

HIAS Employment Resource Guide

Created by HIAS US Legal and Asylum Social Services Department

March 2025



HIAS

Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

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All About Resumes

Purpose of a resume

A resume is a document that summarizes your professional qualifications, including your relevant work experience, skills, education, and notable achievements. Its primary purpose is to provide a snapshot of your credentials, helping you get an interview opportunity. A well-crafted resume showcases your strengths and demonstrates how you can contribute to the prospective employer's goals.

Main components and structure of a resume

Contact Information: This includes your name, phone number, email address, and sometimes your LinkedIn profile or professional website.

Summary or Objective: A brief statement about what you can bring to the job, including your career goals. Think carefully about this, focusing on how you can tell an interviewer why they should hire you.

Work Experience: A detailed account of your previous employment, listed in reverse chronological order. Each entry should include the job title, company name, dates of employment, and a few bullet points outlining your responsibilities and achievements. Even if you have never had a professional job, you may still have experience like volunteer work, clubs, sports, or hobbies that can highlight your skills, show your accomplishments and demonstrate that you are prepared for a job.

Education: Information about your academic background, including the institutions attended, degrees earned, and graduation dates. Include vocational classes or training.

Skills: A list of relevant skills that demonstrate your qualifications for the job. This can include technical skills or languages.

Certifications: Any professional certifications or courses that are relevant to the job you are applying for.

Additional Sections: Depending on your industry and experience, you might include sections for volunteer work, publications, professional affiliations, or awards.

How to create a basic resume with online tools

Starting with a blank document can be daunting, but there are many online tools available to simplify the process. Websites like [Indeed](#) and [Resume Genius](#) offer advice and customizable templates that can guide you.

Additionally, word processors like Microsoft Word or Google Docs have built-in resume templates that can help to create your resume. To access a resume template in Word, go to the "New" tab > under the search bar, click "resume and cover letter templates" > select a template. To access a resume template in Google Docs, go to the Google Docs home page > search "resumes" > select a template.

How to edit your resume for different types of jobs

Read the job description carefully and identify the key qualifications and skills required. Employers often select applicants to be interviewed using Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to identify resumes with matching key words. Therefore, adjust your resume to highlight your most relevant experience and achievements that match the job criteria.

Resume professionalism and etiquette

Proofread your resume, carefully checking for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. Consider asking a friend or mentor to review it as well. Aim for a one-page resume if you're early in your career or have fewer than

10 years of experience. Finally, be honest and avoid exaggerating your qualifications. Never fabricate information. Honesty is critical, and discrepancies can harm your credibility.

Resume Framework and example resume

To illustrate these principles, the next page has a resume framework, explaining what goes in each part of a resume. Then there is a basic example of a resume for someone with several years of experience. If you have less experience, use the Summary section to describe what you have to offer and include examples of how you demonstrated your skills and leadership in the Work Experience section.

Resume framework:

[Your Name]

[Your City, State, ZIP] | [Your Email] | [Your Phone Number]

Education

[Your Degree or High School Diploma]

[Your School Name], [City, State]

Graduation Date: [Month, Year]

Work Experience *(If applicable, otherwise list volunteer work or internships)*

[Job Title] – [Company Name], [City, State]

[Month, Year] – [Month, Year]

- Bullet point describing key responsibility or achievement.
- Bullet point describing key responsibility or achievement.
- Bullet point describing key responsibility or achievement.

[Internship/Volunteer Position] – [Organization Name], [City, State]
[Month, Year] – [Month, Year]

- Bullet point describing key responsibility or achievement.
- Bullet point describing key responsibility or achievement.

Skills

- [Skill 1] (e.g., Customer Service, Microsoft Office, Teamwork)
- [Skill 2] (e.g., Time Management, Data Entry, Communication)
- [Skill 3] (e.g., Social Media Management, Problem Solving, Adaptability)

Certifications & Achievements *(If applicable)*

- [Certification Name], [Issuing Organization], [Year]
- [Achievement Name], [Year]

Jane Smith

123 ABC Lane
Oakland, CA 94612
janesmith@gmail.com
123.456.7890

EDUCATION

San Francisco State University **December 2016**
Bachelor of Arts, International Business – 3.48 San Francisco, CA

Tokyo University **Spring 2016**
Japanese-Intensive Program/Faculty of Liberal Arts – 4.0 Tokyo, Japan

WORK EXPERIENCE

Red River Outfitters **September 2016 – December 2016**
Community Manager, Intern San Francisco, CA

