

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

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Preparing for Changes on the Job

Today's workplace offers challenges that earlier generations of workers did not face. For example, the job market today changes quickly. Tracking employment trends is one way to prepare for the future. What else can you do?

The average American has had at least seven jobs before reaching age 30. People can expect to change employers several—perhaps many—more times before they retire. This means that your career and your job security are in your own hands.

KEEPING UP

Many companies invest heavily in employee education and training. Make use of all opportunities to keep your skills and knowledge up-to-date. In other words, become a lifelong learner. When new technology appears in your workplace, get involved right away. Volunteer for tasks that will give you hands-on training.

GROWING IN YOUR JOB

Continuing to update and improve your skills and knowledge will make you valuable to your employer. It may also help you earn a promotion. People who earn promotions are those who have shown that they can handle additional responsibility. What qualities and behaviors do employers look for?

- **Knowledge and competence.** Employers want workers who know how to do their jobs, even if a new job requires different skills. Employers also look for workers who go a step beyond the norm—workers who excel.
- **Willingness to learn.** Employers promote workers who show they want to increase their knowledge and skills.
- **Initiative.** You will probably advance in your career if you take initiative on the job by solving problems, proposing new ideas, and accepting leadership opportunities as they arise.

- **Perseverance.** Perseverance is the quality of finishing what you start. Employers want to know that you will see a job through to completion.
- **Cooperation.** Employers want people who can get along well with others. It is important to be a team player.
- **Thinking skills.** When considering who should be promoted, employers look for people who can think through situations and solve problems.
- **Adaptability.** Employers want workers who can adapt to new situations.
- **Education and training.** Employers promote people who have the needed skills and education to do the job.

HANDLING YOUR NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Getting a promotion may change your work life in many ways. Often it means you will become a supervisor. Then you will be responsible for both your own work and the work of others.

Be aware that as a supervisor your relationships with your former coworkers will change. You will be the boss. You must oversee their work and give directions. You will review their performance. This can have an effect on your relationships with colleagues.

Effectiveness on the Job

Effectiveness on the job does not happen by accident. Excellence and efficiency take communication, teamwork, respect, responsibility, good humor, honesty, and a willingness to learn.

Think of your success in the world of work as being an effective student. Many of the traits of a successful employee are the same traits of successful, high achieving student. As you read through each of these traits, think of how school projects, clubs, committees, teamwork, and other groups have helped you build the traits that employers value in their employees.

COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

Working as part of a team requires you to listen and speak well. Without listening, you may not know what is expected. Ask for help when you need it. If you do not clearly explain information, everyone on the team may fail. To work well together, you need to show coworkers that you are interested in them. Notice what makes your coworkers unique. Try to see things from their points of view.

TEAMWORK

You, your coworkers, supervisors, and the owners are all in business together. You are a team working toward a common goal. To show team loyalty, do not speak negatively about your employer or a supervisor when talking with others. Be positive and focus on finding solutions as a team rather than looking for others to blame. When there is a crisis, do your part to help the team get through it.

RESPECTING OTHERS

Without respect for one another, there can be little cooperation. The more respect you give others, the more you will receive in return. Two attitudes that prevent respect are a message of “I’m

better than you” and jealousy. It is important to remember that each employee has something to contribute. Jealous workers view others as rivals and make cooperation difficult, if not impossible.

TAKING ON RESPONSIBILITY

Employers want employees to do what needs to be done without being told to do it. They also want them to take responsibility for their actions. The responsible employee is willing to accept a situation or problem and to take charge of responding to what is needed. Some ways to focus on responsibility include

- identifying ways to become more efficient by examining your past and current work habits and performance.
- asking coworkers and supervisors for feedback on how well you do your job.

WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

Every company has its own ways of doing things. You need to learn the system. Be willing to learn any job, no matter how small. This information will help you do your job better and possibly prepare you for a promotion. Take advantage of opportunities to attend training programs, workshops, and other chances to learn more.

KEEPING A SENSE OF HUMOR

A sense of humor can get you and your coworkers through stressful times. It can help unite the team and make all members feel better about themselves. Rather than being a comedian, just try to see the light side of a situation.

BEING HONEST

Employers expect their employees to be honest. One lie can destroy your reputation and not only threaten your current job, but future opportunities as well.

Successful Employee Characteristics

Finding and keeping a good job requires you to work well with other people and show that you are reliable. Here are the personal characteristics that will help you be successful on the job.

COMMUNICATION

Employees need to be able to speak, read, and write the language that is used on the job. It is equally important to listen well, to ask questions, and to explain things clearly. You will need to communicate with supervisors, customers, and coworkers.

TEAMWORK

Even if your workplace is not organized into teams, you still need teamwork skills. One of the main reasons workers lose their jobs is because they cannot get along with coworkers. An employer expects employees to work cooperatively, to plan and make decisions together, to respect differing opinions, to realize there is “give and take” in order to achieve group results, and to encourage and support fellow team members.

DEPENDABILITY

What one person does, or does not do, affects others. If one employee does not show up for work on time or leaves early without permission, the other employees may not be able to finish their work. Your employer will not tolerate it, and your fellow employees will resent it if they cannot count on you.

