

**BOTTOMLESS  
CLOSET**

connecting  
**women** and  
**work**

# STEPS to finding a **JOB**

*The search for employment can oftentimes be a lengthy process. Bottomless Closet developed the following document to provide New York City women transitioning to work with the tools to write a resume and cover letter and prepare for an interview. Additionally, we offer a variety of resources regardless of whether you get the job, and for that reason we encourage you to return to Bottomless Closet.*

## **Are you still looking for EMPLOYMENT?**

If, after your interview, you are still looking for a job, we encourage you to call and schedule an appointment to work one-on-one with a Bottomless Closet Employment Coach to further customize your resume and take advantage of coaching for future interviews.

## **Dates for upcoming Resume & Interview Coaching workshops:**

## **If you got the job, CONGRATULATIONS!**

Once you are hired we encourage you to call to schedule an appointment to select additional business appropriate outfits for your new job.

## **Dates for upcoming Post Hire Appointments:**



## Mission

The mission of Bottomless Closet is to help economically disadvantaged New York City women become self-sufficient through a comprehensive program that begins with business attire and interview preparation and continues with professional development, financial management and personal enrichment. Using the model of women helping women and our network of dedicated volunteers, Bottomless Closet enhances our clients' self-esteem and self-confidence in order for them to enter and succeed in the workforce and improve the quality of their lives.

To achieve its mission, Bottomless Closet provides the following:

- One-on-one assistance in resume preparation, interview techniques and presentation skills to women seeking employment
- The opportunity to select interview-appropriate clothing from Bottomless Closet's boutique
- An educational curriculum delivered by experts in their respective fields that emphasizes workplace skills and personal enrichment



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# Introduction

When searching for a job there are three steps that will help to greatly improve your chances of gaining employment:

- 1. CREATE/EDIT** your resume, cover letter, and references: See the attached guidelines/samples for resume, cover letter and references. If you are in need of additional support please call Bottomless Closet to make an appointment for one-on-one resume review or to attend a workshop.
- 2. ORGANIZE** your job search and make contact with employers: Gather together the employment contacts you received from your referral organization, any job listings you have seen in the newspaper or on the Internet, or any other resources. Set aside time every day for your job search; make telephone calls, send e-mails, write letters, and schedule any appointments.
- 3. PREPARE** for the interview: See the attached guidelines/samples for how to dress for an interview, prepare for an interview and questions you should be ready to answer and ask during the interview.

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## Resume Tips

Your resume helps advertise your experience to employers by expressing your qualifications and skills in written form. It is often used to screen candidates for positions without even interviewing you. This is why resume preparation is so important. Below are some of the things you should keep in mind and review as you create and revise your resume.

- Did you include phone number and personal e-mail?
- Did you run the spell check on your resume? Note: no abbreviations, other than states
- Did you check the spelling of all your employers?
- Did you list your current job in the present tense (write, type, operate, etc.) and all past jobs in the past tense (wrote, typed, operated)?
- Are your jobs listed in reverse chronological order (most recent job first)?
- If you are not currently working, did you put the end date for your last job?
- Are your headings (Summary, Experience, Education, and Computer Skills) the same font and size?
- Is your use of spacing, bold, italics, punctuation, and capitalization uniform?
  1. There should always be one space after a comma.
  2. There should be a space before and after a hyphen in your dates of jobs. i.e. 1/2010 - present.
  3. Be sure to consistently use (or not use) periods at the end of bullet statements.
- Are states listed according to their two-letter abbreviation without periods (i.e. New York = NY)?
- Are your margins the same width? Left and right? Top and bottom? Are margins at least 1" wide?
- Are your computer skills listed with the correct spelling and version noted (i.e. Microsoft Office 2007)?
- Make sure that the headings of your resume, cover letters and reference sheet are in the same format for consistency.

