





Section III: Jumpstarting Your Career



This section provides information and guidance to help you successfully start your career. Whether you are interested in a career in the arts, arts administration, or a related field, this section gives you advice and resources to help you reach your goal. It will help you answer the following questions:

- How do I make a good first impression?
 - How do I create an effective résumé or portfolio?
 - How do I prepare for an interview?
 - Where do I find job leads in my area of interest?
 - Is self-employment right for me?
 - What do I need to do to successfully launch my career in the arts?
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Chapter 6. Making A Good First Impression

Interviewing for a job can be intimidating. Your discomfort can be compounded if your interviewer has no prior experience interacting with a person with a disability. Remember that your primary objective is to demonstrate your ability to perform and enthusiasm for the job. You may also be able to use an interview as an opportunity to dispel stereotypes or misunderstandings about people with disabilities and their potential as employees. You should present yourself in a professional manner, answer questions directly, have good eye contact, and ask thoughtful questions of your own that convey your sincere interest in the job. This section outlines ways to help you make a good first impression with a potential employer. It also addresses ways in which you can be proactive about discussing the relevant aspects of your disability and related accommodation requirements.

A. Marketing Yourself and Your Talent

Throughout your career in the arts, you will need to convince people not only that you have valuable skills and talents but also that you are sufficiently motivat-


ed to get the job done well and will fit in with the people with whom you will be working.

Whether you are meeting with a casting director about a part in a play or a film, trying to convince a gallery director to show your work, or interviewing for a job with a prestigious nonprofit organization, your self-marketing skills will ultimately do the persuading. Potential employers tend to form opinions shortly after meeting you. Keep the following points in mind to make a good impression and get the results you want.

Be Prepared

Do some research in advance and find out everything you can about this person or organization. Try to anticipate some of the questions you'll be asked, and think of some questions you can ask. If you are just starting out in the arts or have not been pounding the pavement for a while, you may feel nervous about meetings. Preparation can help.

The questions you ask will indicate whether you are interested and can handle the work. In the unlikely




event that the person you are meeting covers all of your questions, you can say that, then ask for more details about one or two of the topics.

Present Yourself Well


When you make contact with a potential employer, be brief, direct, and focused. Respect that the person's time is limited. Do not cross the line from being politely persistent to being annoying.

Most people appreciate or expect a firm, friendly handshake when they meet someone new. Smiling also shows your interest and demonstrates that you are friendly. Even if the other person does not smile, you can. If your disability prevents you from shaking hands, use your best judgment, and continue to handle yourself in a polite and friendly manner.



If the interviewer offers you his or her hand simply explain your current situation and say, "thank you." You want the interviewer to see that you are completely comfortable with who you are. There is never any need to apologize.

Maintaining eye contact indicates to an interviewer that you are listening, interested, and friendly. This may not be possible, however, if you are blind or visually impaired. The most important thing is to



focus on the interviewer when he or she is talking. The use of clarifying statements can let an interviewer know that they have been heard and understood. A clarifying statement takes information you have heard and restates it. This may or may not be followed by a question asking for further clarification. One example might be, "It sounds like I will be both organizing and managing the artist's registry and providing teacher education. Both sound really fascinating. Can you tell me a little more about the teacher education component?"

Be courteous to everyone you meet. You may never have to see some people again, but they may talk about you with other people you will meet later.

Of course, dressing neatly and appropriately is always going to make a good impression.

Stand Out from the Crowd

Distinguish yourself by highlighting one or two accomplishments or abilities that show you are an above-average candidate for the position. A focus on one or two unique attributes increases your chances of being remembered by the people you meet. Wherever you can, use specific examples or evidence to demonstrate your accomplishments. Use numbers



(recruited 80 new members) and percentages (increased museum store sales by 50 percent) whenever possible. For more ideas, see the following section on “Résumé Basics.”

Know Your Audience

Consider yourself from the viewpoint of the person you are meeting. He or she wants to know why you are the perfect person for the work, not why the work is perfect for you.

Let this person direct you on how to proceed. Watch body language (e.g., eye contact, smiles, gestures) and pay attention to verbal cues to see if he or she wants a different response or likes what you have to say.

You do not need to do most of the talking. Allow your interviewer to tell you about the work and the organization; do not feel like you have to jump in. You can collect important information by listening and by asking questions, both of which will show the people you meet that you are genuinely interested in them and their work.



