



HOOP JUMPING FOR GROWNUPS:

How to Land the Job Without Losing Your Mind (or Sense of Humor :)



A GUIDE AND
WORKBOOK

by Hillary Ryan

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INTRODUCTION

While the U.S. job market is in a state of glorious chaos, the process of finding a job that's fulfilling, rewarding, inspiring and pays enough to afford guacamole on your burrito is still a tall order. That's why you downloaded this book—and also why I wrote it.

Is this You?

Are you returning to the workforce or switching lanes?

After eight years out of the paid workforce, I felt like I had landed in a foreign country where everyone spoke in acronyms and gifs. Whether you're dreaming of greener grass or ready to torch your old industry and start anew, you are not alone. My sister-in-law has been a concert promoter, restaurant manager, beauty consultant, and real estate agent. And she's still evolving. She's a one-woman LinkedIn.



Has it been years since you updated your resume?

Don't worry, you're in good company. Somewhere in a dusty corner of the internet, your resume is still saved as "Final-Final-Resume-No-Really-This-One.doc."

Did the pandemic slap you awake?

If COVID gave you the wake-up call that maybe, just maybe, you're meant for more than spreadsheets and passive-aggressive Slack threads, congratulations. You're ready.

"Hobbies include applying to jobs and wondering if a response will ever come."

WHY LISTEN TO ME?

My story? Twists, turns, a few faceplants, and more interviews than anyone should reasonably endure without developing a strong affinity for wine or meditation apps. I've made it through the flaming hoops of career chaos and lived to write about it—with only mild emotional scarring.

I promise you, if I can do it, so can you.

So let's get started. We'll laugh, cringe, maybe cry, but we'll definitely build the skills to help you land a job that won't make you want to fake a Zoom glitch.



GETTING LAID OFF OR FIRED- AN UNEXPECTED OFF RAMP

When I was laid off from a job that I loved, I was immediately in shock. I can honestly say that I felt like I had been hit like a truck or all the air had been sucked out of the room. Perhaps I should have known something was off when the development director, who I greatly admired, simply walked off the job (something I had never experienced either). But regardless, I sat there stunned.

I went through all five stages of grief—plus a sixth I like to call ‘excessive snacking while rewatching Parks & Rec.’ It was denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance, and then cookie dough.

When you lose a job unexpectedly, make sure you give yourself some time to get over the anger and sadness that can come with a sudden change. Being in the right frame of mind is key to getting through the entire process. While you may not be financially able to take a break, at least take an afternoon, day or weekend, to process and reframe. This is a perfect time to lean on your network. It will be key in the process of starting your search.

WORKSHEET 1: SELF-CARE WORKSHEET: BECAUSE BURNOUT IS NOT A CAREER STRATEGY

If you don't do anything else, do this worksheet.

Searching for a job is work. Emotional work. Cognitive work. Sometimes even physical work if you've found yourself sweating in a blazer at a summer interview. That's why having a self-care plan isn't just nice—it's necessary.

Use this worksheet to design a plan that helps you stay grounded, resilient, and human while jumping through job-search hoops.

1. Daily Check-In How are you, really?

- Mood today: 😊 😐 😞 😡 😢
- Energy level: 🟢 🟢 🟢 🟢 🟢 🟢
- Top 3 feelings right now:
 -
 -
 -
 -
 -
 -

2. Self-Care Categories Write one action you'll take this week in each area:

🧠 Mind – Learn something new, journal, meditate, read something not job-related:

💪 Body – Exercise, sleep, stretch, dance like no one's watching:

💬 Connection – Text a friend, schedule a coffee chat, vent to someone who gets it:

🌿 Environment – Tidy your space, go outside, light a candle:

🎉 Joy – Watch a funny show, blast music, make something, eat the good snacks:

WORKSHEET 1: **SELF-CARE WORKSHEET: BECAUSE BURNOUT IS NOT A CAREER STRATEGY**

3. Emergency Toolkit What helps when everything sucks and you're spiraling?

- My go-to feel-good playlist: _____
- Someone I can call/text for a pep talk: _____
- A simple comfort activity I can always turn to: _____

4. Boundaries You're Allowed to Have

You do NOT have to:

- Apply to jobs 24/7
- Say yes to everything
- Spend 3 hours on a single cover letter

You can:

- Take a break
- Say "no" to toxic interviews
- Do something for yourself even when you're job hunting

5. Affirmation Station

Write one encouraging sentence to read when you're doubting yourself:

Example: "I am capable, evolving, and on my way to the right opportunity."

