



**CareerBuilding 101:**  
**Your Job-hunting Guide**

**careerbuilder.com™**

The smarter way to find a better job.



## Marketing you

### **You are for sale.**

The interview process begins with the first contact and ends with an offer to buy or decline. It measures everything from the tone of enthusiasm to the confidence of a handshake. The more you are able to communicate professionalism with personality and skill, the better your chances will be to get the job. Every interaction is an opportunity to sell you. If you are the product the employer needs, your job is to let them know.

**There are jobs out there. This handbook was designed to not only help you find a job, but the right one for you.**

## Network

### **The only way in is through the front.**

When a door is unlocked, it's easier to open. Find out who has the keys. Attend industry and trade functions. Introduce yourself to speakers and panelists. Get an internship. Though they are often unpaid, internships are good opportunities to prove yourself and to meet the people who hold the keys you need.

## Your resume

**Walk the walk.** Learn the lingo. Your audience needs to know you understand it. Tailor your qualifications specifically to the company's needs and objectives. Use action words and quantifiable examples to illustrate skills and accomplishments.

**Send a message, not a cover letter.** A letter is just a combination of words and ideas. A message makes a statement. Be charismatic, concise and passionate. Customize your intentions to the position for which you're applying. Find out exactly who your audience will be and direct the message to it. Save long-winded descriptions for the interview process. The purpose of a cover letter is to formally introduce yourself and your intentions.

**Keep it simple.** The best way to stand out in the job market is to take the minimalist approach. Use simple bullets to separate duties and skills. Use bold and italics sparingly and keep the length as close to one page as possible. Don't be afraid to leave out your stint as a bartender. If employers want that kind of information, they'll ask.

**Your name is important but...** The emphasis should be on content, not the size of the font. Simple fonts such as Arial and Verdana look best between 9 and 12 points. White, off-white, cream and gray resume-quality papers are standard because they are the easiest to read. Your resume should stand out because of your skills, not because it looks different.

Your resume is the only way a company can decide whether they want to interview you. Make sure your resume is professional and concise. Check out Resume Services in the Advice and Resources center at [www.careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com).



## Trends

Use technology to your advantage. Technology has inundated us with options. Don't send a prospective employer an e-resume without following up with a hard copy, which requires more thought and effort. These are some of the technology trends that can reinforce the standard resume format.

### The Web Resume

Electronic documents posted on a personal website make transmission quick and easy. This also allows for easy updates:

- Use the top half of the page for key information
- HTML looks good but is not readable by every employer. Special keys and symbols should be avoided.
- Use simple fonts. Arial, Courier and Times Roman are best for web resumes.
- Set narrow margins (4.5 inches) and flush left to make your resume easy to cut and paste.
- Save your resume as a .txt file.

### Interactive Multimedia Resume

- Often called "Flash Resume," this format uses any combination of animation, special effects, sounds and music to involve the reader. These often include a photo and a formatted cover letter.

### Business Card Resume

- Exchanged during self-introduction and handshake.
- Flipside features a brief but impressive history of affiliations, job titles and achievements.

### Broadcast Resume

- Resumes transmitted through hand-helds, such as Palm Pilots or cell phones.
- Includes brief summary: contact information, qualifications and experience.

## Netiquette 101

**It only takes one mistake to fail the test.** Electronic communication is the fastest means of communication. Unfortunately, because of the Internet's immediacy, the message is often communicated without regard for spelling, grammar and content errors. Remember that you are creating a written record. Adjust your tone appropriately and convey a sense of warmth and friendliness without using sophomoric symbols, such as smiley faces or tiny hearts.

**Don't overdo it.** Be respectful of others' time. Do not abuse your e-mail privileges by over-using the medium to find out where you stand in the selection process.

**Be the early bird.** You should always attempt to respond to your e-mails within a business day. If you are vacationing or out of the office, you can use the auto-reply service provided by your e-mail host. It should indicate that you cannot respond immediately and either offer a time when you can, or refer the sender to an alternate contact.