B. Résumé Basics

Scores of books have been written about how to write résumés, but they all have one key message: Image is everything. Your résumé is your personal representative. It is the first impression a potential employer will have of you, and it should encourage the reader to invite you for an interview. You need to make sure its format is consistent with industry expectations and that it makes you look as good as possible.

Writing Your Résumé

Listed below are general guidelines for what to include in your résumé. These guidelines may vary slightly depending on your profession.

- **Personal information:** Include your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address but not your Social Security number.
- **Job objective:** Briefly indicate the kind of job you are seeking. Keep this statement general to ensure that you are considered for a broad range of positions. Be aware that many employers and résumé screeners never read objective statements at all, so the decision to include one is entirely personal.
- **Work Experience:** It is customary to list the most recent job first, but this is not always true with per-





forming artists' résumés (see the following section on “Tips for Performing Artists' Résumés”). Most people include dates of employment, company name, job title, and a brief description of job duties and unique accomplishments. Performers should not include dates, as they may reveal the performer's age.

- **Education:** List most recent schooling first. If you have graduated from college, do not include high school information. List starting and ending dates, along with degrees and honors. Education may be listed at the beginning or end of the résumé.
- **Volunteer and service activities:** Briefly describe volunteer and service activities in which you have participated.
- **Skills:** List only skills that will be used in the job for which you are applying.
- **References:** Put “References available upon request” at the end of your résumé. Do not list references, but have them available during the interview.

Your résumé is a snapshot of you. In addition to including accurate information, it should look appealing. Here are some tips on formatting and writing a great résumé.

- Use good paper, 20- or 24-weight rag bond. It will cost a little more, but it's worth it.
- Try muted colors. They can make your résumé stand out. Eggshell white is nice.
- Use active verbs (e.g., “created,” “designed,” “built,” “negotiated”).
- Use short sentences and bulleted lists.
- Avoid using too much text, which makes the résumé difficult to read. Don't be afraid to leave plenty of “white space” on your résumé.
- Avoid the use of personal pronouns such as “I” and “we.”
- Edit rigorously to be sure every word is relevant and persuasive. Ask yourself whether each bit of information will help you get an interview.

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Résumé Formats: Chronological or Functional

The appropriate format for your résumé depends on the type of work you are seeking and how much experience you have. The résumé of an art conservator, for example, will likely follow a conventional format and be conservatively laid out. The résumé of a graphic designer, on the other hand, can showcase the artist's creativity and originality, making a strong statement with an unconventional layout. If you are entering a new field or are new at writing résumés, take the time to research industry standards.

There are two basic formats for résumés: chronological and functional. The chronological résumé is organized by date: when you graduated from college, how long you worked at each job, and so on. This is the most common type of business résumé. It is usually laid out in two columns, with dates of employment (most recent first) in the left column and the work description in the right column. This type of résumé is sometimes referred to as the reverse chronological format, referring to the fact that the most recent jobs are listed first.

The functional résumé, on the other hand, organizes your work experience by skills or accomplishments. A functional résumé is useful when the companies

SAMPLE: Chronological

Jeremy Michael Thorne *french horn*

Address:
123 Abbott Street
Bangor, ME 22222
(222) 222-3333

Member:
American Musicians Guild
American Brass Union
Phi Beta Kappa

Objective To continue the pursuit of a performance career in orchestral music by gaining admission to the graduate institution of my choice

Education
Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Oberlin, Ohio
Bachelor of Music in French Horn Performance, December 1998

Experience

Orchestral	
Oberlin Symphony Orchestra, Principal	1996–1998
Oberlin Symphony Orchestra, Asst. Principal	1994–1996
Oberlin Mixed Brass Choir, Assistant Principal	1994–1997
Peabody Opera Orchestra, Principal	1995–1998

Chamber	
Oberlin Chamber Brass, Principal	1996–1998
Oberlin Chamber Opera Orchestra	1995–1997

Awards

Oberlin Achievement Award for Graduate Studies	1998
Oberlin Concerto Competition	1997
St. Jude's Episcopal Collegiate Scholarship	1994–1995

Teachers

Barbara Bostik, Principal, Cleveland Symphony Orchestra	1998–Present
Terry Short, Oberlin Conservatory of Music	1994–1998
Randy Russell, Principal, Portland Symphony	1991–1994

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SAMPLE: Functional

Mary P. Hathaway

AFTRA

Hair: Brown
Eyes: Brown
Height: 5' 6"
Weight: 130
Vocal: Mezzo

ABC Artists
125 W. 9th St.
Suite 200
New York, NY
(212) 222-5555

FILM

BABY TALK 2	Woman in Park	Warner Brothers
THE JURY	Club Dancer	Universal

TELEVISION

DAYS OF OUR LIVES	Student	NBC
SEX IN THE CITY	Bar Patron	USA Network
THE MINISTER'S WIFE	Mourner	WNET Great Performances