### **Please note:**

- Your resume is a work in progress that may go through several revisions and updates.
- You may have several versions of your resume that are customized depending on the jobs you are applying for.
- You should keep the most current versions of your resume on a disk or portable flash drive.
- Keep track of when you send the resume out, to whom you've sent it, and which version of your resume you sent.
- Phone messages should be professional in nature. Likewise for e-mails, i.e. ijdoe93@hotmail.com not kisses4u93@hotmail.com.
- Follow up phone messages or e-mails should be professional.

## Resume Sample:

150-66 232nd Street, Apt. 2C, Brooklyn, NY 11433 • (917) 555-1212 • j.doe93@aol.com

### Jane Doe

#### Objective

To obtain a position in customer service where I can use my strong customer orientation and excellent communication skills

#### Experience

##### Goodwill Industries, New York, NY

11/09 - present

##### Clerical Assistant/Intern

- Create and distribute interoffice memos and correspondence
- Perform data entry and prepare spreadsheets using Excel
- Research program information for departmental reports
- Maintain alpha-numeric filing system

##### Self-Employed, Brooklyn, NY

4/06 - 10/09

##### Child Care Provider

- Organized recreational and educational activities for four children
- Assisted children with homework assignments
- Maintained all bookkeeping and attendance records via database

##### 900 Communications, New York, NY

1/05 - 3/06

##### Telephone Operator

- Answered telephones and counseled individuals
- Assisted callers by referring them to social service agencies
- Maintained a log of all callers in an Excel spreadsheet

##### McDonald's, Brooklyn, NY

5/03 - 10/04

##### Cashier

- Operated cash register
- Tallied cash drawers at the end of shift
- Coordinated birthday parties for children

#### Education

New York City Technical College, Brooklyn, NY  
Major: Human Services, 36 credits

February 1999 - June 2000

American Business Institute, Brooklyn, NY  
Certificate of Training: Clerk Typist

December 1995

Thomas Jefferson High School, Brooklyn, NY  
General Equivalency Diploma

January 1993

#### Volunteer

Parent Coordinator Assistant: Parent Association

PS 231

Brooklyn, NY

#### Skills

Microsoft Office, WordPerfect, Excel

Type 45 WPM

Bilingual Spanish and English

References furnished upon request

## Cover Letter/E-mail Tips

To help ensure that cover letters or e-mails you use in your job search are read, be concise and to the point. Remember that most of your audience receives a lot of correspondence. To begin, think about the following points:

### ■ Why Am I Writing?

To respond to an ad, follow up on a job lead, or introduce yourself to someone who may have a job opening.

### ■ Who Am I?

Outline your job-related accomplishments and personal characteristics that you want the reader to know about and that may set you apart from other job seekers.

### ■ What Is My Objective?

To create enough interest in your background and qualifications so that the employer wants to meet you in person.

### ■ What Is The Next Step?

Take the initiative and follow up with a phone call or e-mail; keep a record of the call.

### **Additional Tips:**

- Whenever possible, address your letter or e-mail to a name, not a position.
- If sending your letter through the mail, make sure your letter is business-like in appearance. Use business-like stationery (white or a neutral color), 8.5x11", with a business envelope. If you are sending your resume online, cover letters can be in the body of the e-mail with the resume as an accompanying attachment.
- Always double check for typos, misspellings, or errors of any kind. Remember that this letter or e-mail is making a first impression with a potential employer.
- Use the following sample as a model, but use your own words. You are an individual and want to be yourself.
- Make sure your cover letter and thank you letters or e-mails are in the same format for consistency.

## Cover Letter Sample:

Jane Doe  
150-66 232nd Street, Apt. 2C  
Brooklyn, NY 11433  
(917) 555-1212  
j.doe93@aol.com

Date

Mr. Joseph Manager  
Title  
Company name  
Company address  
City, State Zip

Dear Mr. Manager,

I am writing to express interest in your opening for a customer service representative. My experience and qualifications closely match the requirements for the position described in your ad in the New York Times (or: described by name of your referral organization and its representative).

As you will see in the enclosed resume, I have two years of experience with a high volume retailer where I was given increased responsibility and excellent performance evaluations. During that period I also completed my high school diploma, and I am currently enrolled in the business program at Bronx Community College.

