

CRAFTING THE PERFECT RN RESUME AND PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

According to the United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics*, employment of registered nurses is projected to grow 19% from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations.

Congratulations on being part of this in-demand field! The nursing field has experienced consistent growth, as does the need for specialized skills. Your resume is the first step in presenting your skills, knowledge and experience, and is the critical component to landing that interview.

The crunch for nursing talent is intense and competitive. So your resume needs to reflect all the skills and experience you have to offer. These tips should help:

Point out your qualifications

When you start writing your resume do not pass over any rewards, like academic honors, grants, publications or scholarships during your studies. Include any certifications achieved.

If you are just starting out as a new grad, you can include your clinical rotations and mentorships, in addition to leadership rotations and elective courses. It's acceptable to include your GPA as well.

Along with the qualifications, your experience recommends you best. Ideally, you want to list your employers/experience in chronological order starting with your current or most recent employer. Usually the job is for a certain field of activity, so present detail on your activity in that specific field. This includes details like specialization, the type of the facility you worked in and the average patient ratio.

Use a cover letter to narrate how your background and skills align with the role and the company

The cover letter should be addressed directly to the employer. If you don't know the name of the hiring manager, address the letter to Human Resources. Your cover letter should complement your resume and convey how your experience directly aligns with the position you're apply for and to describe why you are the right fit.

Proof read

Before you submit your resume and cover letter, thoroughly read each document and make necessary revisions. It's considered best practice to read each document out loud or to ask a friend to read them for you. By doing so, you increase the odds to identify errors that you may have overlooked from repeatedly reading your own work. Also, be sure your documents are addressed to the correct employer name. Once you hit 'send', you can't undo it.

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Interviews are an important part of obtaining a nursing job. Some employers have multiple stages of panel and individual one-on-one interviews. Thus, you want to be prepared and ready for that perfect RN job you want to land.

Before the interview

When you arrive for an interview, you first present YOU, so you want to make a strong initial impression. Start by making sure your appearance is polished and professional, including makeup, hair and perfume/cologne. A good rule to follow - less is more. Leave home in plenty of time to locate parking and to find the department where your interview will be held. If you're not familiar with the area, perhaps visit the neighborhood prior to the interview day and walk around the campus if you can. Finally, on the day of your interview, arrive 15 minutes early, unless you were advised otherwise at the time you were scheduled. You don't want your first impression to be that you arrived late.

What to bring

It's recommended to bring credentials that support your qualifications for the role you are interviewing for. That could include licenses, certifications, degrees, diplomas, etc. Always bring an updated and clean copy of your resume, even if you submitted one online with your formal application. Additionally, most employers will request a list of professional references or recommendation letters at some point in the interviewing and hiring process. If you do not have them with you at time of interview and are asked for them, let the interviewer know you can provide them after the interview concludes and be sure to follow through. If you're a nursing student or new grad RN, clinical instructor letters may serve as recommendation letters for you as well. Please note that professional references are those who can directly speak to your work performance and experience. Stay away from character references such as neighbors, friends and family. And don't forget the Reference Rule – ask permission first before you give someone's name and contact information to serve as a professional reference for you.

During the interview

Many interviews today are focused on both clinical/technical skills and behavioral skills that show how you have handled situations in the past. Listen carefully to questions and answer in complete sentences. Be sure to fully describe the situation, the action you took and the outcome when providing examples.

Interviews are a two way process. Ask questions! It should be important for you to know about the culture of the organization, the team you would be working with and management style. What is the mission, vision and values of that organization and does it align with your own?

After the interview

Before you leave, be sure to ask when you can expect to hear back on the next steps in the process. While we all want to hear right away if we will be offered the job, know that it can take several weeks or longer if there are multiple candidates interviewing or multiple levels of interviews on separate dates. If it's been several weeks and you have not heard from the employer, you should follow up with the HR representative whom you interacted with or the hiring manager.

Lastly, it is still a thoughtful gesture to send the interviewers a thank-you note or email. It conveys your continued interest in the position after meeting the interview team.

Follow these tips and you are sure to be prepared for that next RN interview. Good Luck!

*<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>