Stick this worksheet near your workspace. Revisit it weekly. Remind yourself that you're not just looking for a job—you're building a life.

Start with a big question:

01.

WHO ARE YOU REALLY?

Yes, we're starting with introspection. Don't worry, there will be lots of worksheets, and possibly snacks.

Before you search "jobs in my city that pay me to pet dogs and never talk to people," take a moment to reflect. Ask yourself:

- What do I enjoy so much I'd do it for free? (Aside from judging people on House Hunters)
- Do I thrive around people or do I celebrate canceled meetings like national holidays?
- What did I love in past jobs? What made me want to scream into my tote bag?
- How I am looking to grow, what skills/experiences am I seeking in a new position?
- Do I want to do something similar to what I've done in the past or do I want to try something entirely new?
- What salary/wage, benefits and schedule am I seeking?
- What are my transportation limits/abilities?
- Who can I talk to in my network about possible opportunities

Starting with these basic questions can help frame your search in terms of what your career and life goals are and how a job can help you achieve them. For most people, it can be easy to get drawn into the work to live dynamic, but in starting your search you can flip the story and focus on work that results in living the life you want. It might not happen overnight, but by looking at what you want and what you are good at you can start moving toward the future.

Oh, and if you haven't figured out a form of regular exercise, stop here. Go walk, dance, lift, or flail around to YouTube workouts. I'm serious. You'll thank me when you're stress-sweating before an interview and remember you have *some* cardiovascular endurance.



02.

YOU ARE UNIQUE

Whether you've been out of the paid workforce raising humans, building community, or wrestling with your identity as a middle-aged unicorn, your skills are real. Make a list.

Mine included words like:

- Creative
- Driven
- Passionate
- Slightly too obsessed with Canva

You'll weave these gems into cover letters, interviews, and salary negotiations like a stealthy marketing ninja.

So How Do You Figure Out Your Skills? (Without Crying)

Start with two columns: Personal Strengths and Professional Strengths. This is not the time for modesty. Brag like your grandma is writing your LinkedIn profile.

Ask Yourself

For Personal Strengths:

- What do friends or coworkers come to you for?
- What makes you feel confident?
- Are you a natural problem-solver, a motivator, a calming presence, a spreadsheet whisperer?

For Professional Strengths:

- What have you accomplished that you're proud of?
- What tools, platforms, or systems are you good at using?
- What kinds of problems do you enjoy solving at work?

02.

YOU ARE UNIQUE

Explore assessments like:

- The CliftonStrengths (StrengthsFinder) for themes like “Strategic” or “Woo” (yes, that’s real).
- The Holland Code (RIASEC) to match personality with work environments.
- The VIA Character Strengths Survey to find out if you’re more “Kindness” or “Zest.”

Or do the low-tech version: ask five trusted people what they think your top strengths are. Then buy them coffee, because emotional labor is real.

Finally, take a look at your weaknesses—but treat them like spicy salsa: interesting in small amounts. You want to be honest with yourself but not spiral.

Pro tip: Frame weaknesses as growth areas. “I overcommit” becomes “I’m working on sustainable boundaries.” “I hate spreadsheets” becomes “I’m building my Excel resilience.” See? Easy.

When you know your skills, your confidence will grow. And confidence—especially when paired with preparation—is the most attractive thing in any job interview. (Well, besides bringing donuts. That always wins.)



WORKSHEET 2: **PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL SKILLS INVENTORY**

Everyone has different strengths and it is identifying and sharing those strengths that can help you land the job. Sometimes it is easier to see these in others.

Let me give you some examples to get you started.

Lindsey, 17- seeking retail summer job
level-headed
curious

Cami, 24- seeking a first professional job in her field
responsible leader
community builder

Greg, 52- seeking a role in the new field
dedicated team-player
creative problem-solver

What types of jobs would you recommend each of these folks investigate?

Why?