THEATRE

LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY	Jantzi	National Tour
PASSAGE OF TIME	Helen	Pinter Play Theater
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM	Puck	Northeast Summer Stock
WEST SIDE STORY	Maria	Northeast Summer Stock
TWELFTH NIGHT	Viola	NYU
SOUTH PACIFIC	Bloody Mary	NYU

TELEVISION/RADIO

ART IN AMERICA	Host, Writer	KWSO-RadioBoston
HUMAN INTEREST WEEKLY	Reporter	KWWI-TV New York

TRAINING

ACTING: New Artist's Workshop, NY
BFA, New York University

VOICE MUSIC: Boston Music Festival,
Anne Summers, Alice Tad
Private Voice, 4 years, Jeri Costner, New York

SKILLS

Fluent Spanish
Dialects: English, Cockney, Italian, French, New York, Australian, Cartoon/Kids voices
Dance: Jazz, Ballet, Modern, Tap

and positions you held are less impressive than your personal achievements and talents. It can also deemphasize gaps in employment or frequent changes of employment. This type of résumé is particularly effective for arts-related positions. It highlights your outstanding achievements (e.g., roles you played, plays you directed).

Remember that most résumés follow the conventional chronological format. Therefore, carefully consider the types of organizations to which you will be applying. Many companies will reject a résumé that does not follow the conventional format.

Tips for Performing Artists' Résumés

Performers' résumés should showcase training, talent, and experience. They generally follow the same structure as other résumés, with a few unique twists. Many are presented in columnar or tabular format, with the type of production (e.g., musical theater, drama, dance) listed on the left, the role performed listed in a center column, and the company or production and the date in the right column. Special training and education follow the work history. Actors and dancers should always include an 8" x 10" headshot.

Here is some advice for those creating performing arts résumés:

- Never list your home address. Most performing artists wisely choose to protect themselves from the unwanted visitors the profession sometimes attracts. If you want to list an address, consider renting a post office box.
- Never list dates. Keeping your age confidential will likely open more doors and roles for you.
- Never list a range of ages you can play. Let the casting director decide what is right for you.
- Eliminate anything too personal or cutesy. While originality and individuality are valued in the performing arts, professionalism always comes first.
- Always list your talent agency name, the name of your personal agent, and the agency's address and telephone number.
- Always list your union affiliations (e.g., American Federation of Television & Radio Artists, Screen Actors Guild, Equity).
- List your theatrical credits first when auditioning for theatrical roles. Theater professionals, who lose many actors to better-paying film roles, want to know that you are committed to working in the theater.

- De-emphasize singing and dancing roles or eliminate them from your résumé when auditioning for film, television, or dramatic parts.
- List small roles in big places (e.g., New York) before big roles in small places.
- List classic roles, such as roles in Shakespeare plays, first. They indicate the depth of your background.
- If you were directed by or have performed with an important personality, list his or her name under the name of the company with which you worked.


The following books are excellent resources for writing an effective résumé if you are a performing artist:

Résumés for Performing Arts Careers
By the Editors of VGM Career Horizons
and Robert T. Teske
VGM Career Horizons
1997

The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Perfect Résumé
By Susan Ireland
Alpha Books
2000




Tips for Visual Artists' Résumés




Visual artists usually need two or more résumés based on their marketable skills and their artistic accomplishments. The first is a lengthy résumé known as a curriculum vitae (CV). A CV goes to art dealers, art critics, and college deans. This document lists information in the following categories:

- one-person exhibitions
- group exhibitions
- awards
- fellowships
- grants
- commissioned work
- art teaching experience
- juried shows entered
- works in private or public collections
- articles written by or about the artist
- books written by the artist
- reviews written by or about the artist



The CV tracks your professional achievements as an artist—not how you make your living but how much activity has taken place professionally in your career.




The second type of résumé is for a particular art-related job, such as teaching, directing a nonprofit arts program, or working for an art supply company. It follows the guidelines set earlier in this section and should include a chronological listing of your employment history. As with any résumé, it is important to include information relevant to the position to which you are applying and to eliminate other information. Remember, your goal is to appear to be the best candidate for that job.

In addition to a résumé, an artist should prepare the following:

- professional slides of his or her best work
- a statement: a personal, carefully crafted description of the artist's philosophy and how it intersects with his or her current work.