- Planned, developed, and shared content through social media channels
- Responsible for existing and prospective influencer management
- Managed and tracked B2B clients
- Increased Twitter followers by 20% and Facebook interaction by 15%

Subway **November 2011 – Present**
Store Associate, Level 6 San Jose, CA

- Interact with patrons in a fast-paced service environment
- Responsible for training store associates
- Lead staff and resolve customer complaints

Private University Tutor **January 2013 – May 2014**
Calculus San Francisco, CA

ORGANIZATIONS & ACHIEVEMENTS

SFSU Entrepreneurship Club **Spring 2015 - Fall 2016**
Responsible for event planning for university entrepreneurship club

SFSU Associated Students Study Abroad Scholarship **Spring 2016**

Eugene Girl Scouts **Summer 2011 - 2014**
Mentored young girls and co-led a summer vacation troop Eugene, OR

What is a Cover Letter?

A cover letter is a one-page business letter that you submit when applying to a job, along with your resume. Your goal is to convince the employer to interview you. The letter tells the employer why you're a great candidate for the job by highlighting the skills, qualifications, and experience you have that make you a perfect fit for the responsibilities of the specific position.

Not all jobs require cover letters. Check to see if the job posting requests one. If not, you may decide to include one anyway if it could provide important information that they wouldn't get in your resume.

A cover letter should include the following parts:

1. **Header:** Your name and contact information in the same format used on your resume.
2. **Salutation:** Address your letter to the specific person who can hire you, if known, or to the Hiring Manager or Human Resources.
3. **Introduction:** Give a brief overview of your background as it relates to the position. Include key achievements, skills and specialties that make you particularly suited to the position.
4. **Body paragraph:** Describe in more detail one or two specific key achievements, skills, or experiences from past jobs as it relates to the position.
5. **Closing paragraph:** The closing paragraph should focus on another key achievement or skill relevant to the position. Instead of repeating details from your resume, summarize a specific story or anecdote that displays you're right for the role.
6. **Letter ending and signature**

How to Apply for a Job with Limited Experience

If you're beginning your career or changing to a new industry, the following article contains suggestions for discussing transferrable skills in your cover letter: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/get-a-job-no-experience>

Pro Tip:

If you're applying to several jobs at once (or might do so in the future), preparing a draft of a cover letter—a template—in advance, can be a helpful way to save time in your actual application process. The template can be modified as needed to suit the particular job you are applying for.

Useful websites for writing a cover letter:

1. **INDEED:** <https://www.indeed.com>
 - a. This website contains a Career Guide with useful information about all aspects of applying for a job: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/how-to-write-a-cover-letter>. They also have many sample resumes and cover letters. Here is one of their templates for a standard cover letter:
 - i. https://assets.ctfassets.net/pdf29us7flmy/72f8C3eCeCWDj7ktxiFnd/48f64ad71d92470c7a5a874ea5ac92ec/Cover_Letter_Template_With_Example__2_.docx
2. **COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR CAREER EDUCATION:** <https://www.careereducation.columbia.edu/career-resources>

- a. This website is geared toward students at Columbia University; however, it contains useful information for anyone applying for a job, especially in the resource section
 - i. Here is their section focused on cover letters:
<https://www.careereducation.columbia.edu/resources/how-and-why-write-great-cover-letter>

Documents for Job Applications

This section is a general overview of documents you may need to apply for a job in the U.S. as an asylum-seeker. Please consult a lawyer if you have any questions or concerns about documentation, and be mindful to ensure that an employer is legitimate before disclosing private information such as a SSN.

What documents will I need to apply for employment in the U.S.?

Employment Authorization Document (EAD) – An EAD is a document issued by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) allowing people who have applied for or obtained asylum in the U.S. to work. If you have questions about your EAD, contact a lawyer.

If I don't have an EAD, are there other documents that I can use to show I am eligible for employment? Yes, the USCIS provides a list of documents that can be used to show your identity and that you are authorized for employment, <https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/form-i-9-resources/handbook-for-employers-m-274/130-acceptable-documents-for-verifying-employment-authorization-and-identity>.

What documents/information am I not required to provide when applying for a job?

Can an employer require me to have an EAD as a condition for hiring me? No, as discussed above, there are other ways for you to prove your identity and your eligibility for employment.

Am I required to have a Social Security card and number to get a job?