RESPONSIBILITY

Employers want their employees to accept responsibility for their actions. It can be hard to take responsibility, especially when things go wrong, but it is important to be truthful. Explain what happened, but do not try to blame someone else or make excuses.

INITIATIVE

Taking initiative means doing what needs to be done without being told to do it. Employers value workers who are willing to go the “extra mile” and who look for opportunities to do more than just what they were hired to do.

WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

Employers want people who can follow directions and do their jobs well. Listen carefully to instructions. If you are unsure about how to do something, ask questions. Be willing to learn any job, no matter how small. Learn all you can about your job and about the company. This information will help you do your job better and will prepare you for a possible promotion.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Your attitude toward your job is a very important factor in your success. You have a choice: You can act positively or negatively. If you have a positive attitude toward your supervisor and coworkers, chances are that they will respond positively toward you.

ACCEPTANCE OF CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Constructive criticism is part of a supervisor’s job. He or she needs to let employees know how they are doing. If your supervisor tells you that you have done something incorrectly, consider it an opportunity to learn. Ask how you could improve, and follow through on your supervisor’s suggestions.

HONESTY

Employers expect their employees to be honest. One dishonest act can destroy your reputation.

E-4

Workplace Skills Checklist

The following checklists identify skills people need to be successful in the workplace. Check the skills that you currently have. Those skills that remain unchecked are those you will need to develop to be successful on the job.

SEEKING AND APPLYING FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Locate employment opportunities.
- Identify job requirements.
- Identify conditions for employment.
- Evaluate job opportunities.
- Prepare a résumé.
- Write a cover letter.
- Complete job application form.
- Prepare for job interview.
- Send follow-up letter.

ACCEPTING EMPLOYMENT

- Complete state and federal tax forms.
- Complete withholding allowance certificate form (W-4).

COMMUNICATING ON THE JOB

- Communicate clearly with others.
- Ask questions about a task.
- Read and follow written directions.
- Prepare written communication.
- Interpret the use of body language.
- Use good telephone and cell phone etiquette.
- Listen to directions and follow them.
- Use appropriate e-mail etiquette.

DEMONSTRATING TEAMWORK

- Match team member's skills to group activities.
- Encourage shared participation.
- Provide support to team members.
- Build and maintain trust.
- Complete team tasks.
- Evaluate outcomes.

MAINTAINING PROFESSIONALISM

- Treat people with respect.
- Exhibit positive behavior.
- Comply with organizational expectations.
- Use job-related terminology.
- Participate in meetings in a positive and constructive manner.

MAINTAINING A SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

- Follow environmental practices and policies.
- Comply with safety procedures.
- Use and maintain proper tools and equipment.
- Maintain work area.
- Act appropriately during emergencies.

DEMONSTRATING WORK ETHICS AND BEHAVIOR

- Follow rules, regulations, and policies.
- Implement job responsibilities.
- Maintain regular attendance.
- Assume responsibility for decisions and actions.
- Demonstrate willingness to learn.
- Practice time management.
- Practice cost effectiveness.
- Display initiative.
- Exhibit pride in your work.

Workplace Skills Checklist (continued)

USING RESOURCES

- Avoid waste and misuse.
- Divide and manage your time to accomplish tasks.
- Set priorities and accomplish tasks according to priorities.
- Make a list of supplies and materials needed to do a task.
- Follow a budget for projects.

USING INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

- Teach others how to perform a task.
- Assist clients with problems.
- Work well with people from different ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds.
- Respond to praise or criticism.
- Provide constructive criticism.
- Channel and control emotional reactions.
- Help resolve conflicts.
- Display a positive attitude.
- Report sexual harassment or unethical behavior.

USING INFORMATION

- Read instructions and understand how it affects your job.
- Check supplies or products received against an invoice or packing slip.
- Find and evaluate information.
- Use a telephone directory or Web-based search engine.

USING SYSTEMS

- Understand how your department fits within the whole operation. Find out what work is done in each department and how it fits into the operation.

DEMONSTRATING TECHNOLOGY LITERACY

- Operate and maintain tools and equipment.
- Enter data into a computer system.
- Use word processing software, presentation applications, and other digital technology.
- Locate information via the Internet.

INTERPRETING THE ECONOMICS OF WORK

- Describe responsibilities of employees.
- Describe responsibilities of employers.

SOLVING PROBLEMS

- Identify the problem.
- Use reasoning skills.
- Assess employer and employee responsibility in solving a problem.
- Identify solutions to the problem.
- Select and implement solutions.
- Evaluate options.
- Estimate results of implemented options.

ADAPTING/COPING WITH CHANGE

- Exhibit ability to handle stress.
- Seek additional training or education to update job skills for new demands.
- Recognize need to change or quit a job.
- Write a letter of resignation.

E-5

Developing a Strong Work Ethic

Directions: Read the entire activity. Follow the directions for Steps 1 and 2 and the Follow-Up.

Step 1: Holding work as an important value in life is the definition of a strong work ethic. Commitment and dedication to the job are indicators of a strong work ethic. Review the following traits and determine if you think they are indicators of a strong work ethic. Rate each of the possible indicators with a **YES** or **NO** response in the space provided to the left of each number.