Artists' slides and statements are described in more detail in Chapter 9.

Tips for Literary Artists' Résumés



Literary artists' résumés should be conservative, easy to read, and printed on white or off-white paper. Follow the standards laid out earlier in this chapter. In addition, literary artists should be prepared to send writing samples (unpublished) or clippings (published, neatly

photocopied). Musty, yellowed newspaper clippings will not do! The type must be legible if the article size is reduced in photocopying. You may also want to have a professional-quality portfolio of your work to bring with you on interviews (see “Portfolio Basics” for more details). See also Chapter 9 for more information on starting a career in the literary arts.

C. Portfolio Basics

A portfolio is a collection of your best work that you can show to prospective employers or clients.

Portfolios are primarily used by visual and literary artists, but any professional can benefit from having a portfolio. It is best to use a black leather or vinyl binder with clear acetate pages (10" × 12"). This allows you to put in 8.5" × 11" pages as well as 8" × 10" pictures. Larger binders tend to allow items to shift in transit or fall out of the portfolio. Visual artists putting original work in their portfolios may want to consider looking for archival quality (acid-free) materials. Remember to review the information in your portfolio regularly and edit the portfolio before each job interview to target it to the job for which you are applying. Depending on your profession, a portfolio can include the following items:

- printed materials you have designed or written


- copies of monographs or reports you have written
- slides of your work
- professional articles you have written
- performance reviews of your work
- clippings concerning your career
- photographs you have taken
- educational transcripts, certificates, or diplomas
- letters of recommendation
- credentials and licenses you hold
- honors and awards you have received

Even students can begin to assemble an impressive portfolio of work created for school assignments or performed for apprenticeships and internships.

D. Interview Basics

You have passed the initial test. Your résumé has impressed the interviewer enough that he or she has called you in for a closer look. Always remember that the person on the other side of the desk wants you to be the perfect candidate. Your goal is to convince him or her that you are in fact the best person for the job. That means you must look, act, and be the part from the moment you enter, because the first interview is often the deal maker or breaker.





You might even consider rehearsing with a friend or colleague before the interview. Try anticipating questions that the interviewer might ask and plan your responses. Interviewers often ask very simple as well as complex and deliberately challenging questions to get an idea of how you will handle yourself in different situations. Treat all the interviewer's questions respectfully and thoughtfully. Here is a list of frequently asked interview questions:

- What are your career interests and goals?
- What was your most recent job or schoolwork like?
- What are your greatest strengths and skills?
- What are your weaknesses?
- How would you feel about getting more schooling or training?
- How much supervision do you require?
- Do you have any supervisory experience?
- What do you want to be doing five years from now?
- What are your career objectives?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- Do you think you can handle this job? Why?
- What did you like most about your last job? Least?
- Why should I hire you?

- How long do you think it will take you to learn how to do this job well?
- What about you makes you perfect for this job?

For specific tips on how to answer difficult interview questions, refer to the following books:

*101 Dynamite Answers to Interview Questions:
Sell Your Strengths!*

By Caryl Rae Krannich and Ronald L. Krannich
Impact Publications
1999

101 Great Answers to the Toughest Interview Questions
3rd edition

By Ron Fry
Career Press
1995

Tips for Successful Interviews

Here are some tips for having a successful interview and making a great first impression:

- Do your homework. Learn as much as you can about the organization before the interview so you will be better prepared for questions and can speak knowledgeably when it is your turn to talk. Preparation will help you demonstrate your ability to think on your feet.



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- Give honest and thoughtful answers that also make you look as good as possible. Speak of your weaknesses in a way that makes them sound like strengths. Provide examples when possible.
- Be 10 or 15 minutes early for the interview. The extra time will allow you to get a feel for the office and compose yourself.
- Dress appropriately, in conservative business attire, even if you know the organization may allow more casual attire.
- Establish eye contact with the interviewer, but do not stare. It is normal to look away sometimes while you talk, but good listeners usually look into the speaker's eyes.
- Try to anticipate questions you might be asked. (See the previous list of frequently asked questions.)
- Prepare questions for the interviewer in advance. This demonstrates a positive attitude and desire to learn. For example, you might ask the following questions: What opportunities are available to enhance my professional skills? What is the organization's culture and philosophy? (For other ideas, see the section on informational interviewing in Chapter 2.)
- Do not discuss salary, benefits, or vacations at the first interview. Focus on demonstrating your inter-

est in the organization and stress your potential value to the employer. Save the negotiations for subsequent meetings.