**To e-mail or not to e-mail?** Know when to send e-mail and when to choose another mode of communication. As a general rule, bad news and sensitive information should always be communicated in person. If face-to-face is impossible, then a phone call will suffice.



## Interview Etiquette

**Arrive early.** Be in the lobby and introduce yourself 15 minutes before the interview.

**Dress appropriately.** No matter what the corporate culture, dress professionally for the first interview. Simple, conservative business attire for men and women is still the standard. No heavy fragrances, loud clothes or flashy jewelry.

**Turn off your pager or cell phone.**

**Bring a pen.**

**Take notes.**

**Don't talk too much.** Be a good listener so you may thoughtfully present your assets.

**Speak positively.** Don't speak negatively about previous employers or jobs.

**Don't act desperate.** Controlled and relaxed mannerisms let the employer know that you are confident and poised.

**Follow up.** Promise to contact the interviewer, then follow through within 48 hours. Write something that lets the interviewer know that you've learned something important about the company. A great follow-up will make you stand out among other applicants and tip the scales in your favor.

**All follow-ups should reiterate:**

- What interests you about the position.
- What qualities make you suitable for the job.
- Your appreciation for the interviewer's time in four lines or less.
- Your personality.

**Learn how to make a good impression, get interview questions and answers and more interview tips on in our Advice and Resources center.**

## CareerBuilder.com: A smarter way to search.

More than just a website, every page of CareerBuilder.com is designed to make your job search more efficient.

**Still working?** Keep your job search confidential by building a resume online, but use it only to apply to jobs you are interested in rather than putting it in the public database where all hiring companies can search and view your resume.

**Want more accurate results?** Use over 13 advanced search filters on CareerBuilder.com to find the right job for you in any profession, industry or city.

**Too busy?** Sign up for a Personal Search Agent. Have jobs e-mailed to you any day of the week. Have them sent to your home e-mail address while you are at work so you can keep your search confidential and save time.

**Want to track your success?** Set up a My CareerBuilder account and save up to 5 resumes and 5 cover letters. Track where and when you have applied so you can follow up on the position.



## Cheapest U.S. Cities

Looking to live in a major city that's easier on your pocketbook? Check out the cities that ranked lowest on the Mercer Human Resource Consulting 2004 cost of living survey:

1. Pittsburgh, PA
2. Winston Salem, NC
3. Portland, OR
4. Detroit, MI
5. Denver, CO
6. Cleveland, OH
7. St. Louis, MO
8. Seattle, WA
9. Atlanta, GA

## 10 cities with the shortest commute

Hate traffic jams? Check out the U.S. Census Bureau's 10 cities with the shortest average commute times:

1. Wichita, KA
2. Tulsa, OK
3. Omaha, NE
4. Oklahoma City, OK
5. Lexington, KY
6. Toledo, OH
7. Anchorage, AK
8. Kansas City, MO
9. Louisville, KY
10. Columbus, OH

## 10 most expensive cities in the United States

Mercer, a human resources consulting firm, ranked the following cities as the priciest places to live in the United States:

1. New York, NY
2. Los Angeles, CA
3. Chicago, IL
4. San Francisco, CA
5. White Plains, NY
6. Miami, FL
7. Honolulu, HI
8. Washington D.C.
9. Boston, MA
10. Morristown, NJ

## 10 Hot Books for Job Seekers

These Amazon.com bestsellers offer guidance to job seekers looking for a boost:

1. *The Play of Your Life: Your Program for Finding the Career of Your Dreams – And a Step-by-Step Guide to Making it a Reality* by Colleen A. Sabatino (Rodale Books, \$16.95).
2. *What Color Is Your Parachute?, 2004 – A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers* by Richard Nelson Bolles (Ten Speed Press, \$17.95).
3. *I Don't Know What I Want, But I Know It's Not This: A Step-by-Step Guide to Finding Gratifying Work* by Julie Jansen (Penguin Books, \$14).
4. *Knock 'em Dead 2004 – Great Answers to Over 200 Tough Interview Questions, Plus the Latest Job Search Strategies* by Martin Yate (Adams Media Corporation, \$14.95)
5. *Best Answers to the 201 Most Frequently Asked Interview Questions* by Matthew J. Deluca (McGraw-Hill Trade, \$12.95)
6. *Rites of Passage at \$100,000 to \$1 Million +: Your Insider's Lifetime Guide to Executive Job-Changing and Faster Career Progress in the 21st Century* by John Lucht (Viceroy Press, \$29.95).
7. *Occupational Outlook Handbook: 2004-2005* by the U.S. Department of Labor (Jist Publishing, \$16.90).
8. *201 Best Questions to Ask on Your Interview* by John Kador (McGraw-Hill Trade, \$12.95).
9. *How Would You Move Mt. Fuji? Microsoft's Cult of the Puzzle – How the World's Smartest Company Selects the Most Creative Thinkers* by William Poundstone (Little, Brown, \$22.95).
10. *Get the Interview Every Time: Fortune 500 Hiring Professionals' Tips for Writing Winning Resumes and Cover Letters* by Brenda Greene (Dearborn Trade, \$12.95).



## Best and worst cities to snag a job

Are you determined to live in one of the 10 biggest metropolitan areas? Here's how they stack up in job growth, according to the Milken Institute:

1. Washington, D.C.
2. Houston, TX
3. Atlanta, GA
4. Dallas, TX
5. Philadelphia, PA
6. Los Angeles, CA
7. Boston, MA
8. Chicago, IL
9. New York, NY
10. Detroit, MI

## 10 fastest-growing occupations in the U.S.

Here's a look at the top 10 fastest-growing occupations in the United States, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

1. Medical assistant
2. Network systems and data communications analyst
3. Physician assistant
4. Social and human service assistant
5. Home health aide
6. Medical records and health information technician
7. Computer software engineer
8. Physical therapist assistant/aide
9. Fitness trainer and aerobics instructor
10. Database administrator

## Top 10 interview faux pas

Your grasp of etiquette can make or break you in the interview process. Memorize and avoid these top slip-ups from Emily Post's *The Etiquette Advantage in Business* (Harper Collins):

1. Arriving late
2. Bringing shopping bags or boxes
3. Loud colors in your outfit
4. Plopping into a chair before the interviewer offers you one
5. Using first names unless asked to
6. Chattering on and on
7. Chewing gum
8. Smoking
9. Jiggling your knee
10. Playing with your hair

## 10 cities with the longest commutes

If you prefer television time to traffic jams, check out the U.S. Census Bureau's rankings for the longest average travel time to work:

1. New York, NY
2. Chicago, IL
3. Philadelphia, PA
4. Riverside, CA
5. Baltimore, MD
6. Washington, D.C.
7. San Francisco, CA
8. Oakland, CA
9. Los Angeles, CA
10. Boston, MA

## Top 10 Magic Resume Phrases

These phrases, when threaded into your resume, will have employers begging you for an interview, according to Susan Britton Whitcomb's *Résumé Magic* (JIST Publishing):

1. Made money
2. Saved money
3. Saved time
4. Made work easier
5. Solved a specific problem
6. Became more competitive
7. Built relationships/image
8. Expanded business
9. Attracted new customers
10. Retained existing customers.

## Top 10 fastest-growing industries in the U.S.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics ranks the following as the 10 fastest-growing industries in the United States:

1. Education and health services
2. Professional and business services
3. Information
4. Leisure and hospitality
5. Other services (except government)
6. Trade transportation and utilities (includes retail)
7. Construction
8. Financial activities
9. Government
10. Manufacturing



## Top 10 cities with the fastest job growth

Here are the top 10 cities with the fastest job growth, according to the Milken Institute:

1. Fayetteville, AR
2. Las Vegas, NV
3. Fort Myers, FL
4. West Palm Beach, FL
5. San Diego, CA
6. San Luis Obispo, CA
7. Laredo, TX
8. Brownsville, TX
9. McAllen, TX
10. Monmouth, NJ

