

# Every teenager's top secret guide to landing a great job

**T**here is a secret most teenagers do not know — it is incredibly easy to find a job. Not just any job, but a great job. Managers want to hire you. To be honest, they need to hire you.

So why do they give you strange looks at job interviews and rarely call you after the interview? It's simple, really. Teenagers intimidate — even frighten — many adults, including bosses.

Although adults have spent years hiring and managing teenagers, it isn't difficult to understand why some are intimidated by teens. As adults we tell you that we remember what it was like to be a teenager. In reality, we think you guys dress funny, talk funny and your actions bewilder us. We rarely know what is going on inside your head.

One day — sooner than you think — you will run the world. But for now, adults are in charge. We control things. So in order for you to get the kind of job you want and make it work for you, you need to have a plan.

## Camouflage: Dress for success

First, the plan requires protective coloration — camouflage. Imagine a secret agent who approached an enemy stronghold dressed in the wrong uniform, speaking an unfamiliar language and acting in a manner guaranteed to irritate the guards. Would you expect success from an undercover agent so incredibly thickheaded? Not a chance. The guards would simply throw the agent to the alligators.

A job interview is not much different. You are attempting to enter a foreign and somewhat hostile territory. The interviewer guards the gate. To get whatever it is that you want inside — money, work experience, etc. — you must pass this initial checkpoint.

A good disguise is critical at a job interview. If you are a young man, you need a clean, well-pressed business shirt. A tie is a great idea. Borrow a nice one from your dad or an uncle. Dress pants, pressed or dry cleaned, and leather shoes complete the camouflage.

Do you feel a little weird wearing this stuff? That's all right. It means you've got it right. Almost. One last thing — remember to leave the earrings at home.

Many young women are better at this cloak-and-dagger stuff than young men. Just keep in mind that you are aiming for professional, not sexy. A skirt or dress is preferable to pants; nylons are a nice touch. A modest appearance outclasses flamboyant every time.



## Successful game plan

- Dress for success — clean and polished.
- Speak the language — politely and clearly.
- Write a résumé — put your skills and gifts in writing.
- Experiment with your dreams — Believe it or not, you can choose the job rather than letting the job choose you.

Wear only one set of earrings, and cut back on your makeup and perfume by half.

With this, you have just won 90 percent of the battle. Even if you are applying for the most basic job at the company, it is usually better to overdress for the part. In most cases your competition will underdress.

Does all this “show” seem unfair? Teenagers complain that people, especially bosses, should judge them for what they can contribute, not for how they dress. But that's how it is. Undercover agents do not receive points for good intentions.

### Language: Translation, please

Now for step two of your transformation in becoming a competent undercover agent — language. If you use slang, your potential boss probably won't know what you are saying. Speak in complete sentences and make eye contact occasionally. As much as possible during your interview, eliminate "yeah" from your vocabulary. The word "yes," spoken clearly and with confidence is a powerful password. Remember, too, that the phrase "Yes, sir" or "Yes, ma'am" will warm the heart of almost any interviewer.

### Résumé: Written instructions

Step three: Let's look at your résumé. "What résumé?" you ask. While it's understandable that young people have little or no work history, that doesn't mean that only professionals and other highly qualified people should prepare résumés for prospective employers. You can and should prepare a teenage-style résumé, printed on nice paper.

Begin by listing basic information — name, address, phone numbers, etc. Next, include personal details. What have you done in the way of volunteer work, clubs, extracurricular activities? What activities do you enjoy — raising tropical fish, playing sports, sewing, art? These are not business-related but they will give the interviewer a sense of who you are. More important, this will set you apart from the average applicant.

But remember, just as a good undercover agent would never call attention to anything that might blow his or her cover, some of your favorite activities are not appropriate for a résumé. Few interviewers will be impressed that you spend every Saturday at the mall or that you play computer games three hours a day, so leave these types of things off your résumé.

Ask two adults to write short letters of reference and staple copies of their letters to your résumé. A letter of reference is nothing more than someone telling potential employers a few reasons why they should hire you. The interviewer has seen hundreds of applications but few — if any — teen résumés. The fact that you took the time to prepare a résumé and attach letters of reference will impress any employer.

Consider asking an adult to help you prepare the résumé. Your parents would probably be thrilled to help, or you could ask a favorite aunt or uncle. Your school counselors and almost any teacher would doubtless feel honored to read your résumé and make suggestions.

### Experiment: Plan for the job you want

Now that you know how to land a good job, it's time for step four. Take a few minutes to think about what kind of job you really want. Believe it or not, you can choose the job rather than letting the job choose you. Your early work years are a time to experiment. You don't need to wait until someone posts a "help wanted" sign in the window.

If you like animals, take your résumé to veterinarians or pet shops. If you enjoy flowers, talk to florists. If you want to be a nurse or a doctor, try clinics, rehab centers or retirement homes — anywhere nurses or doctors work. If you love electronics, visit computer shops or electronic stores. Be creative and assertive in deciding where to take your résumé.

Now you're ready to go out and discover a great job. Happy hunting! FVM

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# Thank You

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