A company that hires you is required to report your wages to the Social Security Administration (SSA) and deduct taxes from your paycheck. Therefore, you will probably have to apply for a Social Security number when accepting employment. When you get work authorization, you can get an SSN—ask your case manager for help with this process if you have questions. An employer cannot require you to already have this number when you apply for a job or as a condition for hiring you.

What protections do I have against discrimination by employers because of my nationality, immigration status, race or other factors?

There are protections in US law against discrimination (unequal or unfair treatment) by employers based on citizenship, immigration status, national origin, race, religion, sex, age or disability. There are additional protections against discrimination in the laws of many states, counties, or cities.

The U.S. Department of Justice has an office focusing on immigration-related unfair employment practices, called OSC for short. Here is a helpful factsheet from the OSC about your rights, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/media/989441/dl?inline>.

Additionally, you can call the OSC Worker Hotline at 1-800-255-7688 for more information about your employment rights as an asylee applicant, asylee, or refugee.

Finally, you can contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for information about federal, state or local laws that protect you against discrimination in employment, 1-800-669-6820.

Documents After I Find Employment

Payroll and Tax Forms (W-2's). After you are hired, your employer will report your wages to the Social Security Administration (SSA) and deduct taxes from your wages. The form submitted to the SSA is called a W-2. If this form is submitted before you have gotten your Social Security number, the employer can indicate that you have applied for it.

Form I-9. – Employers have to submit this form for all people they hire. It verifies the employee's identity and their ability to work in the U.S.

Employment Contracts – Written employment contracts are generally only used for high level positions such as managers. These contracts typically describe specific job responsibilities as well as the salary that will be paid and benefits provided. For many jobs, employees will not be required to sign these contracts. If an employer asks you to sign an employment contract, you should read it carefully and ask for an explanation if there are sections or language that you do not understand. If you are presented with an employment contract, ask a lawyer to read through it.

Confidentiality Agreements – If you are hired by a company or agency that deals with sensitive information or data, you may be required to sign an agreement that you will not disclose information about the company or agency. However, many jobs do not require these agreements. As with employment contracts, if you are asked to sign one of these agreements, please read them carefully before signing and ask for an explanation of anything you do not understand. If you are presented with a confidentiality agreement, ask a lawyer to read through it.

Uploading Job Applications on Websites

Once you finalize drafting your resume and gathering application-required documents, you are ready to apply for jobs! Below you may find how-to guidance for using application platforms (with two specific examples), and employers' direct websites (with one specific example).

For a video guide for how to use job application websites, click [this link](#)! For a video on how to upload a resume to job application websites, click [this link](#)!

Job Application Websites

1. INDEED: <https://www.indeed.com>

First, create a profile within your Indeed account. The profile should show your contact information, skills, education, job experiences, qualifications, career goals, privacy settings and other relevant information. For additional guidance, see <https://www.indeed.com/job-search-services/profile>

After, add your resume to your profile by using the "Upload your resume" feature.

Then, select the preferred privacy setting for your profile. Indeed offers "Searchable" (publicly visible) and "Not Searchable" (private) options which expose your profile information to, or hide it from, prospective employers.

Once you complete your profile and upload your resume, you are ready to apply to jobs of interest!

Note: Sometimes, an employer may require additional information, or you might wish to highlight certain qualifications that would make you a preferred candidate for a specific posting. In such instances, a cover letter is recommended.

To upload a cover letter to Indeed, first find a job opportunity that matches your qualifications and interests; then, click on the "Apply now" button. After, choose between writing a cover letter directly into the application webpage, or uploading a cover letter file from your computer.

File types best supported for upload include PDF, DOCX, DOC, TXT, or RTF formats.

2. LINKEDIN: <https://www.linkedin.com>

First, create a profile within your LinkedIn account. Your profile should provide your contact information, professional expertise, work and education, experiences, qualifications, career goals, privacy settings and other relevant information. For additional guidance, <https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/answer/a554351/how-do-i-create-a-good-linkedin-profile-?lang=en>

After, add your resume to your profile. You can upload your resume either:

(a) from the "Job Application Settings" page by clicking the "Upload" button under the "Resume" section, or

(b) navigating to the "Jobs" tab, clicking "Preferences" and after "Resumes and application data."

Then, select a preferred privacy setting for your LinkedIn profile. If you designate your profile as visible, other professionals and interest groups, including prospective employers, will be able to view it (including your uploaded resume).

Note: You may choose to request recommendations from other connections in your LinkedIn network.