## 10 worst cities for employment

Looks like things aren't so sunny for many Californians. Seven out of the 10 cities on CNNMoney's highest unemployment list were from the sunshine state. The list:

1. Yuma, AZ
2. Visalia-Tulare-Porterville, CA
3. Merced, CA
4. Fresno, CA
5. Salinas, CA
6. Yuba City, CA
7. McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX
8. Bakersfield, CA
9. Yakima, WA
10. Modesto, CA

## Top 10 highest-paying jobs in the United States

Health care jobs dominated the 10 highest-paying jobs in the United States, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, with eight of the 10 in the health care field. Here's a look at the list:

Occupation Mean Annual Wages

- |                                                     |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Surgeons .....                                   | \$190,280 |
| 2. Anesthesiologists.....                           | \$184,880 |
| 3. Obstetricians & Gynecologists .....              | \$180,660 |
| 4. Internists, general .....                        | \$160,130 |
| 5. Pediatricians, genera .....                      | \$143,300 |
| 6. Chief Executive .....                            | \$140,580 |
| 7. Family/General practitioners .....               | \$139,640 |
| 8. Psychiatrists .....                              | \$139,300 |
| 9. Dentists.....                                    | \$131,210 |
| 10. Airline pilots, copilots & flight engineers.... | \$129,880 |

## Top 10 mispronounced words

According to Emily Post's *The Etiquette Advantage in Business*, the following words are often mispronounced:

- |                   |                                                  |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Escape:        | Ess-CAPE, not ex-CAPE                            |
| 2. Genuine:       | JEN-yoo-un, not JEN-yoo-wine                     |
| 3. Heinous:       | HEY-nus, not HEY-nee-us                          |
| 4. Interesting:   | IN-tur-est-ing, not IN-nur-est-ing               |
| 5. Jewelry:       | JOO-uhl-ree, not JOO-luh-ree                     |
| 6. Library:       | LY-brer-ee, not LY-behr-ee                       |
| 7. Nuclear:       | NYOO-klee-ur, not NOO-kyuh-lur                   |
| 8. Pronunciation: | pro-NUN-see-AY-shun,<br>not pro-NOUN-see-AY-shun |
| 9. Realtor:       | REE-ul-tur, not REE-luh-tur                      |
| 10. Similar:      | SIM-i-lur, not SIM-yoo-lur                       |

## Top 10 Interview Questions

According to a recent survey by ResumeDoctor.com, the following are the 10 most frequently asked questions in interviews:

1. Describe your ideal job/boss.
2. Why are you looking for a job? or Why are you leaving your current position?
3. What unique experiences or qualifications separate you from other candidates?
4. Tell me about yourself.
5. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
6. Describe some of your most recent career accomplishments.
7. What are your short-term/long-term goals?
8. Describe a time when you were faced with a challenging situation and how you handled it.
9. What are your salary requirements?
10. Why are you interested in this position? Our company?

## Top 10 Resume Verbs

Well-placed verbs in your resume can save precious space and spice up your qualifications. Here are 10 effective action words from Tom Jackson's *The Perfect Resume*:

1. Analyzed
2. Coordinated
3. Delivered
4. Developed
5. Eliminated
6. Improved
7. Managed
8. Navigated
9. Performed
10. Researched

# Five Tricks to Job Search Secrecy



**Finding a job requires the right qualifications, the right search tools and often the right timing. For job seekers, the right time seems to be right now.**

*Thanks to the growing employment optimism, more people are poised to make the move to a new job. One of the biggest job seeker groups expected is those currently employed. In fact, four-in-10 workers plan to change jobs this year.*

Due to the dismal job climate over the past several years, workers have become more dissatisfied. They have taken on more responsibilities and toil longer hours for the same pay. Leaders are seen as out-of-touch and incapable. Burnout is rampant. And the fear of losing one's job often postpones badly needed vacations to recharge, causing even more burnout.