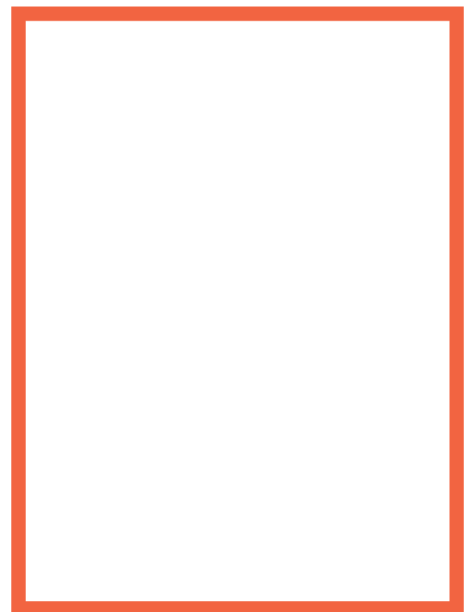
Lindsey



Cami



Greg



WORKSHEET 2: **PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL SKILLS INVENTORY**

Use this worksheet to help uncover your unique strengths and selling points.

Print it, type into it, doodle on it—whatever gets your brain going.

Step 1: Personal Strengths

- People often come to me for advice about: _____
- Something I've always been naturally good at is: _____
- I feel proud when I: _____
- Three adjectives friends would use to describe me:
a. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Step 2: Professional Strengths

- I feel confident when I'm doing: _____
- A big win from my past job/volunteer role was: _____
- Tools/technologies I'm good at using:
 -
 -
 -
 -
- Soft skills I consistently bring to teams:
 -
 -
 -
 -

Step 3: What Do Others Say?

Reach out to 3–5 trusted people and ask:

- What's one thing I do really well?
- What do you see as my top strengths?
- Write the most common responses here

WORKSHEET 2: **PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL SKILLS INVENTORY**

Step 4: Room to Grow (aka Not-So-Scary Weaknesses)

- Something I want to get better at is: _____
- I tend to struggle with: _____
- I'm working on this by: _____

Step 5: My 5-Word Summary

If I had to summarize my personal brand in 5 powerful words, they'd be:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Final Thought: Keep this sheet handy as you start writing your resume, cover letters, and prepping for interviews. These are the building blocks of your professional glow-up. ✨

03.

YOUR RESUME: BREAK OUT THE POWER TOOLS

When was the last time you updated your resume?

(Cue distant thunder and dramatic zoom-in on a Word doc last opened in 2017.)

Modern resumes are not the same beasts they once were. Gone are the days of listing jobs like “Cashier, 1997.” Now you need quantifiable impact, keywords, and at least a passing flirtation with design. A friend once asked me, “Should I include my MySpace coding experience?” and I gently told them no, and also that we are no longer friends.

Before you start filling out job applications, consider taking some time to brush up on the details on your professional resume. Reflect on your achievements over the past year.

- What new things have you accomplished?
- How can you demonstrate your continual learning?
- Have you presented at or attended conferences?
- Have you volunteered somewhere new, have you taken additional coursework?

Make it easy to read. Make it *look* like you have your life together. And for heaven's sake, double-check your LinkedIn link doesn't send people to your cousin's DJ page.

Probably the best thing you can do in the process of creating your resume is to find someone to help you. This can be a friend or colleague, but you need someone to give you constructive feedback on this crucial piece of the interviewing process.

Don't be scared. This can actually be fun. For me, it was a good opportunity to activate my supporters. I got feedback from people who I trust and want the best for me. Having folks double checking things, like your LinkedIn link is correct are tremendously valuable. Connect over coffee or a beer or a walk and get someone in your corner to give you some advice and listen.

A MODERN RESUME APPROACH

1

Header

Typically this is the largest font on your resume and features your name and relevant contact information. A phone number and an email address are the basic items, but other can include your social media handles, your website, or other links to specific credentials.

2

Tagline

Distilling down who you are and what type of work you are seeking can give a reader a quick reference when reading through many resumes. Through developing your own personal brand you can discover strong words to describe yourself. In addition, working through some visioning exercises you can craft language to chart the path you are seeking.

3

Skills

Making a list of all the special or focused experiences that you have is essential. Not all your skills may apply for every role that you apply for, but having a full list will help you be more prepared as you move forward.

3

Employment

Typically, the first section is employment history. It can be tempting to add words and/or explanations in your employment section, but be wary of having taking up too much space or overwhelming your reader. It can be helpful to have a short sentence or two that explains your duties and highlights an accomplishment.