Employers' Websites

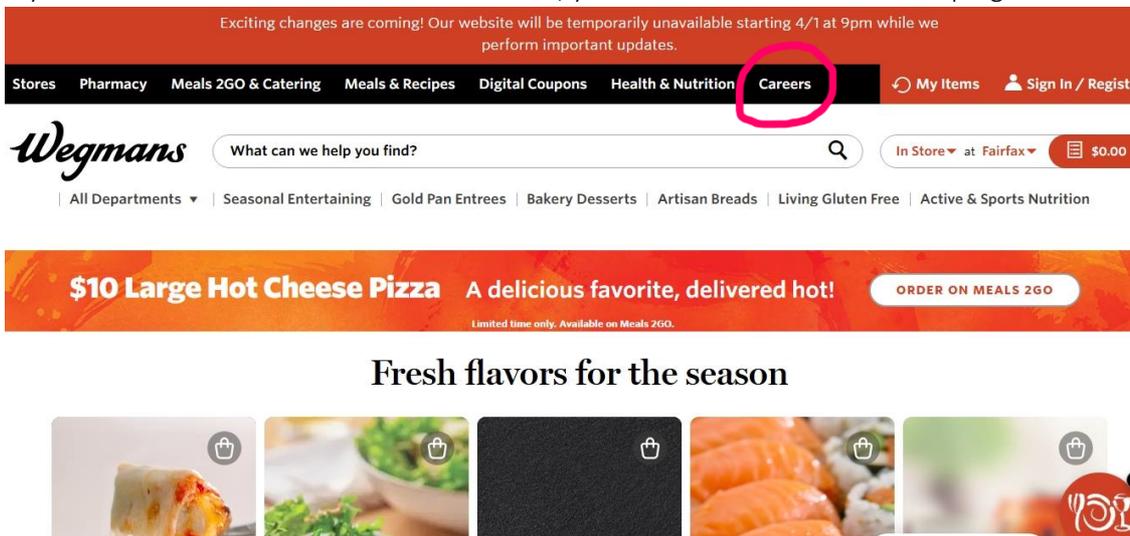
Another job search strategy is to visit the individual websites of employers of interest, and apply to listed openings.

First, make a list of companies, non-profits, government entities and other organizations that interest you, and would match your abilities and experiences.

After, do internet research to learn about said employers. This will help you become familiarized with their organizational culture, trends, and other matters. It will also help you better align your resume, and cover letter if applicable.

Employers' websites list employment opportunities in sections that are usually entitled "Jobs" or "Careers." Links to these sections are usually found at the bottom part of their main webpages. You may also choose to reach out directly to an employer and ask about job prospects by using the "Contact" feature in the employer's webpage. To help illustrate the above, we are going to use Wegman's website as an example, www.wegmans.com.

If you click on the menu section of the website, you will find "Careers" on the top right:



Clicking on the "Careers" button will redirect you to another page, where you can "see open positions" sorted by location and type of position. Once you click a position that interests you, you will be prompted to create an account, upload your resume, and answer additional questions about why you'd like to work at the company.

Employer Red and Green Flags

This section is intended to provide an overview of what good employers should do and not do. **Please be aware that this section is not intended as legal advice. It is important to speak with a lawyer if you believe your rights as a worker are being violated.**

What questions may employers ask or not ask during job interviews?

- **Visa Status/Citizenship:**

Employers **cannot** ask whether you are a U.S. citizen, where you were born, or what is your native language.

Employers **can** ask whether you are authorized to work in the U.S. Employers can also ask about what languages you speak, but only if speaking languages other than English are relevant to the position you are seeking.

- **Marital/family status:**

Employers **cannot** ask whether you are married, whether you have children, whether you are planning to have children soon, or what you do for child care. Employers also cannot ask questions about your sexual orientation.

Employers **can** ask if you are able to work the amount of hours required for the position you are interviewing for. Additionally, if the position requires overtime or travel, the employer can ask whether you are able to meet these requirements.

- **Disability/health status:**

Employers **cannot** ask questions about whether you have a health condition or disability. For example, they cannot ask whether you take prescription drugs, whether you have been diagnosed with a mental illness or substance use disorder, or whether you have ever been in a rehabilitation program.

Employers **can** ask whether you are able to perform the requirements of the job, with or without reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations are modifications that employers can make to help you perform the requirements of the job. For example, if you have poor vision, providing you with a larger computer screen to help you better see words.

For certain types of positions, employers can require you to take medical exams or drug tests before you are offered the job, but only if other people who apply for the position are also required to take these exams. For example, an employer can require a medical exam for a position that requires heavy lifting or require a drug test for a position that requires you to drive a vehicle.