I can be reached at (917) 555-1212 or at my email address listed above if you would like further information or to set up an interview. I appreciate your consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*Sign your name here*

Type your name here

Enclosure



## The Importance of References

The phrase “references available upon request” on your resume means exactly that. Reference checks are normally conducted after interviews and prior to a job offer. You must be prepared to provide good, solid references. It is good practice to bring a copy of your references to the interview so you will have them if asked. Employers use references to help complete their picture of the applicant as a potential new employee and what your references say may determine whether you are offered a job.

### Selecting References

At the beginning of your job search, select three to five references. There is no need to try to overwhelm an employer with a long list. Select people who know you well and can speak knowledgeably about your professional and personal attributes; references should be primarily professional, include personal contacts only if you do not have sufficient professional references.

- References should include former supervisors who can comment on your work performance.
- They can also be teachers, church or community organization leaders who can paint a positive picture and recommend you as a person with strong values, a solid work ethic, and a commitment to individual development.
- Select people who will be very positive.
- Choose people who can discuss fairly recent association with you, not ancient history.
- A former co-worker may be a suitable reference if they can articulate your contribution as a team player.
- Social friends and relatives are not appropriate references.

### Communicating With Your References

When asking someone to be a reference, ask in person, if possible. Pick those who will be positive, willing and helpful. **Never** give a potential employer the name of someone whom you have not asked to serve in this role.

- Give each person who agrees a copy of your resume to refresh his/her memory.
- Be sure to obtain accurate contact information.
- When you actually give out a reference’s name, alert the person immediately. Brief them on the type of position and any issues or questions that may arise.
- Ask your references to call you after they get a reference inquiry. This usually means you are a serious candidate for the position.
- Thank your reference after each call and ask for feedback. If you do not get this position, you will need their help again.
- When you do get a position, let your references know about your new employment with a final thank you call or letter.

Think of the time you invest in selecting your references as the beginning of building your professional network. It will be time well spent.

**Reference Sample:**

Jane Doe  
150-66 232nd Street, Apt. 2C  
Brooklyn, NY 11433  
(917) 555-1212  
j.doe93@aol.com

1) Mr. Joseph Manager  
Title  
Company or Organization Name  
Telephone Number  
E-mail address

2) Ms. Susan Jones  
Title  
Company or Organization Name  
Telephone Number  
E-mail address

3) Ms. Ann Johnson  
Title  
Company or Organization Name  
Telephone Number  
E-mail address



## Thank You Letter/E-mail Tips

Thank you letters or thank you e-mails are an important part of your job search because they leave a very positive impression with a potential employer. Sending one also reiterates your interest in the job. Here are some suggestions on how to write a thank you letter or e-mail that will distinguish you from other candidates:

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- 1.** Send the letter or e-mail within 24 hours of the interview.
  - 2.** Get a business card from the person(s) with whom you interviewed and be sure to use their full and correct name, title, and address. Make sure all information is spelled correctly. If you are not sure how to spell the name, you can call the person's office to check; people are always happy to offer this kind of information.
  - 3.** Make sure your thank you letter or e-mail is business-like in appearance. There should be no typos, misspellings, or errors of any type. Remember this note is a reflection of your work to a prospective employer.
  - 4.** Once you receive and accept a job offer, it is appropriate to send another thank you letter/e-mail.
-

## Thank You Letter Sample:

Jane Doe  
150-66 232nd Street, Apt. 2C  
Brooklyn, NY 11433  
(917) 555-1212  
j.doe93@aol.com

Date

Ms. Caroline Jones  
Title  
Company name  
Company address  
City, State Zip

Dear Ms. Jones,

I want to thank you for interviewing me yesterday for the position of \_\_\_\_\_. I was very impressed with the description you provided of your organization, and I am very excited about the prospect of working with you.

My qualifications are well matched with the position we discussed, and I have a real interest in this area of work. My experience specifically with \_\_\_\_\_ and my \_\_\_\_\_ skills are among my strongest attributes. They would certainly enable me to make a valuable contribution to your company.