4

Education

Listing your education can also include non-formal education that you have received, certificates you have earned and/or relevant workshops, conferences or meetings that you have attended. While certain professions still require specific degrees, there is a growing awareness of non-traditional educational paths as well as the value of life-long learning. So if you've taken relevant LinkedIn Learning, Coursera, other educational classes, add those here.

BUT WAIT....

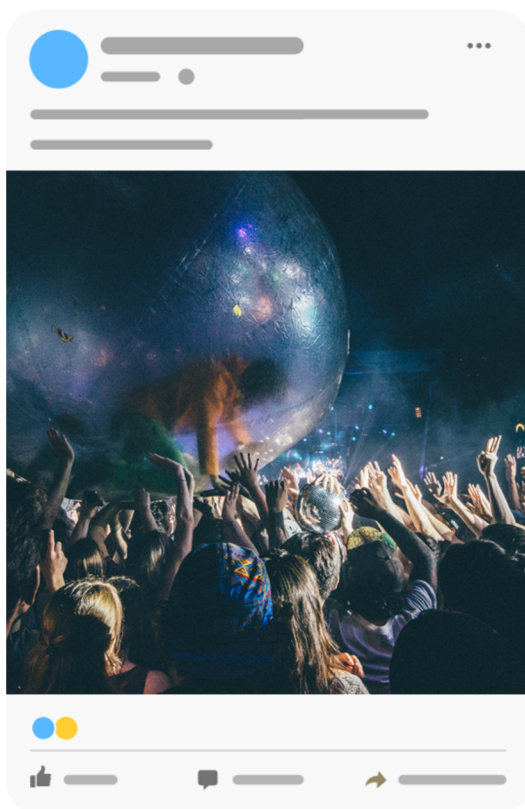
Sorry, here's where I have to talk about social media for a moment. If you have social media accounts, take a moment to review what you have posted in the past. Is everything something that you would have no problem sharing with your best friend's grandma?

Yes- skip to the portfolio section below.

No- keep reading- you have some work to do.

Your digital footprint should reflect your personal values and ideals. You don't have to change who you are, but it's worth the time to examine your posts, connections, and groups and realize what any HR department can find out about you.

If you don't have a LinkedIn account or haven't spent much time updating it, that should be a high priority. Not only do recruiters use profiles to find candidates, but there are also lots of people who look at LinkedIn to get to see who you are connected with and what else you may have done professionally. Another reason is that there are a lot of online applications that will pull directly from your LinkedIn profile saving you the time of typing in all that information.



Work Samples/ Portfolios

Taking the time to assemble a list, file, or website that features your best work is absolutely worth the time. With the new simple and free website creators out there, if you have work that can be displayed digitally, I urge you to get going.

WORKSHEET 3: **GETTING ORGANIZED**

Think about all the different jobs that you have had and create a job history log.
Make as many copies of this page as you need.
Make sure to include all of the following:

Job 1

Job Title
Organization
Dates of Employment
Supervisor
Contact information
Overview of Duties

Highlights

Job 2

Job Title
Organization
Dates of Employment
Supervisor
Contact information
Overview of Duties

Highlights

WORKSHEET 4: **BASIC SEARCH LOG**

If you will be applying for multiple jobs at once, stay on top of your search by tracking your applications and interviews in a log. Make sure to include all of the following:

Date Applied

Position

Company

Source

Key Responsibilities

--

Why You are Interested

--

Interview #1 Info, Questions and Notes

--

Interview #2 Info, Questions and Notes

--

Follow Up

--

04.

THE COVER LETTER: YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION

Half the world hates writing resumes. The other half hates cover letters. A rare few hate both and become billionaires who never have to write either. For the rest of us: suck it up.

This is your chance to sound like a human, not a robot trained on motivational LinkedIn posts. Inject some heart. Show a little humor. Do NOT write, "I am a results-oriented professional with a proven track record." We all are. That's the entire point of being employed.

A cover letter is often the first impression anyone has of you and your work, and therefore needs to be reflective of both how your professional background and education have prepared you for the role as well, and maybe more importantly, what your personality is like.

While most cover letters are fairly straightforward and in business-appropriate language, thinking about why you want to work for the company or organization from a personal perspective can make all the difference in landing the interview. You don't need to spend a lot of space or words on this part, a sentence or two in the opening and closing paragraphs can be enough.