Step 2: Choose the three traits you believe are the **BEST** indicators of a strong work ethic.

Possible Work Ethic Indicators

- _____ 1. Showing up for work 20 minutes early so you are ready to work when the day begins
- _____ 2. Offering to help train new workers
- _____ 3. Using sick leave every time you have a cold or are tired
- _____ 4. Reading professional journals in your field to remain current
- _____ 5. Setting personal goals to improve your work performance
- _____ 6. Willingness to stay after work to complete an important assignment on time
- _____ 7. Dressing in a professional manner
- _____ 8. Offering to help busy coworkers complete their assignments when your work is completed
- _____ 9. Informing the boss about coworkers who are lax in the performance of their jobs
- _____ 10. Taking additional courses and seminars to improve your skills
- _____ 11. Doing everything you can to earn a promotion
- _____ 12. Admitting to your boss when you make a mistake
- _____ 13. Admitting to your coworkers when you make a mistake
- _____ 14. Complimenting others who have a strong work ethic
- _____ 15. Never misusing equipment on the job

Follow-Up

- Write an essay of at least 150 words to convince an employer in a child care center that you have a strong work ethic. Use real-life examples to support your case.
- Create a collage of newspaper and magazine pictures that show people demonstrating a strong work ethic in a workplace setting.

E-6

Mapping Your Education and Training Options

Directions: To review different education and training options and to help you identify the location of schools in your immediate area, follow the steps below.

Step 1: Use print, electronic, or Internet resources to identify schools and colleges in your area that offer preparation for careers in early childhood care and education. On a separate sheet of paper, make a list of at least three schools in your area.

Step 2: Use print or Internet resources to identify names, addresses, and telephone numbers for one school under each of the following four headings:

Career and Technology Center

Community or Technical College

Trade or Technical School

Four-Year College or University

Step 3: Contact the schools you listed in Step 2. You may also be able to conduct online research for these schools. Compare the following information:

	Career and Technology Center	Trade or Technical School	Community or Technical College	Four-Year College or University
Annual Tuition Costs				
Average Class Size				
Housing Available				
Scholarships Available				
Modern Facilities				
Up-to-Date Equipment				

Follow-Up

What conclusions can you draw about your education options based on your comparison?

Networking and Personal Contacts

Background Information

Did you ever hear the saying that “people get jobs through people they know”? There is some truth in that. Most people can name others who made them aware of job openings or served as personal references. Many people often credit these individuals with helping them get a job or simply encouraging them to explore career opportunities in a given area. Family members, friends, and even acquaintances can be great sources of information regarding employment opportunities. They may be able to answer your questions or at least put you in contact with someone who can.

There are several reasons personal connections are so helpful. Word-of-mouth information is often the best source of job openings. Employers want to know that others can vouch for a candidate’s skills, experience, and positive attitude toward work before offering the position. Employers also want additional information to confirm what they learn during an interview.

The process of making friends and sharing information about jobs is called networking. Networking begins when you talk to people. Preparation for networking starts by making a list of people you can talk to about a variety of topics. Anyone you feel comfortable talking to is a potential contact who can lead you to hundreds of others.

The goals of networking are to increase your visibility with others and to gain career information. Remember to join professional organizations. They are a great place to network and often have a listing of job openings.

Most people are willing to help others if it takes only a few minutes. To network effectively, you will need to develop short statements that tell others who you are, what your goals are, and the type of assistance you need to reach your goals. These brief statements should be used when making new contacts.

Directions—Part 1: Complete the following five assignments to foster your networking efforts:

- **Assignment 1:** Write a short statement (75 words or less) that tells others who you are.
- **Assignment 2:** Write a short statement (75 words or less) that explains your career goals and your personal or family goals.
- **Assignment 3:** Write a short statement (75 words or less) that explains the information you need to reach your career goals. For example, “I need to know how to make contacts in the child care or early childhood education field.”
- **Assignment 4:** Write a short statement (75 words or less) that explains how you anticipate maintaining balance between your career and personal or family life.
- **Assignment 5:** Complete the network contact sheet on the following page.

E-8

Using the Occupational Outlook Handbook

Directions: Select a job in the early childhood professional field that is described in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)* and the *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*. This information can also be found in the online versions of these handbooks. Then respond to the questions or statements that follow.

Early Childhood Occupation: _____

1. Under what general career heading, or cluster, is this occupation in the table of contents?

2. Under what subheading (a group of specific occupations), if any, is this occupation found?

3. Briefly describe two facts about the nature of work in this occupation.

4. Describe two characteristics of the working conditions in this occupation.

5. Relate a fact concerning employment in this occupation.

Using the Occupational Outlook Handbook (continued)

6. What education or training is needed for this occupation?

7. What personal qualities are helpful for this occupation?

8. How would you describe the opportunities for advancement in this occupation?

9. What is the job outlook for this occupation? Explain.

10. According to the *OOH*, how much might a typical worker in this occupation earn?

11. List two sources of additional information about this occupation.

Preparing a Résumé

As you think about getting a job as an early childhood professional, one of the first challenges you will face is developing a résumé. You may be wondering how to begin. As with many tasks, preparation is essential. The following hints can help you start preparing your résumé.