Again, thank you for the interview and your consideration. I am eager to have an opportunity to work on your staff. I look forward to hearing from you. Please feel free to call me at (917) 555-1212 or contact me through my e-mail address listed above if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

*Sign your name here*

Type your name here



# Preparing for an Interview

## Research:

- Try to find out as much as you can about the company, the job, and the position of the person(s) with whom you will be interviewing. (From your counselor or job developer, the Internet, public library, newspaper ad, etc.)

## Organize:

- Write down the skills you have in order of strength (word processing skills, computer programs, accounting, sales experience, food service, waitressing, etc.). Be sure to include “soft skills” (see the Personal Skills Worksheet for help). Write down major strengths and weaknesses.

## Review:

- Review your resume and know every line inside and out. Practice out loud with a friend or family member answering the questions outlined in the Typical Interview Questions worksheet.

## Prepare:

- Prepare examples about your previous job tasks, situations that occurred and how you handled them. Be prepared to back up your strengths/skills with tangible accomplishments. (Interviewers neither want to hear one word answers nor long-winded responses.)

## Practice:

- Create a testimonial or “infomercial” about yourself. This is a one-minute description that includes key points about yourself, including pertinent personal information, your education, work experience, skills and why you want the job. (See the Creating Your Infomercial Worksheet for assistance.)

## Consider Limitations:

- Next, make a list of any necessary limitations you might have in looking for a job (time of day, locations for transportation, work environment, hours). While you may not choose to share these with the interviewer, they are important to keep in mind when considering a position.

## Prepare References:

- Prepare a list of references. (See the Sample Reference List for guidelines.)

## Consider:

- Think about why you want this particular job. Does it match up with your background or experience? Does it reflect recent training you have had? How and why do you see yourself succeeding in this position?

## Orient:

- Finally, be sure you know where you are going for the interview, including the address, how to get there, and how much travel time you need. Use the evening before to plan what you will wear to the interview and be sure clothing is clean and pressed.

***It is important to do all of the above. By preparing for the interview ahead of time, you can begin to feel confident that you are the best candidate for the job!***

## How to Dress for an Interview

You never get a second chance to make a good first impression. This theme is especially important during the interview. Your grooming and dress are important to putting your best foot forward. Always remember that the clothing you wear should enhance your personal style and identify you as someone the employer would want as a representative of his/her company.

### Top to Bottom Suggestions:

**Suit:** Different business cultures have become increasingly tolerant of more casual dress in the workplace. However, for the interview, typically a business suit or jacket/skirt or pants should be worn depending on the industry. The suit should be traditional and classic; it is not mandatory to wear dark/neutral colors, but the suit should be understated. Always wear a shirt, blouse or sweater under a jacket. Most importantly, make sure the suit is in good condition, clean, pressed and fits well.

**Shoes and Legs:** Your heels should not be too high (two inches or less) and your shoes should be polished. No sneakers or sandals. Open toed shoes are okay but should be on the more conservative side. Boots are acceptable with pants or a skirt but should be professional.

**Hair:** Hair should be clean, neat and off your face. Hair ornaments (barrettes, combs, etc.) should be kept to a minimum and should be in basic colors.

**Jewelry:** All jewelry should be kept to a minimum. While it is acceptable to wear rings, bracelets, a necklace and earrings, they should not be large or exaggerated. There should be a difference between business and pleasure. The accessories you wear to an interview should be professional and different from those you would wear for fun. Avoid facial piercings.

**Nails and Tattoos:** Nails should be neat, short, and with no polish or polish of a neutral color. Avoid elaborate designs or nails that are too long. Conspicuous tattoos should be covered for the interview.

### Interview Don'ts:

- No short hemlines or miniskirts.
- No plunging necklines or see-through blouses.
- No tight fitting skirts or pants.
- No sandals or sneakers.
- No jeans.

# Creating Your “Infomercial”

An “infomercial” is a short (one minute) description that includes the key things you want to be sure someone knows about you. It includes pertinent personal information about your education, work experience and skills. Preparing and practicing an infomercial will be useful when the interviewer says “Tell me about yourself”, and at job fairs when you may have a limited amount of time to speak with a representative of a company.