I enjoy writing, but I know that isn't the same for everyone. There are some great books and websites that can help get you going. Again this is a great place to lean on your network. Do you have someone that you know who likes to write? As with any writing project, drafts are your best friend. It can be hard but keep going. You are ½ way to the finish line.

"IT IS NOT KNOWN WHAT IS MORE EXHAUSTING: WRITING COVER LETTERS OR PRETENDING TO BE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT EVERY OPPORTUNITY."

05.

WHAT IS YOUR TIME WORTH?

No really—how much?

Salary. Flexibility. Benefits. Location. Does the office provide snacks or just existential dread?

Calculate what you actually need to earn to survive, then add enough for a streaming service and therapy. Don't guess. Do your research. Otherwise, you might find yourself working full-time to afford ramen.

Are you looking for full-time, contract, gig work? The number of people contracting continues to grow annually and additionally, the pandemic and technology have created lots of options to live somewhere and work somewhere else.

I've had a client across a state that includes a mountain range. I've also had a manager who lived in an entirely different time zone. You've probably encountered a call or two from someone who is clearly working at a call center located on the other side of the country or the world. I've also explored gig and contract work. Both have their benefits and drawbacks, but they could be a perfect fit for you.

What's your base rate of pay?

While no one is very skilled at determining what they should get paid, you can gauge what your base rate of pay needs to be by looking at your current and potential future housing costs. Do you live in Seattle where the housing market is bananas? Or do you live somewhere where you can find a decent apartment that doesn't send you screaming?

Since the rule of thumb for your living costs has always been about 1/3 of your take-home pay, your best bet is to start there. Adding to that, you may want to consider any monthly debt payments for educational loans. Since the housing crisis is hitting across the country, you also should consider what the projection is locally for economic growth.

06.

ORGANIZATION: AKA **NOT FORGETTING** **WHERE YOU APPLIED**

Pro tip: Don't be me.

Don't apply to 73 jobs and then forget which one ghosted you, which one scheduled an interview, and which one sent you an email that started with, "We were impressed by your application" but ended with, "...but not that impressed."

Use spreadsheets, apps, Trello, whatever works. Just don't rely on your brain alone. That path leads to stress-snacking and awkward phone calls.

I tried to do a job search on post-it notes. The cat got one, I spilled coffee on two, and the rest are probably under the couch.

Learn from me—embrace spreadsheets, apps, or at least a grown-up folder. It wasn't a good look when I was called for an interview for a position I had applied to several months ago, but couldn't remember any details of the organization or the opening. When the HR contact called me, I struggled to answer the basic "So why do you want to work here?" question.

Fail.

So even if you have to write them on post-it notes and pile them in a box, the info about what you applied for, where, when, the title, and why you applied can really make or break your ability to be on your game.

07.

INTERVIEW TYPES: **LIGHTS, CAMERA, PANIC!**

Congratulations! You've landed the interview. Whether it's a phone screen, a Zoom grid, or a Hunger Games-style panel interview, the goal is the same: survive.

Modern interviewing includes a huge range of types and paths. Depending on the industry, size of the business or organization, internal need for staff the entire interview process can happen in one day or over several months. That being stated, there are two main ways that you will be interviewed, bottom-up or top-down.

BOTTOM UP

Bottom-Up is the most common and traditional way of selecting a candidate. A human resource specialist, recruiter, or computer reviews your information, and you are selected for an interview either in-person, via phone, or over a video chat. Much like a sports tournament, if you make the cut for the first round you are then asked back for a second interview with someone further up in the chain of command that most likely will include the hiring manager as well as the team of people you may be working with. These interviews tend to be boardroom style with you facing three or more people. Going around the room they will ask you prepared questions. Finally, in some cases, your final interview will be with the direct report of the hiring supervisor.

TOP DOWN

Most Top-Down interview processes start with a phone call with the hiring manager who is taking the time to hand-select a candidate. Being prepared with your elevator speech and having your resume and cover letter with you will let you specifically speak about your success and interest in the job. Again, if you make the cut here, you may be asked to meet with the team for an interview. At this point, you may be asked to demonstrate skills and/or assessed for your soft skills



**FOR MORE
INTERVIEW TYPES
SEE WORKSHEET 6**

INTERVIEW TIPS

When you are scheduled for an interview, **ask with whom you will be meeting** and if you need to be prepared with any materials. Knowing what you are walking into will help you be better prepared.