THE PARTS OF A RÉSUMÉ

Most parts of a résumé are essential because they provide information that employers need or want. Other parts are not as necessary but give additional information to enhance your desirability as a job candidate.

Personal Information

Employers need to know who you are and where they may contact you. Use the following guidelines in providing this information:

- **Name:** Give your full first name, middle initial, and last name. Do not use nicknames. To avoid discrimination, do not use titles such as Ms. or Mr. before your name.
- **Address:** Use your street address (including any apartment letter or number) or your post office box number. Spell out the name of the city, but use the official abbreviation for your state. Be sure to include your zip code.
- **Telephone:** Give your home telephone or cell phone number (including area code) or a telephone number where someone responsible can take a message for you.
- **E-mail:** Include your e-mail address as another way to contact you. Think about whether your e-mail is professional enough to list on a resume. Consider creating an extra e-mail account with a simple, professional name to use while seeking employment.

Employment Objective

Your employment objective should clearly state what type of employment you

are seeking. It should be short and to the point. A well-written objective might be “To obtain a teacher’s aide position in a preschool program.”

Special Skills

Special skills include any abilities and qualities you have that will make you a desirable job candidate. When seeking a position in early childhood care, think about your skills or experience in the following areas:

- **Knowledge of Children:** What knowledge do you have related to child development? Are you experienced in observing and recording behavior?
- **Management:** What skills do you have that would help you plan and administer a program, work with parents or family members, or supervise employees?
- **Aspects of Care:** Which of your qualities make you especially suited for caring for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school-agers, and children with disabilities; for identifying and attending to the needs of children; and for guiding the behavior of children?
- **Preparation:** Can you set up a classroom, plan and prepare materials for learning activities, and prepare meals for children?
- **Activities:** What skills have you demonstrated in directing activities in an early childhood curriculum?
- **Maintenance:** What experience do you have in caring for facility materials, activity areas, and equipment?
- **Nutrition, Health, and Safety:** Can you plan nutritious meals and snacks, identify and eliminate safety hazards, administer first aid, or teach health and safety?

After developing your list of special skills, you can choose those items most relevant to your employment objective. Concisely incorporate these into your résumé.

Preparing a Résumé (continued)

Educational Background

Potential employers need to know about your educational background and experience. List the schools you have attended (and years of attendance) in reverse chronological order, with the most recent listed first. Also include any additional programs or courses you have taken related to your employment objective. Any special honors you have received also enhance your image with employers.

Work Experience

Your work experience will be of key importance to your potential employer. List any former employers—including their complete addresses and your dates of employment, job titles, and special achievements—in reverse chronological order.

If your work experience is limited, look for other ways to emphasize your skills and qualities. Any volunteer work that relates to the job you are seeking is especially helpful. Use action verbs when describing your work or volunteer responsibilities. For example, start your statements with words such as *managed*, *created*, *directed*, *organized*, and *prepared*.

PREPARING REFERENCES

Most employers will ask for a list of references before hiring a job candidate. Select people who know you well, such as a tutor, teacher, or coach, who can provide favorable information about your qualifications, character, and work habits. Be sure to request permission from these individuals so that they can be prepared with relevant details for your potential employer. Avoid using relatives as references, because employers may view them as biased.

Generally you should supply references only when an employer requests them. On your résumé, you may want to include a statement such as “References available on request.” Prepare your references list ahead of time, including complete names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email

addresses. Identify each person’s relationship to you. Use a word processing program on your computer and print your references list. Keep several copies on hand.

CREATING YOUR RÉSUMÉ

After you have gathered the information you would like to include on your résumé, the next step is to write a rough draft. Many different styles and formats are acceptable for a résumé. Check out resources in your school or community library for résumé examples.

Read your rough draft with a critical eye. Is it concise but complete? Does it show you in a positive light? If you were an employer, would you be favorably impressed when reading it? Consider asking an adult who knows you well to read your résumé and to offer suggestions for improvement.

Carefully proofread your résumé for any errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar. Your résumé may be the first and last chance you have to make a good impression on an employer, so it should be free from errors. Create and save the final version of your résumé to a hard drive, disk or flash-drive. Check your final version carefully to make sure you did not type anything incorrectly.

After making corrections, ask at least one other person to proofread the résumé again. When you are satisfied that your résumé is accurate, neat, and error-free, make copies of your final version.

CIRCULATING YOUR RÉSUMÉ

To circulate your résumé, consider networking. Making contact with people who can help you find a job may prove invaluable in getting your foot in the door for a job interview. Along with a well-prepared résumé, networking often makes the difference in a successful job search. Distribute copies of your résumé among friends, teachers, employers, and others you know.

E-10

Résumé Fact Sheet

Directions: The first step in writing a résumé is to gather the information you would like to include. Complete this activity by filling in the information requested. You may wish to refer to the completed fact sheet when preparing your résumé and your references list.