Are you one of the people waiting for the right time to make a leap to a new job? Here are some tips for conducting that stealthy search while still employed from Neil Lebovits, president and COO of Ajilon Professional Staffing in Saddlebrook, NJ.

## **Be smart about e-mail.**

Play it safe, says Lebovits. You need to keep your current job until you have a new one. E-mail watch policies vary by company, so you'll want to use a separate account, like Hotmail, when discussing job search-related items. Plus, employers would rather receive correspondence from personal accounts than from competitor addresses. And most importantly, you don't want to send a message to a potential new employer that you conduct job searches on company time.

## **Don't wear your interview suit to your biz casual office.**

Nothing sets off a red flag like wearing a suit to your dressed-down office. So how should you handle the wardrobe dilemma? For both men and women, suit bottoms (i.e. pants, skirts) are always passable for business casual. Lebovits suggests bringing a shoulder bag/duffle with a jacket in it, and change en route to/from the interview. For women, it is especially easy to wear a casual shell under a suit once a jacket and stockings are removed, no one will detect an afternoon interviewee. For men, make sure your shirt stands on its own without a tie and you can easily make the switch.

## **Be discreet when gathering references.**

It all comes down to discretion. Former coworkers who have left the company are usually the first ones to turn to if you want to keep your search confidential. However, current coworkers are really the ideal names to pass along to your potential employer. Put a significant amount of thought into who will keep your confidence at your current job. "Oftentimes, people find peers rather than managers to be safer bets," says Lebovits. "As long as your reference can speak to your work ethic, enthusiasm, drive and accomplishments, you don't need to search high and low for a senior executive to speak on your behalf - go with who knows you best."

## **Use your time wisely.**

The breakfast interview is an ideal forum. Meetings scheduled at 8 a.m. are often over in time to arrive at work by 9 a.m. If they run over, any number of reasons can be offered for a delayed arrival. "I'd caution the use of excessive creativity when devising excuses for taking time off," warns Lebovits. "Personal time for a relaxing respite is still an acceptable reason for taking vacation time. Those who offer the 'sick' excuse run the risk of being asked to log on and work from home, or at least make themselves available." The best maneuvers are those when an interview can be tacked on to other pre-planned time off (long weekends, etc.) or non-work hours, he adds.

## **Don't slack off at work.**

Never stop giving your all, advises Lebovits. Job seekers often experience intense paranoia at their current job. If you devote yourself fully to what you're doing in the hours you're there (and job search with a vengeance in the hours when you're not), you'll continue to get the praise and recognition to keep you on track at your current job. In the end, the possibility always exists that you'll stay. Don't shoot yourself in the foot by causing suspicion where you are and maybe not landing anything else.

# Ten Ways to Botch Your Resume



**More often than not, the company's first impression of you comes in the form of a resume, a simple piece of paper that includes your entire work and educational history, typically on one to two pages.**

*With such limited space to convey such important information, it pays to make sure you get it right the first time. To meet this challenge, it's important to keep in mind 10 of the most common resume mistakes. While avoiding these mistakes won't automatically make you a shoo-in for the job of your choice, it will make sure you are on the right track.*

**Mistake #1: Writing your resume to sound like a series of job descriptions.** You need to give the reader an idea of what you have done throughout your career, but instead of focusing on the duties you were responsible for at your last jobs, list your accomplishments along with quantifiable facts to back up your claims. Saying you were responsible for a 10 percent growth in overall sales is more impressive than simply stating you managed a sales team.

**Mistake #2: Writing in the first person.** Your resume is not a personal correspondence, and should not include words such as "I," "my," and "me." Save the first person pronouns for your cover letter.

**Mistake #3: Including unrelated and personal information.** As mentioned above, you do not have much room in a resume, so why take up valuable space with information unrelated to the position you are seeking? Leave the details about your personal life, marital status, hobbies and other interests on the cutting room floor.

