: showing foresight, perceiving, planning, policy-making, balancing factors, visualizing in 3rd dimension, able to read blueprints

Creativity: imagining, creative imagining, creating, inventing, developing, designing, being an idea wo/man, applying theory

Artistic: dealing creatively with colors, shapes, faces, spaces, music, paints, handicrafts, drawing

Words: reading, copying, writing, talking, speaking, debating, public speaking, communicating, teaching, training, editing, instructing

Helping: being kind, being of service, rendering services to, interviewing, consulting, understanding

Performing: getting up before a group, demonstrating, lecturing, making people laugh, performing, acting, playing music

Persuasion: influencing others, selling, promoting, persuading, negotiating, reconciling, manipulating

Leadership: initiating, organizing, leading, directing others, coordinating, managing, controlling, showing courage, taking risks, effecting change

Using Eyes: observing, examining, inspecting, diagnosing, determining, deciding, filing, showing attention to details

Using Numbers: taking inventory, counting, calculating, doing cost analysis, keeping financial records, doing accounting

Using Responding Skills: applying what others have developed, following-through, a detail wo/man, focusing

ADAPTIVE SKILLS

Self-disciplined: able to set a regimen for the self and stick to it. For example, exercising, dieting, etc. Impulse control

Consistency: needing the familiar in the surrounding environment, and wanting to sense continuity and structure

Change: needing or wanting change, risk, and lack of any structure which would stifle discretion and choice

Authority: moving toward, or away from, or against others.

Time: punctuality, self-pacing, self-routing, responsible, reliability

Awareness: of self, and the surrounding environment and of others, deeply concerned, unusually good grasp.

Dress and property: desire for material comfort, surroundings, attitudes toward dress

Resourcefulness: versatile, responsive, conscientious, purposefulness

Other: Unique, exceptional, outstanding, earning respect, deft, penetrating

WORK CONTENT SKILLS

Such as: a mechanic knowing parts and function in cars, a Spanish student knowing Spanish, etc.



TOP 10 SOFT SKILLS IN DEMAND

1. **Communication Skills:** Communication skills are always top of the 'essential skills' list in any job advertisement. People with strong communication skills can build relationships (from the initial building rapport through to a longer-term relationship), listen well, and vary their communication to suit the circumstances. If you spend time on nothing else, work on your communication skills.
2. **Making Decisions:** Valued by employers for many reasons, being able to make decisions is key to getting on in life. Sometimes the actual decision doesn't even matter; what matters is that you have made one and moved on.
3. **Self-Motivation:** People who are self-motivated get on by themselves. They don't need close supervision and they are good to work with because they are generally positive about life and can be counted upon to keep going. It also helps to work on your personal resilience and adaptability to change.
4. **Leadership Skills:** These are the set of soft skills that we least expect someone to develop by themselves. There are many leadership training courses available and much has been written about how to develop your leadership skills. Our leadership skills pages describe many of the skills needed for effective leadership and how to develop your leadership style.
5. **Team-Working Skills:** Like leadership skills, there are many training courses to teach you how to work well in a team. However, there is also plenty of thinking to suggest that good communication skills, particularly good listening skills, together with an ability to build rapport will go a long way to support your ability to work well in a team.
6. **Creativity and Problem Solving Skills:** Creativity and problem-solving skills are highly valued because they are hard to develop. There are many people who believe that creative thinkers are born, not made, and there are certainly some people who find these skills much easier. But, like other skills, you can develop them if you work to do so and our pages on these topics will give you some ideas about how to do this.
7. **Time Management and ability to work under pressure:** Many would say that these two skills, which often go hand-in-hand, are more an attitude than a skill. However they can also be developed and honed, which is why we include them as skills. Highly valued by employers, they are also very useful for organizing a family or a team, and for making sure that the job gets done.
8. **Computer and technical literacy:** Almost all jobs nowadays require basic competency in computer software, but many job seekers fail to provide this section because they think it's implied. If computer skills are relevant to your field, insert a "Technical Skills" or "Systems Proficiencies" section to your resume.
9. **Adaptability:** Don't underestimate the ability to adapt to changes and manage multiple tasks. In today's technology driven and rapidly evolving business environment, the ability to pick up on new technologies and adjust to changing business surroundings is important. Display your relevancy in the workforce by referencing an example of how you adapted to a sudden change at work in your resume.
10. **10. Project management skills:** Organization, planning and effectively implementing projects and tasks for yourself and others is a highly effective skill to have. In the past, this was a job in itself. Nowadays, many

companies aren't hiring project managers because they expect all of their employees to possess certain characteristics of this skill.

(Source: <https://www.livecareer.com/career-tips/career-advice/soft-skills-in-demand>)

NEGATIVE FACTORS WHICH LEAD TO REJECTION OF AN APPLICANT

1. Poor personal appearance.
2. Overbearing – overaggressive – conceited “superiority complex” and “know it all.”
3. Inability to express himself or herself clearly – poor voice, diction, grammar.
4. Lack of planning for career – no purpose and goal.
5. Lack of interest and enthusiasm – passive, indifferent.
6. Lack of confidence and poise – nervousness, ill-at-ease.
7. Failure to participate in activities.
8. Overemphasis on money – interest only in best dollar offer.
9. Poor scholastic record – just got by.
10. Unwilling to start at the bottom – expects too much too soon.
11. Makes excuses – evasiveness – hedges on unfavorable factors in record.
12. Lack of tact
13. Lack of maturity.
14. Lack of courtesy – ill mannered.
15. Condemnation of past employers.
16. Lack of social understanding.
17. Marked dislike for school work.
18. Lack of vitality.
19. Fails to look interviewer in the eye.
20. Limp, fishy hand-shake.
21. Indecision.
22. Late to interview without good reason.
23. Difficulties in social/personal relationships.
24. Sloppy application blank.
25. Merely shopping around.
26. Wants job only for short time.
27. Little sense of humor.
28. Lack of knowledge of field of specialization.
29. Parents make decisions.
30. No interest in company or industry.
31. Emphasis on whom he knows.
32. Unwillingness to go where we send him.
33. Cynical.
34. Low moral standards.
35. Lazy.
36. Intolerant – Strong prejudices.
37. Narrow interests.
38. Poor handling of personal finances.
39. No interest in community activities.
40. Inability to take criticism.
41. Lack of appreciation of the value of experience.

42. Radical ideas.