1. Personal Information

Your name: _____

Street address or P.O. Box: _____

City, state, zip code: _____

Home or cell phone number (including area code): _____

E-mail address: _____

2. Employment Objective List four positions for which you might be interested in applying.

3. Special Skills. Place a check mark next to each skill listed below that you have. If you identify other relevant skills, write them on a separate sheet of paper.**Child Development**

_____ Knowledge of child development

_____ Experience observing and recording behavior

Management

_____ Planning a program or administering a program

_____ Working with parents and family members

_____ Supervising employees

Aspects of Care

_____ Identifying children's needs

_____ Attending to children's needs

_____ Guiding children's behavior

_____ Caring for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children

_____ Caring for children with special needs

Résumé Fact Sheet (continued)

Preparation

- _____ Setting up classroom or activity areas
- _____ Planning learning activities for children
- _____ Preparing materials for use
- _____ Preparing meals for children

Activities (Directing)

- _____ Art activities
- _____ Language activities
- _____ Drama/dramatic play activities
- _____ Social studies/social skills activities
- _____ Music activities
- _____ Science and math activities
- _____ Cooking and nutrition activities
- _____ Active play or fitness activities

Maintenance

- _____ Classroom or facility
- _____ Play areas or recreational areas
- _____ Materials and equipment

Nutrition, Health, and Safety

- _____ Planning nutritious meals and snacks
- _____ Identifying and eliminating safety hazards
- _____ Administering first aid
- _____ Teaching health and safety
- _____ Certification in CPR

Technology and Business Skills

- _____ Operating a copier and other office equipment
- _____ Using a computer and software programs, such as for word processing, budgets, and presentations
- _____ Answering telephones; using e-mail and the Internet
- _____ Driving a van
- _____ Preparing and serving meals
- _____ Accounting/bookkeeping/filing

Other Skills

- 4. Educational Background** Supply information about your education and training, giving the most recent first, on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this activity.
- 5. Work Experience** List your work experience starting with the most recent job first. Remember to include volunteer work and paid employment. Write your list on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this activity.
- 6. Activities and Interests** List your personal interests and leisure activities, especially those that might relate to the job(s) you are seeking. Write your list on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this activity.
- 7. References** After receiving permission from at least three individuals, record the following information: name; relationship; position and place of employment; city, state, and zip code; e-mail and telephone number. List your references on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this activity.

Writing a Cover Letter

By the time you get ready to write a cover letter, you may have already invested a great deal of time and effort in your job search. If you are serious about finding a job, you will also take the time to write a thoughtfully worded cover letter. A well-crafted letter and résumé help you stand out from the crowd in a positive way, convincing a potential employer that you deserve an interview.

OPENING SENTENCES

The first sentences in a cover letter should inform the reader of its purpose. State that you would like to be considered for a particular position and tell how you learned about the job. For example,

- “I am writing to apply for the child care aide position advertised in *The Tribune* on April 10th.”

If you would like to work in a certain program but do not know if there is a position available, it may be worthwhile to send a cover letter just in case. Your initial paragraph might read,

- “I am writing in regard to possible employment with your program. I have the training and credentials required of a child care aide and would like to work for a company such as yours. Please consider me as an applicant if a position becomes available.”

MIDDLE SECTION

The middle section of your letter is your sales pitch—where you explain why you are the right person for the job. It should emphasize the qualifications in your résumé. Show how you are qualified to fill the job vacancy. If you do not have much education or experience, emphasize your training. If all three areas—education, experience, and training—are impressive, mention them in this section. Here are several examples:

- “As my résumé states, I have received my training at Hills School. I have completed the Child Care Aide Program, and I am well prepared to work as a teacher’s aide.”
- “I recently completed my education and training in early childhood education with a focus on children with special needs. I have acquired the skills needed to nurture children’s development effectively and to guide their behavior. My training also included a supervised internship. I believe this practical work experience has prepared me for immediate employment in the field.”

CLOSING PARAGRAPH

In the final paragraph, ask for a response. Give your home or cell phone number and e-mail address, and request that you be contacted to make an appointment for an interview. This section might read,

- “If you would like more information concerning my qualifications, I would be glad to answer any questions that you may have. May I do so in a personal interview? I can be reached at the above address or by telephone at (555) 555-5555. I look forward to hearing from you.”
- “I look forward to talking with you. I will contact your office on May 11th to see when an interview will be convenient.”

Be sure to close your letter with a sentence thanking the prospective employer for his or her time and consideration. Finally, remember that, as with your résumé, the letter you send to a potential employer represents you. It should be neat and error-free.

E-12 Cover Letter Worksheet

Directions: Imagine that you are preparing to write a cover letter for a position in the early childhood field. You may wish to choose a specific opening that you have seen advertised. Compose a draft of the body of your cover letter by responding to the statements that follow:

1. In one or two sentences, explain the position for which you are applying and how you learned about the availability of this position.

2. In the second paragraph, tell the prospective employer why you are a good candidate for the position. Emphasize your most important qualifications. Refer the employer to your résumé for more information.