To develop your own infomercial, think about each of the following:

## 1. Education, Training, and Certification

- Do you have your high school diploma or GED?
- Have you taken any college courses or completed a degree?
- Have you attended training classes to improve your skills?
- Do you have any skill-specific certifications?

## 2. Work History

- What are your responsibilities in your current position? What skills are required?
- What other jobs have you had? What skills were required (computer, cashier, etc.)?
- What “soft” skills have your jobs required (patience, being part of a team, etc.)?  
Note: This is just one question and should not be the focus of your infomercial.
- Do you have any noteworthy accomplishments in your work history?

## 3. Current Status

- What kind of job are you looking for?
- How will you be an asset to this manager, company, or organization?
- Why do you want the job?

Write one or two sentences that can be stated in less than 30 seconds about each part. Relate what you say to the job you are applying for or the kind of company you are speaking to. Choose the statements that tell the best story, you want the listener to want to learn more about you.

**Example 1:** “I am a high school graduate with two years of clerical experience with Goodwill Industries. In my position, I was responsible for filing, copying, faxing, and answering the telephone. I have recently taken computer classes to improve my skills in Microsoft Office and was told I am a quick learner. I have always been told I am a team player and get along with my coworkers. I am looking forward to being part of an organization where I can use my office and computer skills. I have read about the training programs you offer your employees and that is important to me.”

**Example 2:** “I have had a range of customer service jobs, including positions at a fast-food restaurant, a clothing store, and in an office as a receptionist. In my most recent position, I was responsible for receiving all incoming calls, directing them to the proper person, and taking messages. I also had to handle customers calling with complaints and my supervisor told me she was confident I could handle any customer situation. I also have experience working at a store where I stocked inventory, maintained the appearance of the showroom, and helped the customers. Your customer service position will give me the opportunity to combine skills I have with what I like to do.”

## “Infomercial” Worksheet

Successful “infomercials” begin by truly getting to know yourself first, feeling confident about who you are and what talents/skills/knowledge you offer. Focus your talk on how you can benefit the person with whom you are speaking, and present a clear statement of what you want for yourself.

**At a Job or Career Fair, you may only have 60-90 seconds to introduce yourself.**

- who are you (*introduce yourself by name... first and last*)
- what you are looking for (*what you aspire to do*)
- highlight something that stands out about you (*what it is you do extremely well*)
- emphasize a significant accomplishment (*an example of a time you demonstrated your ability to deliver*), whenever possible, tailor what you say to the specific individual or industry (*always do your homework!*).

The key to a successful “infomercial” is preparation and practice.

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Below is a framework... it’s not meant to be a script. You should use your own personality, style, and vocabulary. However, don’t forget to always behave professionally; and let’s not forget eye contact, posture, and facial expression. Add a dash of enthusiasm and you’re all set.

### “TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF...”

**How nice to meet you!** (*Remember to smile and make eye contact when you shake hands.*)

**My name is** \_\_\_\_\_ . (*first/last*)

**I enjoy** \_\_\_\_\_ . (*interacting with the public/children, working with computers, helping the elderly, preparing food, etc.*)

**I am effective/efficient at what I do because I have** \_\_\_\_\_ (*education/experience*) **and have achieved** \_\_\_\_\_ . (*accomplishment*)

**I’m familiar with your business/industry** (*Be specific about what they do by looking at their website.*) **and believe I can make a contribution.**

**May I have your business card and give you a copy of my resume?** (*When you ask for someone’s business card, it gives you the opportunity to follow up with the individual.*)

*Always end with a sincere **Thank you!***

Now, write your own “infomercial”. When you’ve finished, practice it out loud. When you feel comfortable speaking (not reciting), try it out on a family member or friend until your voice sounds natural, your words are confident, and your enthusiasm is genuine.