I recommend responding as soon as you can to anyone offering you the opportunity to explore an job. Even if you aren't 100% sold on the job/company/pay, enhancing your network of contacts as well as practicing interview skills is totally worth it.

In every situation, the more you are prepared, the better. **Actors would much rather have a chance to read the script that they are auditioning than have to do a cold read.** Auditioning is a job interview, the most intense audition that you can do. So heh, if you really want to work through your feelings about rejection, try some community theatre auditions and build up some layers on your skin.

STORIES YOU CAN SHARE

We all know that stories are one of the most basic ways humans make connections. Before every interview take a few minutes to think about some potential questions you could be asked and craft a story to share that demonstrates your experience with the situation, task needed, your actions and the results. Often called the STAR technique, this is a widely recommended structure for answering situational and behavioral questions.

Prepare like you're going on a first date with someone who can also ruin your credit score. Look up the company, know who you're talking to, and practice your answers out loud—ideally not in public unless you enjoy concerned glances.

Also, smile. Breathe. And yes, even *you* need to wear pants for a video call.

08.

YOU GET TO ANSWER QUESTIONS TOO

Yes, YOU. **This isn't The Bachelor; you're not here to beg for a rose.** Prepare questions that matter to you.

- What's the team vibe?
- What does success look like in this role?
- Are your snacks communal or protected by passive-aggressive Post-Its?

If they don't have good answers, they might not be your people.

You are interviewing them too!!!!

It's totally, 100%, absolutely true. If a good hiring manager is looking for a fit, you also need to be looking for a fit.

The questions that you prepare can be different for each interview. But I recommend having at least three to five prepared.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Culture

Since I firmly believe that “culture eats strategy for breakfast”, it's advisable to try to determine the culture or environment of the business or organization from both the interactions that you have with staff, their body language and the interactions of the people you meet with and what they say about working at the business. If you ask about culture and get either a very practiced answer or a blank stare, you will know that the concept of workplace culture is probably not an important part of the organization and you can make your own decision about that.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER- CON'T

Time

If you don't know already, it's good to get a sense of how long the interview will be before or when you get started. Not only will you be able to better answer questions in the allotted time, but you are also demonstrating your respect for your future colleague(s) or boss by keeping to the time limit. Likewise, if your interview starts late or seems rushed, that could be an indication of the work environment you could be entering.

In addition, knowing the timing of the hiring process can also be incredibly helpful. If you can ascertain when they need this person to start can help you gauge the length of the process you can expect. If you are told that they are looking for the right fit, you have a great opening to respond as to why you are that person. Also, if you know that there is a big project ahead, you will know how you can talk about how you would immediately jump in with your skills and enthusiasm.

Talent

You've read the job description and done your research, but who are they really looking for to fill this role. In this rapidly changing world, where you could be competing with candidates from around the world you need to know as much about the non-practical skills that will make you the best person for the job.

Asking about the soft skills demonstrates that you are interested in understanding more about your coworkers and the other people with whom you will be working.

Interview Gone Wrong

For one of my interviews, I wasn't sure I was in the right place. I arrived 10 minutes early to get a lay of the land, but the front door was locked. I called the office number that I had and it went to voicemail. I checked all my notes. Nope. I was in the right place and at the right time.

Another person was also trying to get into the building and I asked him if this was the right place to find XYZ Foundation. He informed me that I needed to call the cell phone handwritten and taped to the front door to get in. OK.

Was this a test?

Nope, the hiring manager hadn't even arrived. No one from the organization was there for my interview, but I was left in the lobby area and told to wait.

Finally, the hiring manager appeared and took me to a boardroom, where I waited another ten minutes until the hiring team was assembled.

Hmmm, what was I going to think? Clearly, this wasn't as important to them as it was to me, and/or they were pretty unorganized, out of step, or unprepared.

DEMONSTRATING YOUR TALENT (PRACTICAL TESTS OR PREWORK)

Mini-Interview Hoops

It has become more and more common for pre-work or practice tests to be part of an interview. Some places like Facebook and Amazon are well known for their grueling practical tests where you get to solve problems on a whiteboard while someone watches you. I've encountered a number of tests that have asked me to write specific pieces of copy, develop plans or proposals, or present a design based on the materials given to me. All of these are timed and have the supposed purpose to help the hiring staff figure out if you have the stuff. If you can, try to find a way to incorporate something in your response that connects back to at least one of your unique selling points.