**Mistake #4: Using passive language or no action words.** Your resume needs to make a bold, strong statement, and the best way to do this is by utilizing action words to describe your accomplishments. Words like "coordinated," "achieved," "managed," and "implemented" will spice up your resume and make it more interesting and relevant to the reader.

**Mistake #5: Repetition.** While using action words is important, it is also key to make sure you have variety in your resume. Don't pick a couple of words and stick with them throughout the entire document. Utilize a thesaurus, career advice Web sites and other sources if you are having problems coming up with new ways to say the same thing.

**Mistake #6: Poor formatting or formatting that is too flashy.** While the most important part of your resume is the content, there is no question that the document's overall look and feel is also important. By now, you should be comfortable enough with a word processing program to create a clean, polished-looking document. Use consistent formatting for headings and bullet points. In the same respect, steer clear of flashy formatting or overly creative resumes with unconventional fonts or graphics, unless you are seeking a highly creative position. Keep your resume simple, bold and professional.

**Mistake #7: Sending a resume without a cover letter.** One of the worst things you can do is send a great resume without an official introduction. Resumes and cover letters should be inseparable. Make sure you don't give up your chance to really sell yourself with a cover letter.

**Mistake #8: Sending an unfocused or generic resume.** While your work experience doesn't change depending on the job or industry you are targeting, your resume certainly should. If you are seeking a sales-related position, your resume will include details that are different from those that would be included in a resume for a management job. Make sure you write to what you are seeking and make it easy for the reader to see why you are a good fit.

**Mistake #9: Including typos and other spelling or grammatical errors.** Before you send out your resume, make sure you have proofread it several times. Many hiring managers will automatically throw away a resume that has typos or other errors.

**Mistake #10: Sending your resume to a nameless, faceless person.** Want your resume to get thrown out with the recycling bin? Just send it to the company's "Hiring Manager," or "To Whom It May Concern." Do yourself a big favor and take the time to find a real person at the company who is responsible for hiring in the department you are targeting. This is often the first and most helpful step to getting your foot in the door.

# How to Overcome Eight Interview Stumbling Blocks



## Does the thought of going on a job interview cause your palms to sweat and your body to break out in hives?

*Stop itching; you're not alone. The vast majority of job seekers admit to emotions ranging from mild uneasiness to downright panic leading up to their interviews. The good news is there have been no reported cases of job seekers who died of nervousness during a job interview. So relax and follow these simple tips for keeping your anxiety at bay before and during your interview.*

**First, take the proper amount of time to prepare for your interview.** Being well-prepared will boost your confidence and lower your anxiety. Experts recommend that you spend at least three hours preparing for each interview. You should draft answers to the most common interview questions and practice speaking them out loud. You also should read up on the company with which you will be interviewing and prepare some questions of your own. This lets the interviewer know that you are truly interested in the company and the position. As a final step in your preparation, make sure you have good directions to the interview site. Some job seekers make a dry run to the interview site to ensure the directions are correct and to estimate the amount of time they will need to get to the interview on time.

**Going into a job interview is often like entering the great unknown.** Although every interviewer is different and questions vary from industry to industry, there are some questions that are common across the board. Reading through the following questions and developing your own answers is a good place to start in your preparation. Once you have done that, remember practice makes perfect! Nothing impresses a potential employer like being ready for whatever is thrown your way.

### **Why should we hire you?**

Here's the chance to really sell yourself. You need to briefly and succinctly lay out your strengths, qualifications and what you can bring to the table. Be careful not to answer this question too generically, however. Nearly everyone says they are hardworking and motivated. Set yourself apart by telling the interviewer about qualities that are unique to you.

### **Why do you want to work here?**

This is one tool interviewers use to see if you have done your homework. You should never attend an interview unless you know about the company, its direction and the industry in which it plays. If you have done your research, this question gives you an opportunity to show initiative and demonstrate how your experience and qualifications match the company's needs.

### **What are your greatest weaknesses?**

The secret to answering this question is being honest about a weakness, but demonstrating how you have turned it into a strength. For example, if you had a problem with organization in the past, demonstrate the steps you took to more effectively keep yourself on track. This will show that you have the ability to recognize aspects of yourself that need improvement, and the initiative to make yourself better.