- **Religion**

An employer **cannot** ask you questions about your religion, unless the job is with a religious institution such as a church, mosque or synagogue which are permitted to give hiring preference to people of the same religion.

If the job requires working on Saturday or Sunday, the employer **can** ask whether you are able to work on those days.

- **Arrest record**

An employer **cannot** ask if you've ever been arrested.

An employer **can** ask whether you have ever been convicted of any crime other than a traffic violation. Conviction of a crime means that you have been found or pled guilty to a crime.

Salary, Benefits, and Overtime

Minimum Wage: Salaries for specific jobs vary, depending upon things like job duties, required training and qualifications, and other factors. However, with limited exceptions, U.S. law and the laws of most states require that all jobs pay workers at least minimum wage.

The federal minimum wage under U.S. law is \$7.25 per hour. This means that you must be paid at least this amount in whatever job for which you are hired. However, most state laws set minimum wage limits that are higher than the federal minimum wage.

For example, Maryland law sets minimum wage at \$15.00 per hour. Therefore, if you are hired for a job in Maryland, you must be paid at least \$15.00 per hour. Examples of minimum wage laws in other states include.

- Virginia, \$12.41 per hour;
- Washington, D.C. \$17.50 per hour;
- New York, \$15.50 per hour;
- New Jersey, \$15.49 per hour.

Overtime: U.S. law requires employees who work more than 40 hours in a work week to be paid not less than one and one half their regular rate of pay for each hour worked beyond 40 hours. Therefore, if you work 45 hours during a work week, you must be paid at least one and one half your regular salary for the additional five hours you work.

Example: If you are paid a regular salary of \$20 hours per hour, you must be paid \$30 per hour for any time worked above 40 hours.

Employee Benefits: Employee benefits include health insurance, vacation leave, sick leave, unemployment insurance, family and medical leave, and others.

- *Required benefits:* U.S. law requires all employers to contribute to Medicare, Social Security, unemployment insurance, and workers compensation for its employees. In addition to employer contributions for these benefits, a certain amount will be deducted from your paycheck for these benefits.
- *Health Insurance:* U.S. law requires all employers with more than 50 employees to provide their employees with health insurance or pay penalties.
- *Sick Leave and Safe Leave:* There is no U.S. law requiring employers to provide sick or safe leave. However, certain states may require these types of leave. For example, Maryland requires employers with 15 or more employees to provide sick leave and safe leave. Safe leave is leave provided to enable employees who are victims of domestic violence, stalking or other types of threat.
- *Vacation (annual) leave:* Employers may and often do offer a certain amount of leave for employees to take time off or for vacations. However, this type of leave is not required by U.S. law.

Family and Medical Leave: Family and medical leave is unpaid leave for specified family and medical reasons. The federal Family and Medical Leave Act requires all employers with 50 or more employees to provide this type of leave. **Although you may not be paid for this leave, your job and health insurance benefits will be protected.** Examples of family or medical leave listed in this law include leave for:

- The birth of a child and to care for your newborn child within one year of his or her birth;
- Placement with you of a child for adoption or foster care;
- Medical care and support for your spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition;
- Your own serious health condition that prevents you from working.

For more information about the federal Family and Medical Leave law, see <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/28-fmla>

State Family and Medical Leave Laws: Thirteen states have passed family and medical leave laws that go further than the federal law because they require paid family and medical leave for certain employees. These states include Maryland, New Jersey and New York. Additionally, Washington, DC has a paid family and medical leave law. For more information about these state laws, see <https://www.ncsl.org/labor-and-employment/state-family-and-medical-leave-laws#:~:text=Mandatory%20Paid%20Family%20and%20Medical,leave%20coverage%20from%20private%20insurers>.

The right to a safe workplace:

The federal Occupational Safety Health Agency (OSHA) oversees federal laws requiring a safe workplace for employees. Under these laws, you have the right to point out workplace hazards to your employer and request that changes be made to make the workplace safer, without fear of retaliation. For more information about your rights to a safe workplace and how to file a complaint, see <https://www.osha.gov/workers>.

Job Interviews

It is normal to be nervous about interviewing for a job, whether it is in person, by telephone, or online. The following recommendations can help you be ready to show your prospective employer why they should hire you. Most important, try to have fun! The whole point of an interview is to help your interviewer easily imagine you as a teammate. This means showcasing your strongest skills and allowing them to picture how enjoyable it would be to work with you.