Feel like this is asking a lot of candidates?

I couldn't agree with you more. While I see the value in figuring out if a person can do what they say they can do, this adding a practical test doesn't fit for all roles and positions out there. I encourage you to ask as many questions as you can about the test, evaluation criteria, and reviewers. Knowing these things can help you fly through this hoop with more skill and speed.

WORKSHEET 5: INTERVIEW TYPES AND HOW TO PREPARE FOR EACH

Informational Interviews- What's Your Job?

With the number of candidates on the market today, it is a great time to set up informational interviews. Reach out to someone who has a role that speaks to you or whom has been an influencer on your career and request an informational interview. Establish that you are exploring and are interested in hearing from them about their career path as well as the current challenges that they are facing. If you want advice, ask for it. And be gracious. Someone is volunteering their time with you so make sure you say thank you and let them know that you value their time.

First Round Interviews

General Hints

Prepare- Take a look at the job description and the cover letter you applied with and refamiliarize yourself with the role and organization. Have at least 3-5 questions of your own prepared and take notes if you can during the interview so that you can ask any additional questions that may come up.

Smile- Please smile. You might be nervous or anxious, but if you try to smile you have a better chance of finding some calm and peace which can contribute to a more pleasant experience for everyone.

Breathe- If you are asked a question that stumps you or that you need to think about before answering, take a good deep breath or two. Pausing sends a message that you are processing information and formulating an answer. It allows your interviewer a break too.

Ask about the timeline or next steps in the hiring process- While you may run out of time or just be glad you made it to the end of the interview, it never hurts to ask about what will follow. If anything it will help in your self-care. If you choose to follow up, you will know when an appropriate time would be to take that action.

Explore Options- It can certainly happen that during the course of the conversation it becomes apparent to you that this is not really a role for you. Its ok to be aware of that. If you have interest in the organization or company, you can certainly also bring up the option to be considered for future roles.



Video Interviews

Hello. Is your mic muted?

With the explosion of people using Zoom and Microsoft Teams, the video interview has become a much more common form of an interview.

Here are some things to consider:

Connectivity

It is entirely appropriate to discuss connectivity in a video interview. If you have spotty wi-fi or have been experiencing technical problems for any reason, make sure you let your interviewer know. If you feel comfortable doing so, you can provide a phone number to continue the conversation should technology fail.

Lighting

Most people who have been working in a remote fashion have thought about the lighting during video calls. If you haven't investigated options in new equipment or changing locations, spending time in this area is well worth it.

Pauses for Thinking

Because of the nature of technical lags, it may not always be clear to the interviewer if there you are pausing before you respond or if there is a tech issue. One way to address this is to have a glass of water handy and take a drink when you are taking a pause. This gives a visual clue to your audience.

Second+ Round Interviews

It used to be that if you made it past the first round of interviews that you could assume that you had moved into a much smaller pool of candidates. Today this is less accurate. During subsequent interviews, you could be asked questions from a variety of potential team members and/or that cover different parts of the role. These interviews often run longer and can sometimes involve a practical test. Preparing for second, third, or additional interviews can be exhausting, but as you learn more about the role and organization, you can develop more in-depth questions as well as identify the stories of success that you want to make sure you can share. Keep those snacks handy, this is a process.

Panel Interviews

Both in-person and online, panel interviews are growing in popularity. They are used for a variety of purposes, but typically if you are meeting a group of people you are also going to be evaluated on social and soft skills. Therefore, it is important to ground yourself and reduce your stress going into these interviews as much as possible. Try the Superman pose for 3-5 minutes or a short meditation and affirmation session. During the interview speak to the person who asks you questions, but try to have eye contact with each panelist at least once. While it might feel like you are getting your teeth cleaned, staying calm, collected, and positive will help you get through a panel interview.

Phone Interviews

Often a starting point is a phone screen or interview. Often with HR staff or recruiters, these folks are charged with the task of trying to determine if you have the skills and qualifications that match the role. Talking to a real human being allows you to share items that aren't on your resume including stories of success. This is a great place to insert a STAR (situation, tactic, action, result) that could be applicable for the role you are interested in pursuing. Since you are still just a name on a list, this is your opportunity to become someone remarkable.