- If you bring your portfolio to the interview, include only the items most relevant to the job for which you are applying. Put your materials in a professional-looking case or binder, display them attractively, and organize them logically. If the interviewer asks you to leave materials behind for others to review, be sure your name and address are clearly indicated so the portfolio can be returned to you.
- Be clean and well groomed, be polite, do not chew gum or smoke, and try to conceal any nervousness.

What Are Employers Looking For?

Most employers are looking for employees with the following skills:

- the ability to learn new skills rapidly
- the willingness to take responsibility
- the ability to function effectively in teams
- excellent problem-solving skills
- good interpersonal and communication skills
- leadership skills



- the willingness to take reasonable risks
- the ability to plan ahead and think strategically
- a passion for winning and excellence
- a positive attitude of cooperation and helpfulness

The Bottom Line for Interviews

Always remember that an interviewer wants you to succeed. He or she wants you to be the ideal person for the position. Never take rejection personally; it is not about you, it is about what the employer needs at that moment.

Never burn your bridges. Remember that a new opportunity may arise later in the same organization.

Finally, always leave the interviewer with a positive impression of you. Thank him or her for the meeting, let him or her know you are very interested in the job, and ask when you might hear about any hiring decisions that have been made.

E. For People with Disabilities: Know Your Rights as an Interviewee

People with disabilities need to know what their rights are during interviews. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) sets guidelines governing the

rights of people with disabilities during the interview and hiring process. This section reviews your rights and gives some general advice about how to discuss your disability, if necessary.

Generally speaking, an interviewer can ask only questions that focus on your ability to perform the essential functions of a job. In addition, an interviewer is not allowed to ask you questions that are different from those that would be asked of someone who does not have a disability.

Interviewers cannot ask legally about the following issues:

- the nature or extent of your disability
- whether your family has a history of a disability
- any aspect of your health, including injury and disease, or whether you have any history of emotional illness
- whether you have had drug or alcohol problems in the past

An interviewer can ask about the following issues:

- your ability to perform job-related duties
- your previous job experience
- whether you have the skills required to perform a specific job

- your educational background

It is important to be aware of the following points:

If you raise the issue of your disability, or your disability is obvious, an interviewer may ask whether there is anything you need to help you perform the duties of the job.

You must meet the same requirements, including physical requirements, as any other applicant. If an interviewer is concerned about your ability to perform a job, he or she can ask you to explain how you would accomplish the essential functions of the job or schedule a working interview in which you would perform the job tasks.

As an interviewee, you should be prepared to answer any questions that an interviewer may ask, especially those related to your ability to perform the essential functions of the job. You are not required to disclose that you have a disability during the initial interview, but if you have an obvious disability, as stated earlier, you may be asked to describe how you will perform the duties of the job. After you have been offered a job, you may decide to disclose that you have a disability and that you may need accommodations. It is advisable for you to be totally clear about how you plan to

address any disability you have prior to going in for an interview. For more information about the interview process and accommodation issues, contact the following organizations and see Chapter 11.

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

West Virginia University

P.O. Box 6080

Morgantown, WV 26506-6080

Telephone and TTY: 1-800-526-7234

Fax: (304) 293-5407

E-mail: jan@jan.icdi.wvu.edu.

Web site: <http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu>

Calls are answered 8 am–8 pm EST, Monday through Thursday, and 8 am–5 pm on Fridays. Machines answer after-hours calls.



F. Cover Letters and Thank-You Notes

Cover Letters

Your cover letter may be your only chance to get your résumé read. Never send a generic cover letter. Always focus on the specific requirements of the position or part, and use a businesslike but enthusiastic tone.

Keep your letter brief, no more than a page, and focus on the strengths you will bring to the position. In other words, ask not what the employer can do for you, but what you can do for the employer.

If writing is not your strong suit, have a better writer read your letter and résumé to check for grammar, style, and spelling. Always make sure your résumé is free of typographical errors. Many employers reject a candidate, no matter how well qualified, if a résumé contains a single typo.

Thank-You Notes

Immediately after an interview, write a brief thank-you note (using the post office, not e-mail) to the person who interviewed you. Many applicants overlook this small but important detail that can bring your application to the top of the heap.

Also remember to thank (preferably in writing) everyone who helps you along your career path, including the helpful receptionist who guided you through the agency's hierarchy, the upstairs neighbor who alerted you to an upcoming audition, and the member of your support or professional network who tipped you off to the perfect job. They all deserve your gratitude.

