

# Instructor's Guide

## for

### Expert Job Search Strategies for the Ex-offender DVD Series

#### Resume Realities

#### Video 2 of 3

*"Nothing is a waste of time if you use the experience wisely." --Rodin*

#### Overview

When you look for a job, you are selling yourself a prospective employer. Your resume and cover letter are the advertising piece of that sales effort. A resume lets employers know you are available and is often the first contact you have with an employer. Because first impressions often count so much, your resume should represent you in the best possible light.

A resume and cover letter should get the employer's attention, tell them what they need to know about you, and explain why you are the best person for the current job opening. Employers learn about your history and experience through your resume and often evaluate your ability to write and communicate through your cover letter. Ex-offenders should use a functional resume rather than a chronological one; in that way you focus on your skills rather than on the timeline of your work history. Include positive activities while in prison such as getting education or dealing with a substance abuse problem. Emphasize your strengths, stay positive, and never lie.

If you have enough experience it's okay to have your resume run more than one page. However if you have less experience, don't stretch things out: a one-page resume may be more appropriate for you.

Your resume and cover letter should meet the following guidelines:

- No spelling errors or grammatical mistakes: Use spell check or have a friend review them.
- Avoid frilly or trendy paper stock: Use white, gray, or cream stock and black ink.
- Use the terminology of your target business in your cover letter: This shows that you are familiar with the work or have researched the company's business.
- Decide how to account for your time in prison in positive ways: You may have been earning a degree, in a vocational program, or undergoing substance abuse treatment.
- Arrange for three references: Obtain permission from these references to use their names. Don't list reference on the resume; instead use a separate sheet you can provide if asked for references.
- Be sure to address the cover letter to the appropriate person and use their correct title.
- Follow up after sending your cover letter and resume to show follow-through and dedication.

Employers often spend less than a minute reading your cover letter and resume. You have to make a strong impression. When you have created a strong resume, constantly update it with new skills, recognitions, or awards.

## Presentation Suggestions

Tell students that a resume shows an employer what you think is important about you.

Ask students to each write down or state one thing that they think is important about them that makes them uniquely qualified for the type of job they are seeking. Give them the **Anticipation Quiz** to complete prior to viewing the video.

Show the **program**. Encourage students to make changes to the answers they gave in the Anticipation Quiz while watching the program.

At the conclusion of the program, ask students to discuss any changes they made to the answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of watching the program.

Follow up the discussion with the Activities.

Use the **Discussion Questions** to request oral or written responses from the students.

Give the **Quick Quiz** at the conclusion of class and review the quiz questions as a group.

Assign the **Take-Away Activity**, if desired.

## Anticipation Quiz

**Directions:** Answer these questions as completely as possible. You will revise your answers as you watch the program.

1. Why are good spelling and grammar important in a resume?
2. How long should a resume be?
3. What should you emphasize in your resume, skills or a timeline of past jobs?
4. Should you avoid talking about your time in prison?

### Answer Guide:

1. They make a poor impression and may cause a prospective employer to put aside your resume.
2. One to three pages, but only go over one page if you have enough experience to merit it.
3. You should emphasize skills with a functional, rather than a chronological, resume.
4. No. Give information about positive steps you took while in prison such as education or learning vocational skills.

## Activities

### Activity #1

**Title:** Staying Positive

**Format:** Small Group

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Materials:** Paper and pens

Divide the class into four small groups (or more if you have a large class). Have each group spend about 10 minutes making a list of positive activities they participated in while in prison. Encourage them to think creatively about how the way they spent their time could be presented positively to an employer.

Post the group lists in the classroom. Hold a discussion about how each of the items they came up with might relate to some typical entry-level jobs such as food service, janitorial work, or warehouse worker.

### Activity #2

**Title:** Doing Your Homework

**Format:** Group

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Materials:** Whiteboard and markers

In this program it is recommended that you learn about a company before you send a cover letter and resume. As a group, make a list of the types of information you might look for. Then, list possible sources for this information. If you like choose a specific large employer in your town as the focus of this activity.

Your results might look something like this:

Type of Information	Source
Is the company casual or formal, conservative or modern?	Look and feel of Web site, other employees or ex-employees, stop by the office reception area to ask for a company brochure and observe how people dress and interact.
What business terminology would be used at the company?	Check the Web site, read their brochure or other literature, research their industry online, check the library for books on their industry.

What is the company's mission?	Read the company brochure, check the About Us section of their Web site, and look for news stories or magazine articles that mention the company.
How is the company doing financially?	Check their stock or Dun and Bradstreet ranking, call and ask for a copy of their annual report, check press releases on their Web site about their quarterly or yearly earnings.

### Discussion Questions

1. How can you quantify your accomplishments in a cover letter or resume?
2. In what way can you stay businesslike and concise, yet let your personality come through in a cover letter/resume?
3. If you lie to an employer on your resume, what could be the consequences?

### Quick Quiz

You may read these questions out loud, allowing time for students to respond, or copy and hand this out as a written exercise. If you read the quiz, write responses on the board/overhead.

1. What type of paper should you use for your printed resume?
2. T or F: It's okay to use a form letter and send it to many employers.
3. Name two methods of catching spelling errors in your resume or cover letter.
4. What was one example given in this program of a positive way to account for your time in prison?
5. What should you do before providing somebody's name as a reference?

### Answer Key

1. Plain white, gray, or cream, nothing frilly.
2. False.
3. Use spell check or have a friend review the documents.
4. Education, vocational training, substance abuse counseling.
5. Ask that person's permission.

## Take-Away Activity

Ask students to find a job advertised in the local newspaper, research the company, and write a brief cover letter for the job that:

- Is professional, concise, and to the point.
- Gives evidence that they know something about the company.
- Indicates that they have the experience and skills to do the job well.
- No spelling or grammatical errors.
- Accounts for their time in prison in a positive way.

***See [www.jist.com](http://www.jist.com) for many other career and job search resources, including books, assessments, videos, and more.***