09.

THE CLOSE (AKA CHANNEL YOUR INNER SALESPERSON)

You made it to the end of the interview. **Now ask for the job.**

Gently. With charm. Like someone who knows their worth and also brought cupcakes to the office potluck.

Try:

- "Do you have any hesitations about my fit for this role?"
- "How can I help you make the case for hiring me?"

Yes, it feels weird. Do it anyway. Closers win. Also, you can practice this on friends or pets.

Closing the deal can be the key to getting the job. Basically, this means you are asking upfront for a commitment from the business or organization at the close of your in-person interview. Since this can be the most nerve-wracking part of the whole ordeal, I recommend that you rehearse this with a friend. Closings don't need to be lengthy or demanding, but they do need to be firm, direct, and warm.

As your final question, close the deal with a straightforward question that indicates that you are ready to be hired on. First re-state your interest in the role and specifically what you could bring to the company. Then, take a breath and go for the close.

Over the umpteen interviews I've done, I've probably used a close only a few times. It's hard to always know when is the right time to pull out the stops and go for it when you feel like you've already given them so many reasons to hire you. But that is exactly why you need to go for the close. In addition, your interviewer is unlikely to hire you on the spot (although that still happens) but you are demonstrating you can advocate for yourself. This will bode well for you in pay negotiations.

10.

FOLLOW UP LIKE A PRO

DON'T GHOST THEM. (THIS ISN'T DATING IN YOUR 20S.) SEND A THANK-YOU WITHIN 24 HOURS.

BONUS POINTS FOR REFERENCING SOMETHING YOU DISCUSSED OR SHARING A RELEVANT ARTICLE.

HANDWRITTEN CARDS ARE CHARMING AND RARE—JUST DON'T SEND GLITTER.



"Remember, every 'no' gets closer to a 'yes.' Just keep applying!"

EXTRA SPECIAL BONUS

WHEN THE INTERVIEW GOES SOUTH

You didn't think I'd leave you hanging, did you? Not when the topic of crashing and burning in an interview is still out there.

It happens. You get asked an illegal question. The interviewer confuses you with another candidate. Someone chews loudly on a granola bar during your answer. Shake it off. Take notes. Learn. Then treat yourself to a fancy coffee or five. Remember, you're not just finding a job. You're designing a life you actually want to live.

And if you've got a funny interview story? Send it my way. I can always use a good laugh.

Remember, you are there of your own free will and you are a human with all the foibles of a busy life before and after this interview. I've certainly walked out of interviews knowing that I absolutely wasn't going to get the job or I absolutely didn't want to work for that company/those people/that cause/ in that culture.

Job hunting is a process and having bumps in the road is normal. Examine what you can learn from what went wrong and think about what went right. All that information is valuable to help you dial in the right place for you and demonstrate that you are the person that they have been looking for all along.

11. BONUS CHAPTER BECAUSE YOU ARE WORTH IT

THE ART OF REJECTION (WITHOUT BECOMING A GOBLIN).

Let's be real—job rejection sucks. You've imagined yourself in that role, picking out your first-day outfit, maybe even mentally spending that new salary. Then you get the email:

"We've decided to move forward with other candidates, but thank you for your interest."

Cue dramatic music. Maybe ice cream. Maybe tears.

Here's the thing: it's not always about you. Sometimes the organization is a mess, the budget changed, or the hiring manager picked their cousin Kevin who once wrote a memo.

Take a deep breath, then:

- Send a thank-you anyway. It might open doors later.
- Reflect on what you learned.
- Text your friend that meme about "rejection is redirection"—and mean it.

Remember, the right fit isn't just about getting hired. It's about getting excited.

Now shake it off and move forward like the resilient, job-hunting rockstar you are.

Good luck out there. You got this.



HILLARY RYAN

Intrepid interviewee, Hillary Ryan has interviewed a lot in her career. She attributes her ability to deal with the interview process repeatedly and not turn into a shivering pile of goo to her years in theatre and specifically to a college course called Auditioning, which was a hellish 10 weeks of her life. She greatly appreciates her friends and family who have supported her during her most recent interview spree with special love to her kids and her husband who have had to hear about each and every one of these experiences and love her anyway.