3. In the third paragraph, ask for an interview and tell the employer how to contact you.

4. Close your letter with a sentence thanking the prospective employer.

Leadership in the Workplace

Are some people “born” leaders? Do leaders create themselves? In truth, everyone has skills and qualities to lead in his or her own way. Sharpening those skills and knowing how to use them is often what distinguishes a good leader from a potential one.

LEADERSHIP AT WORK

A person does not need to be appointed, win an election, or become a boss to be a leader. You probably have been a leader at various times and situations in your life. Maybe you took the lead in planning a family picnic, organizing a group project for class, or coordinating a campus wide recycling drive. Likewise, a good deal of leadership in the workplace comes from people with no title at all. They assume leadership in informal ways, such as influencing and motivating others, promoting teamwork, and serving as role models.

What makes a good leader? Do you have what it takes? Certain factors are associated with good leadership. These factors are discussed as follows with examples of how you can develop and practice leadership skills in everyday life.

Skills and Qualities

Knowledge Some people believe that technical ability and experience are the most important traits of good leaders. Certainly you cannot lead others if you do not know the way yourself. Knowledge and experience, however, are only part of the picture.

Communication Good communication skills—speaking, listening, writing, and reading—are vital to good leadership in the workplace and elsewhere. This makes sense, for leaders by nature must deal with people. How can leaders direct others if they lack verbal skills to express themselves clearly?

Consideration Good leaders are also good listeners. They realize that the feelings behind the words are as important as the message itself. They are aware and considerate of the feelings of others and take time to listen to others’ ideas.

Integrity Good leaders are honest and trustworthy. They are dependable and straightforward in communicating with others. They use good judgment based on solid values and principles when working with others.

Writing skills are especially valuable for leaders in the workplace, who write memos and reports describing their ideas and plans to coworkers and others involved in the business.

Reading skills allow leaders to understand the written communication of others. This includes feedback from coworkers as well as information on new developments in their line of work. In this way, good leaders are also good learners.

Team oriented Of course, there can be no leaders without followers. Good leaders have personal qualities that make others *want* to follow them. They collaborate, or work well with others, to achieve a common goal. Leaders are committed to the team effort and value the differing backgrounds, viewpoints, skills, and talents of team members.

Most leaders are intelligent and energetic. They are able to make quick and accurate decisions. Good leaders are honest, creative, and enthusiastic. They know how to promote unity among group members. They are aware that a group becomes strong when individual members feel special and wanted.

Effective leaders maintain a high level of commitment to their goals and the workers who help them achieve these goals. Leaders also desire to reach the highest standard of quality in any task.

Leadership in the Workplace (continued)

Maintaining a good image is important to gaining the support of others. If coworkers see you as honest, intelligent, respected by others, and able to get things accomplished, they will be more likely to trust your judgment, providing you with opportunities for leadership.

A positive self-concept helps create a positive image among others. Feeling good about yourself and your abilities can help give you confidence to take on a leadership role.

Styles of Leadership

People lead in different ways, depending on their style of leadership. In all organizations, there are people who have been given the title and authority to tell others what to do. They are leaders by position.

People who may have the specific knowledge to make the best decisions are leaders by expertise. They know what needs to be done and how to do it. Sometimes people follow others because they do their jobs well.

Some people are direct leaders and like to be involved in every part of a project. Others are indirect leaders who may delegate authority, staying in the background until they are needed.

You may have observed people who lead by example rather than words. You may also know leaders who are very vocal and motivate others with frequent words of encouragement.

No single style of leadership is the best. Rather, one style may work best in a certain type of situation. Good leaders are familiar with the different styles and with the individuals with whom they work. They know that what works for one person in one situation may not work for another person in different circumstances.

TAKE THE LEAD

How can you develop your own leadership qualities? You might begin by observing others who model leadership skills at work, school, and home. A coworker who shows a new employee how to do a particular job demonstrates good communication skills. Identify the types of leadership used by different teachers at school. Determine why each style is effective.

Opportunities for practicing leadership, formally or informally, are all around you. You might encourage a sibling or classmate to try out for a sports team. You can join various organizations, such as FCCLA, National Honor Society, SkillsUSA, or scouting groups. These are just a few of the organizations that call for leadership among their members.

All members of a team can display leadership skills by supporting the common team goal, taking initiative to accomplish tasks, and sharing opinions and concerns about the team's plan and direction.

If you lack confidence in your leadership abilities, choose an activity and a situation in which you do well. Developing self-confidence is a goal not only for leadership but also for life.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs start, develop, and then run their own businesses. They may start their business ventures in one of four ways:

1. **Starting a new business.** Some entrepreneurs start their businesses from scratch. They see a need and start a business to meet that need. There are many challenges to starting a new business. The entrepreneur must find a location, buy or build a facility, purchase equipment, hire employees, and find ways to attract and keep customers. They must obtain financing and develop a business plan. A business plan identifies the goods or services that will be offered, tells where it will be located, outlines the owners' goals, describes customers, and identifies the type of marketing that will be done. The advantage of starting a new business is that the owner can decide just how the business will be developed and run.
2. **Buying an existing business.** People who buy an existing business obtain the facility, equipment, and even the employees in some cases. However, it is important to find answers to the following questions before buying a business: Why is the business being sold? Was it making a profit? Does it have a good reputation? Are the current employees skilled and motivated? What is the condition of the building, the equipment, and the inventory?
3. **Taking over the family business.** Entrepreneurs who take over a family business usually have the advantage of years of experience with the business. However, they must consider the same issues as those who are buying an existing business. In addition, they need to consider possible concerns and conflicts with other family members.