How to Prepare for an Interview

1. **Research the Organization**
 - a. Explore the company website
 - b. Google the company (look for recent news)
 - c. Search for company reviews (glassdoor.com is a good place to start!)
2. **Research the interviewers**
 - a. Google the interviewers.
 - b. Look at their LinkedIn profile.
3. **Come prepared**
 - a. Bring numerous (at least 3) copies of your resume.
 - b. Dress appropriately (<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/how-to-dress-for-a-job-interview>).
 - i. Research the company's dress code. Even if their dress code is casual, it may benefit you to look more professional than the employer requires. There are resources to access free professional clothing if needed – ask your case manager for help finding these.
 - ii. Ensure your clothing is wrinkled and stain-free. Choose your outfit in advance to make sure the clothes go together. Avoid strong cologne or perfume.
 - iii. Be yourself! You can use an interview as an opportunity to display your personality.
 - c. Think of questions you have for the interviewers. For example:
 - i. What does a typical day look like?
 - ii. What are the company's goals this year?
 - iii. What is the company and team culture like?
 - iv. Ask about them - how long have you been working here?
 - v. What is your favorite part about working here?

After the Interview

1. Send a thank you note within 24 hours of the interview.
2. If you do not hear from the employer after the hiring timeline they initially indicated, follow up once. Call or email the interviewer or human resources contact. Reaffirm your interest in the position and inquire about the new hiring timeline.

Sample Thank You Note

The following example is only a guide to give you an idea of what to include in your letter. Do not copy this letter directly. The most important quality you can convey in a thank you letter is enthusiasm and this must be done in your own style.

CONTENT:

Dear (Recipient Name),

Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to interview. **Share** what you enjoyed learning about and/or discussing during the interview.

Reiterate the highlights of why your experience and skills make you a strong candidate for this role. Reaffirm your interest in the organization.

If needed, clarify a response **or add** additional, relevant information that makes you a strong candidate.

Thank the interviewer again. Express your interest in hearing from them.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

EXAMPLE:

Dear (Recipient Name),

It was a pleasure to speak with you by phone today about the Advertising Associate role at HUGE. I enjoyed learning more about the team. In particular, I appreciated our discussion about Generation Z and how to strategically market to them.

I am very excited about the opportunity to contribute my experience as a marketing assistant communicating with clients and researching and analyzing market trends.

In addition, my psychology major has given me insight and strategies for understanding Generation Z and how people respond to advertisements.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Practice Interviews

It is extremely helpful to draft and practice your responses to general interview questions in advance of the actual interview. Find someone to conduct a practice interview with you.

Pro tip: *You can also record yourself practicing your interview questions using your phone and assess your delivery, body language, voice intonation, and facial expressions. Which questions do you need to practice? What would you change about your delivery? Do you come across confident and excited, or indifferent about the role?*

Here are some sample questions:

- Tell me a little bit about yourself.
- What are your career goals?
- How would your boss and coworkers describe you?
- Why are you looking to leave your current job (or why are you currently unemployed)?
- Why do you want this job?
- Why should we hire you?
- How was your job experience (in your home country) useful for this role in (the city where you are applying)?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?
- Would you rather work by yourself or with a team?
- Describe a challenge you've faced and how you overcame it.

- What salary are you looking for?

Illegal Interview Questions

Any questions that are meant to reveal your age, race, national origin, citizenship, gender, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, and arrest records are illegal. Here are some examples of commonly asked illegal questions and how you can answer them safely.

1. Where were you born?
 - They may be trying to determine if you can work legally.
 - You can answer: "I am authorized to work in the US."
2. Do you have any children?
 - They may be trying to determine if you will miss work due to young children
 - You can answer "I will be able to work every day and will be on time each day."
3. What religion are you?
 - They may be trying to determine if there are days/times you will miss due to religious obligations.
 - You can answer: "I will be able to work every day and will be on time each day."
4. What salary/hourly rate were you previously (or currently) earning?
 - They may be trying to assess what salary you'd be looking for.
 - You can answer: "I am looking for a salary/hourly rate of ____"

There is a great deal of information about interviewing on the Internet. Here are a few helpful sites:

- <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing>
- <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/interview-for-job-with-no-experience>
- <https://www.careereducation.columbia.edu/resources/things-do-during-and-after-your-interview>
- <https://www.careereducation.columbia.edu/resources/how-prepare-virtual-and-phone-interviews>