# Personal Skills Worksheet

**It is important to keep in mind what the interviewer is looking for:**

- Can you do the job? Do you have the ability to perform the specific functions of the job? These are the technical skills required.
- Will you be compatible with others in the organization? These are the “soft skills” that are equally as important.
- What are the specific things about you that will make you an asset to the organization and set you apart from other candidates?

To help you assess those personal qualities and characteristics that are unique to you, take a look at the following list of skills that might help you describe yourself:

Accurate	Adaptable	Artistic	Caring
Communicate well	Compassionate	Confident	Creative
Curious	Dependable	Energetic	Enthusiastic
Flexible	Good attitude	Good listener	Good judgment
Hard worker	High standards	Leader	Levelheaded
Loyal	Organized	Patient	Perfectionist
Personable	Practical	Punctual	Quick learner
Reliable	Resourceful	Responsible	Self-assured
Self-starter	Team player	Trustworthy	

**Identify 4 characteristics that best describe you and list them below:**

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

It is one thing to say to an interviewer that you are reliable, but it is much more persuasive to back up that statement with an example: “My manager gave me the keys to the shop/office/restaurant because he knew he could always count on me to be there on time.”

**Give examples from your current or prior work experience that illustrate each characteristic:**

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

## Typical Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself. (See the Infomercial Worksheet for assistance on this question.)
2. What skills do you have that make you a good candidate for this job? (You have made your list, now is the time to recite it and then relate it to the job.)
3. Why did you leave your last job?
4. Tell me about a stressful situation you have experienced and how you coped with it.
5. What is your greatest strength? Weakness? Give examples.
6. Why do you want this job?
7. Why do you think you are the best person for the job? (Remember to refer back to the specific skills and experience you have. The more specific, the better.)
8. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and had to prioritize your tasks.
9. Would you consider yourself a good team player? Explain.
10. Tell me about your communication and problem-solving skills. Give examples.
11. Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
12. Give an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
13. Tell me about a situation in which you had to deal with an upset customer or co-worker and how you handled the situation.

## Questions to Ask an Employer During an Interview

1. What skills are you looking for in this position?
2. What kind of training will I receive?
3. Tell me a little bit about the work environment here.
4. What are the opportunities for advancement?
5. Can I give you any additional information about myself?

## Other Helpful Hints

1. Be sure to make eye contact and to smile.
2. Give a firm handshake.
3. Inquire what the next steps of the hiring process will be.

## Notes:

**Notes:**



Bottomless Closet invites you to participate in a comprehensive Program Curriculum including workshops on **Professional Development, Financial Management and Personal Enrichment.**

For more information please call the office or visit our website.

**Professional Development:**

Includes core workshops that repeat each trimester and elective workshops that repeat once per year. Some topics are:

**Core:**

- Resume Writing and Review
- Interview Preparation
- Fundamentals of a Successful Job Search
- Business Etiquette
- Strategies for Early Success on the Job

**Elective:**

- Time Management
- Balancing Personal Style in the Workplace
- How to Start Your Own Business
- Customer Service
- Marketing Yourself Using Social Media

**Personal Enrichment:**

Topics include:

- Book Club
- Nutrition Classes
- Stress Management
- Domestic Violence Awareness
- Helping your Child Succeed in School
- Makeovers and Presentation
- Self-esteem Building

**Financial Management:**

Includes core workshops that repeat each trimester and elective workshops that repeat once per year. Some topics are:

**Core:**

- Financial Goals and Budgets
- Understanding the FICO Score and Credit Report
- Debt Management

**Elective:**

- Today's Woman: Overview of financial responsibilities, goals, and obstacles faced by women throughout their lifetime
- Investing/Retirement Planning
- Insurance and Wills
- Higher Education: Funding options including grants and scholarships, paying off old/defaulted student loans
- Homebuying: Saving for a down payment and overview of programs and loan options for low-income buyers
- Understanding Income Taxes

*We encourage you to share these tools with others who might be looking for employment; we do ask that you credit Bottomless Closet for their origination.*

**BOTTOMLESS CLOSET**

connecting **women and work**

**BOTTOMLESS CLOSET**

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