4. **Buying a franchise.** Many businesses are franchises. The entrepreneur who buys a franchise obtains the right to sell a company's products or services within a given area or territory. The company provides the location, management training, and help with advertising and employee recruiting. In return, the franchise operator pays the company a share of the sales, in addition to the initial purchase price, and agrees to operate the business according to the company's stated policies.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ENTREPRENEUR

It takes a special kind of person to be a successful entrepreneur. Here are the most common characteristics:

- **Persistent.** Entrepreneurs work hard! They work until the job is finished, no matter what the job. They know their livelihoods depend on completing the job and reaching the goals they have set for themselves.
- **Risk-taking.** A good entrepreneur does a lot of research and planning before starting a business. This is because after the final analysis, the entrepreneur must put his or her money and reputation on the line.
- **Responsible.** Successful entrepreneurs take responsibility for their actions. They know they are accountable to their customers, employees, and investors. They keep their promises and treat people honestly and fairly.
- **Creative.** Entrepreneurs recognize opportunities and are always looking for ways to improve their businesses. They may develop new products or services or find new markets for their products or services.

Entrepreneurship (continued)

- **Self-confident.** If you do not believe in yourself, how can you expect your investors, customers, and employees to believe in you? Entrepreneurs must be confident in their business actions.
- **Independent.** Entrepreneurs make their own decisions. They run their businesses the way they believe is best. They will ask for advice, but they make the final decisions.
- **Goal-oriented.** Entrepreneurs set goals and then “go for it.” They know what they want and work hard to achieve it. They are “driven” to reach their goals.
- **Competitive.** Entrepreneurs are always looking for ways to make their products or services better than the competition’s. They learn as much as possible about things that might affect their businesses.
- **Demanding.** Entrepreneurs expect a lot from their employees, but they expect even more from themselves. Entrepreneurs need to focus on all areas of their business. In order to do that, they expect a great deal from everyone involved in the business.

COULD YOU BE AN ENTREPRENEUR?

Read each statement on the chart that follows. If a statement strongly describes you, rate it a 5. If it does not describe you at all, rate it a 1. If the statement partly describes you, rate it as a 2, 3, or 4. Total your answers and divide by 10. The closer your total score is to 5, the more likely it is that you would enjoy being an entrepreneur.

Rate Your Entrepreneurship Qualities					
Qualities	1	2	3	4	5
I am creative.					
I take responsibility for my actions.					
I am independent and like to make my own decisions.					
I am persistent and finish a task, despite difficulties.					
I set goals and try to reach them.					
I like to work at my own pace.					
I believe in myself and what I am doing.					
I like challenges and am willing to take risks.					
I set high standards for myself.					
I am willing to learn in order to make wise decisions.					

Total Score: _____ ÷ 10 = _____

E-15 How to Leave a Job

Every job has a beginning and an end. Sometimes employers choose to end a job when a worker's performance is poor or the employer no longer needs the service of an employee. More frequently, however, employees choose to leave their jobs. Some people may leave to return to school or to begin a new job, while others stop working.

Techniques for getting and keeping a job are important, but it is equally important to use appropriate strategies when leaving a job. The saying "do not burn your bridges" is sound advice. When leaving a job, you should be careful not to offend your supervisors or coworkers. By leaving on a positive note, you will leave a network in place that may become a lifesaver down the road.

The following chart provides suggestions for leaving on a positive note.

Actions to Take Before You Leave	Workplace Behavior While You Are Still on the Job	Actions to Take as You Are Leaving
Tell your immediate supervisor first of your decision to leave the job. He or she needs to hear it directly from you.	Do not decrease your work ethic or reduce your commitment to your current job during your last days. People tend to remember others by the last experience they have with them.	Leave your job in good shape. Finish all major projects. Leave details about projects for those who follow.
If you are leaving to advance your career, honestly state your reasons to your employer.	Continue to treat others with respect regardless of how you may be treated by others.	Be sure to turn in your keys, tools, or company uniforms when you leave.
Identify a specific date that you want to leave your job and provide your employer with at least two weeks' notice.	Ask your supervisor if he or she would be willing to serve as an employment reference in the future.	Avoid making negative comments about your current job.
Thank your supervisor for the assistance and training you have received.		Submit a letter of resignation to your employer mentioning appropriate information from the previous suggestions.

Directions: Read the suggestions above and complete the following activities:

1. Interview at least two people you know who have experiences leaving a job by choice. Were their experiences positive or negative? Why? Write an essay explaining how the suggestions above helped them leave their jobs. For the sake of privacy, do not include real names. Attach your essay to this activity.
2. Imagine that you have received and accepted a job offer for a position that better suits your needs and your career goals in the early childhood field. However, in order to accept the offer, you must tell your current employer that you will be leaving. Write a letter of resignation to your employer that follows the suggestions given in the chart above. Attach your letter to this activity.