### **Why did you leave your last job?**

Even if your last job ended badly, be careful about being negative in answering this question. Be as diplomatic as possible. If you do point out negative aspects of your last job, find some positives to mention as well. Complaining endlessly about your last company will not say much for your attitude.

### **Describe a problem situation and how you solved it.**

Sometimes it is hard to come up with a response to this request, particularly if you are coming straight from college

## How to Overcome Eight Interview Stumbling Blocks (cont'd)



and do not have professional experience. Interviewers want to see that you can think critically and develop solutions, regardless of what kind of issue you faced. Even if your problem was not having enough time to study, describe the steps you took to prioritize your schedule. This will demonstrate that you are responsible and can think through situations on your own.

### **What accomplishment are you most proud of?**

The secret to this question is being specific and selecting an accomplishment that relates to the position. Even if your greatest accomplishment is being on a championship high school basketball team, opt for a more professionally relevant accomplishment. Think of the qualities the company is looking for and develop an example that demonstrates how you can meet the company's needs.

### **What are your salary expectations?**

This is one of the hardest questions, particularly for those with little experience. The first thing to do before going to your interview is to research the salary range in your field to get an idea of what you should be making. Steer clear of discussing salary specifics before receiving a job offer. Let the interviewer know that you will be open to discussing fair compensation when the time comes. If pressed for a more specific answer, always give a range, rather than a specific number.

### **Tell me about yourself.**

While this query seems like a piece of cake, it is difficult to answer because it is so broad. The important thing to know is that the interviewer typically does not want to know about your hometown or what you do on the weekends. He or she is trying to figure you out professionally. Pick a couple of points about yourself, your professional experience and your career goals and stick to those points. Wrap up your answer by bringing up your desire to be a part of the company. If you have a solid response prepared for this question, it can lead your conversation in a direction that allows you to elaborate on your qualifications.

# How to Get Paid What You're Worth



## It's a catch-22 when it comes to salary talks with a potential employer.

*Ask for too much and you might be dropped from consideration; ask for too little and you could be earning less than what your employer is willing to pay. The way to escape this seesaw is to do your research and find out exactly what the position you're vying for earns in the industry you're seeking. This way, when it comes to talking cash, you have facts to back yourself up, not just the need to feed your shopping addiction.*

### **How do you find out whether your salary is at market value for your profession, position and location?**

You can turn to your friends, but they may embellish their salaries, so reliability is suspect. Your dad's input as to what people make may be outdated. Finding good sources is not easy, but here are some tips for assembling information that might lead you to the answer.

#### **Determine your needs**

First, figure out what you'll need to make each month to make ends meet. Draw up a budget for your necessities including rent, credit card bills, school loans, cell phone, car insurance and food. You'll probably also want to factor in extra money for going out with friends, clothes and savings. That's what your minimum take home pay should be ideally each month .

#### **Salary sites**

Check out a Web site that specializes in salary information, like SalaryExpert.com. You can search by job title and metro area. Ad hoc searches on search engines can sometimes direct you to fruitful results. A search engine query for "salary information" and "salary guides" can lead down various paths and you might get a little lost. Even better is to narrow the search by profession, say, to "accounting salaries" or "accounting salary guides."

#### **Occupational Outlook Handbook**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides comprehensive occupation information for specific jobs. Pick your industry and then your job title-median earnings are given for a range of roles per job description. This information is based on national figures, though, and might not reflect median earnings in your geographic location.

#### **Trade publications and professional associations**

Association sites for a particular profession might be one of the most reliable sources of salary information. Some sites do not have salary surveys listed among their menus, but a call or e-mail to the site administrator might reveal how that information can be obtained. Trade publications often run their own salary surveys, so search their Web sites. For example, Ad Age features salary information that is fairly detailed. One pitfall about trade and association Web sites: you often need to be a subscriber to access information.