

Helping Teens to Find the Perfect Summer Job

I recently had the opportunity to participate in a mock interview session at a local high school. My day consisted of interviews with nine different students, some that I would hire in an instant, and others that needed a little help. As the school year winds down and the summer approaches those students along with other teens and returning college students to look for that perfect job. Below are some tips to help in securing the job you are looking for, or in today's economy any job.

A strong resume plays a significant role in raising the chances of your selection. Right now teenagers seeking employment for work during the summers are up against stiff competition. Employers are having to weed through sometimes hundreds of applications to find the one perfect candidate. Your resume is your first impression to prove that no one but you can best serve the job. Your resume should in some ways reflect your personality and help to show who you are. The first key is that it should only be one page. No one has time to weed through a piece of paper to discover your skills, make an effort to be concise and to the point. It is important to show what you are good at and how those things related to the job you are applying for. Be sure to include your education, honors and awards, previous work history, school and community activities, volunteer experience, and a list of references.

During my mock interviews at the high school one young lady apologized for not having any work experience, however she was very active in school and community. Many of the organizations you are a great way to learn new skills, some of which or equal or better than those you might learn through a afterschool job. Title a section "Relevant Experience" instead of "Work Experience" and include your involvement in groups, organization, and other activities. Employers are looking for well rounded candidates who show leadership and the willingness to learn.

When selecting your references make sure to choose the right people. It is a good idea to have at least 3 references ready to provide either on your resume or at the request of the employer. A reference is someone who can account for your character, work experience, ethic, and ability, your personality and if you would be a good fit for the job. This should be someone you have known for at least 3 months and isn't family. Examples of a good reference choice would be a former employer, a teacher or principal, a neighbor, a minister, a coach or other community leader.

If your resume makes it past the initial screening another challenge awaits you, the job interview. Show up for the interview dressed for success, even if the job doesn't require you to dress up. If you don't own a professional outfit it is no excuse for not dressing like you do. If you really want the job you need to look at your options. The first is to talk with your friends, if you share a common size look to see you have some clothes you can borrow for the interview. Another option is a second hand store or Good Will. You might not find the latest trends, but you will be able to find a black pair of slacks, a dress shirt, and maybe even a tie. If you have the money you can also go to the store and purchase a new outfit, it doesn't have to be expensive to look professional. Employers look for traits which manifest determination, confidence and

professionalism in the attitude of an applicant. Dressing up appropriately for an interview is one way to prove these traits are a part of your personality and convinces the employer to

Some words of advice. As a female avoid low cut shirts. Many dress cloth options today show too much skin. Consider a jacket or tank top to make sure that you are fully covered. Also make your accessories appropriate. Avoid rings or bracelets that you might be tempted to play with during the interview, they can be very distracting. For males a suit is great, but as a teenager it is often not something you have in your closet. If you don't have a suit a black pair of pants and a button shirt or polo would be acceptable. Scrutinizing magazines that discuss adult dressing styles is one way to learn how to dress up for an endeavor. You will come across loads of content that gives guidance and tips for professional dressing while staying within an economical budget. Magazines meant for teenagers may give you trendy dressing ideas but adult magazines focus more on professional dressing.

Another way to learn how to dress up in a professional way is to consult adults who you know. Though parents may seem out of fashion when it comes to trendy dressing but for professional dressing advice, they may be the best source. Your very first impression will make or break your chances of success so choose your clothes wisely in order to be successful in your attempt.

During the interview be confident, this is a time to brag about you and your skills. Go into the interview with a positive attitude and don't be afraid to show your personality. Try practicing at home with your parents, a caring adult, or a teacher at school.

Good luck to those of you who are looking for the perfect job this summer. If you would like information on this or other youth development related topics please contact the University of Missouri Extension Office at 660-885-5556