Preparing for Competitions

Participation in competitions is a good way for students to move forward along their career pathways in early childhood care. As the instructor, you must be committed to the goals of competition. Working with your students as they prepare for various early childhood competitions is a time-consuming process. However, your reward is watching your students increase their work skills while developing leadership and teamwork skills.

PREPARING YOURSELF

After committing the time to prepare students for competitions, you will need to prepare yourself by

- attending advisor workshops or meetings about various competitions.
- talking with other advisors who have had students compete.
- obtaining copies of competition requirements from the various sponsoring organizations such as FCCLA and SkillsUSA. (See pages 255 to 256.)
- attending competitions to see firsthand what happens during each competition.
- talking with administrators, students, and parents about competitive events.
- locating resources for students to use for their competitive events.

Your preparation will also include assisting at the competitions. For competitions to be successful, all advisors need to help organize and carry out the competitions. Your help will be needed to get rooms set up for competitions; to find runners, room consultants, and judges; and to tally score sheets.

PREPARING YOUR STUDENTS

Talk with your students about the goals of the competitions and how they can benefit from competing. Explain the commitment involved in preparing for competitions.

Offer students choices in competitive events. Help them determine their strengths and select competitions which they will enjoy and from which they will benefit. In addition, review the competition requirements, problems students will need to solve, and the evaluation processes for various competitions.

PRACTICING FOR THE COMPETITIONS

To help your students practice, demonstrate an event or show a video of students competing. Discuss the steps students go through at competitions, the equipment and supplies needed, and the procedures to follow. You may also show samples of past projects prepared by former students.

Have students prepare and practice their events over and over. After students become comfortable with their events, have them actually perform for their classmates. Have “judges” evaluate and help students fine-tune their projects.

As a final step for competition, proof-read all paperwork for proper spelling and grammar. Have students prepare a checklist for items they will need to take to the competition. You may need to help students register for the events and get to their assigned locations.

AFTER THE COMPETITION

Discuss students’ experiences following the competitions. Encourage students to continue to participate in competitions. Make recommendations for improvements and listen to their concerns about competing.



Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, Inc. (FCCLA), is a nonprofit national vocational student organization for young men and women in family and consumer sciences courses. Involvement in FCCLA offers members the opportunity to expand their leadership potential, to explore careers, and to develop skills for life.

Through FCCLA, students can participate in a number of programs and competitions to strengthen their skills and leadership abilities.

STAR EVENTS

STAR Events are competitive events in which FCCLA members are recognized for their aptitude of career and leadership skills and achievement in chapter and individual projects and occupational preparation.

Depending upon specific event rules and procedures, projects may be carried out by individuals or teams. National *STAR Events* participants are selected by state-established procedures before moving on to nationals. Some event areas include

- Early Childhood.
- Entrepreneurship.
- Focus on Children.
- Interpersonal Communications.

CAREER CONNECTION

Through individual, cooperative, and competitive events, students link their skills to life goals. They discover their strengths and target their career goals. The activity areas offered in the *Career Connection* program include

- Plug In to Careers.
- Sign On to the Career Connection.

- Program Career Steps.
- Link Up to Jobs.
- Access Skills for Career Success.
- Integrate Work and Life.

LEADERS AT WORK

Leaders at Work is a national program that recognizes FCCLA members who create projects to strengthen their leadership goals on the job. The main program goals include recognizing career-oriented FCCLA members and encouraging leadership development.

Leaders at Work emphasizes leadership on the job and helps students identify skills they need to strengthen to become effective leaders. Leadership skill areas include

- Communication.
- Interpersonal.
- Management.
- Entrepreneurship.

The program is open to any FCCLA member who has a paid, in-school job or ongoing volunteer job related to one of the Leaders at Work career areas. The career area related to early childhood competitions includes

- Early Childhood, Education, and Services.

Leaders at Work helps students prove they have the skills employers want and provides them with examples to use in job interviews and on college applications. Program participants can also apply to be recognized as an Outstanding Leader in the targeted career area related to their jobs. Through this program, students may also receive scholarships.



COMPETITIVE EVENTS

The national SkillsUSA Championships are held annually in June. Thousands of students compete in more than 70 occupational and leadership skill areas. Competing against the clock and each other, the participants prove their expertise in early childhood-related skills.

There are also competitions in leadership skills, such as extemporaneous speaking and community service. Students benefit from competition no matter how they place in the finals. They learn more about their skills and often make future job contacts.

These events offer opportunities to spark a student's interest in a particular area and can provide motivation for students to present their best work.

CONNECTIONS TO INDUSTRY

Technical committees made of industry representatives of labor and management plan the championships. The national technical committees are assisted by local representatives of education and industry. Along with technical skills, safety practices and procedures are also judged.

Early childhood care and education students may participate in the SkillsUSA Championships in the "Preschool Teaching Assistant" contest. The contest will evaluate the students' ability to plan and present appropriate activities for preschool-age children relating to a specific theme. The students must also demonstrate a general knowledge of quality child care.