

Help Ads and Job Postings

The great thing about help-wanted advertisements is that the employer usually tells you exactly what they're looking for. This allows you to custom-tailor a response that meets their needs.

Should I wait for the Sunday paper with the big career section?

Oh no. Do some job hunting everyday. Check the smaller local papers as well as the large metropolitan ones. Be sure to also check some of the large on-line career sites, like **monster.com**, **careerbuilder.com**, **hotjobs.com**, or **jobfinder.com**. And ask around to see if there are any local or regional online career sites in your area.

Too many ads-how do I get organized?

As you read the newspaper ads, use a yellow marker to highlight the jobs that interest you. When you've finished reading all the ads, cut them out and put them in an envelope. Then, write a letter to each of those companies asking for a job interview. Print an extra copy of each letter for your files. Staple the matching advertisement to each of the letters. Do the same with the online job postings. Print the job posting and attach it to a copy of your e-mail. Put all these letter/ads in a folder. Keep the folder handy so when an employer calls, you'll be able to find the letter/ad quickly and talk intelligently about who they are, what they need, and how you can help them.

How will I know what they need?

When you spot an ad that interests you, read it carefully. Read it again. Read it a third time. Look for a statement like, "The ideal candidate will be able to..." That's where the employer explains the job requirements. Keep in mind that each employer will have different requirements.

Take a shoe store for example; one store might require someone who can work with children while another might require someone who can work with athletic teams or sports clubs. Because employers have different requirements, you'll need to write each employer a personal letter explaining how you can help them.

For each ad, write down all of the requirements that the employer mentions. Under each requirement, explain your qualifications - how you can help them. Mention your accomplishments. Use "powerhouse buzzwords," examples, and numbers to show how well you do it.

Suppose I don't have one or two of the requirements?

Show whatever strengths you do have. For instance, if the ad says that you must be able to use Boston pencil sharpener, say that you know how to use a Panasonic pencil sharpener - if that's true - and offer an example to show how well you can use it. Offering an alternative says that you are able to learn quickly.

Any other advice?

Inject a little humor in your closing paragraph, if it's appropriate - it says you have personality. Also, the employer's mail is usually heaviest on the third day after the ad appears. Try to get your letter/resume in the mail promptly so there aren't too many ahead. Before you do mail it, though, double check for spelling errors and typos - a sloppy letter or resume says you're a sloppy worker.

How soon before I can expect a phone call?

Most small-company advertisements pull about two dozen responses. In large companies, some of the best jobs can pull over a thousand responses. In large companies, it could take three to six weeks before you hear anything. In a small company, it might take about a week.

Responding to want ads

Want ads announce job openings in the classified sections of newspapers and certain industry publications. Some job seekers do find employment by responding to want ads. Looking through want ads can give you a good idea of what jobs are available in various industries. You may be able to get information on what experience, qualifications, and skills you need and what salary you can expect. Job openings may exist in a certain field even though no specific positions are listed in the want ads.

Most ads first appear on Wednesday or Sunday, so pay attention on those days. Read all of the want ads, because jobs that interest you may be listed in unexpected places. For example, want ads for drywall work may be listed under construction, painters, laborers, home builders, carpenters, or other job categories.

When reading and responding to want ads be aware of the following:

- Some ads list a post office box instead of a company name. This prevents you from doing any research on the company.
- Ads that promise a big paycheck usually are for sales positions which involve working on commission.
- If the contact for the ad is an employment agency, find out if they will charge you a fee. Some agencies charge the employer a fee; some charge the job seeker a fee.
- Multiple-position ads usually indicate a new or expanding company. Many people will be competing for these positions.
- Some ads use the word "preferred" as in "degree preferred" or "two years experience preferred." This usually means you can apply even if you do not have that particular skill or ability, if you do have the other qualifications.
- Be sure you meet the minimum requirements listed in the want ad. If it says that certification, license, degree, or experience is required, you will probably be wasting your time applying if you do not have those qualifications. If the ad says "no phone calls," *do not* call. This is a simple exercise in following directions.