

# THE BRIDGE

*Connecting Pitt-Greensburg grads with career advice & opportunities*

## COVER LETTERS & INTERVIEWING SKILLS

### Tell me a little bit about yourself....

#### Otherwise Known As Your "30-Second Commercial"

#### Some helpful tips for your reply during an interview

This can be very difficult for the interviewee to answer. Where do you start? What is your goal? You might be surprised to find out that this point in the interview is actually an opportunity for you to discuss information that you would like the employer to know. There isn't a crystal ball to determine what questions will come next, so think about how best to market yourself within your statement.

**Give the employer an idea of your present situation and your future plans. Points to include might be:**

- When did you graduate?
- What is your degree?
- What is it about the position that particularly interests you?
- How can you be an asset to their company?
- What prompted you to enter the particular career field?
- What experience have you gained? Has it taught you anything? Did it lead you to where you are at today?

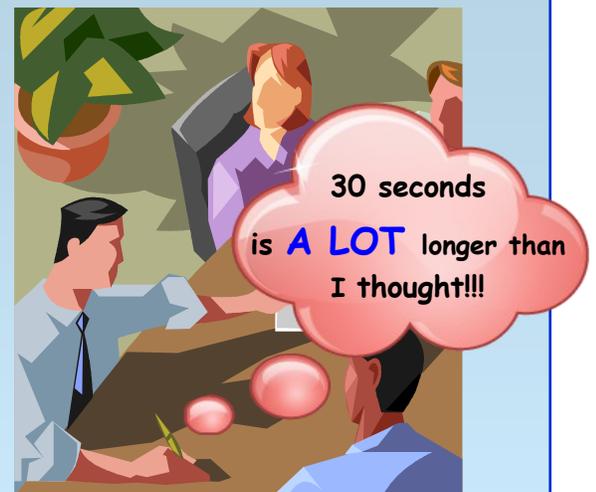
**Think about their company. Is there anything you might add to indicate your sincere interest?**

What do you know about their company?

What area of their company interests you?

It's best to practice your statement before the interview, but not so much that it sounds rehearsed. In addition to starting off the interview, this type of statement might also end the interview when asked if there is anything else you would like to add.

**Take this as your opportunity!  
Market yourself!**



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# So...what do I include in my cover letter?

Tailor the cover letter toward the particular position and company.

PARAGRAPH	CONTENT
1 <sup>st</sup> IP	Include the position for which you are applying and how you found out about the position. You may also want to mention interest in the company at this time.
2 <sup>nd</sup> - 3 <sup>rd</sup> IP	Discuss why you are a qualified candidate. This may include education and experience. This discussion may be one paragraph or two, dependent upon your experience. Do not reiterate your resume. This discussion should enhance it as well as give the employer an example of your writing style.
3 <sup>rd</sup> or 4 <sup>th</sup> IP	Refer the employer to your resume. Discuss meeting with the employer to further discuss your skills and qualifications. Include contact information, such as phone and email.
Final IP	Thank the employer for their time and consideration of your application. This is usually completed in one sentence.
Salutation	The word, "Sincerely", is often used.
Signature	Written signature is written below salutation and above typed name.
Enclosure(s)	Denotes enclosed resume, transcripts, etc.

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER

313 Unity Street  
Greensburg, PA 15601

April 15, 2009

Susan Miller  
Director of Personnel  
A.T. Cochran & Company  
99 Fullerton Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15312

Dear Ms. Miller

Recently I learned of your opening for an Information Technology Associate through the WestPACS Job & Career Expo in April. I believe my education and experience make me an excellent candidate for the position.

I am currently a Senior at The University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg and I will graduate at the end of this April. Through my coursework, I have taken numerous related classes, such as Database Management Systems, Java, and Computer Programming, to gain a thorough understanding of the theoretical knowledge. To enhance this knowledge, I interned with Relex during the summer of 2008, gaining insight and practical applications by working individually with clients and co-workers. This internship has taught me more about customer service and attending to the client's needs throughout the process, from consultation, satisfaction of needs, to follow-up strategies.

In addition to this, I have also utilized computer-related skills in previous work at Faith In Action, developing and modifying their agency website. This position also included data entry and brochure development using Microsoft Office.

Enclosed is my resume for your review. I welcome the opportunity to discuss my skills and qualifications further. I look forward to hearing from you and may be reached at (412) 882-0000 or via email at [cak23@pitt.edu](mailto:cak23@pitt.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincere regards,  
*Cassandra Kassidy*

Cassandra Kassidy

Enclosure

# HOW TO DRESS FOR AN INTERVIEW

## Dress

Preferably, men and women should wear a conservative two-piece matching suit for an interview. Colors should be conventional, including: black, gray, and navy blue. Ties and tights should match or be a complementary color.

## Hair & Accessories

Hair (including facial hair) should be well groomed. Make-up and accessories should be minimal. Men and women should take notice of the trends within the industry.

## Additional Materials

A copy of your resume, portfolio, & pen typically should be taken to an interview. Additional materials may be suggested, dependent upon position or industry.



For more information, check out some recommended the following websites:

SYMS Dress to Achieve!

[www.symsdress.com](http://www.symsdress.com)

College Grad.com

<http://www.collegegrad.com/jobsearch/Competitive-Interview-Prep/Dressing-for-Interview-Success/>

## Interviewing Dos & Donts

Megan Paul, Career Services Intern

### Interview DOs

✓ Dress appropriately for the industry; lean towards conservative to show you take the interview seriously. Your personal hygiene should also remain flawless.

✓ Know the exact location and time it takes to arrive at your interview. Also, arrive 10 minutes prior to the start of your interview.

✓ Research the company you are interviewing for and be able to present your knowledge of the industry during the interview.

✓ Present a firm handshake, make eye contact, and have a friendly expression when greeting your interviewer.

✓ Greet your interviewer by using their title (Ms., Mr., Dr.) and their last name.

✓ Bring extra resumes to your interview and any job skills portfolios.

✓ Be honest and be yourself during the interview process. Dishonesty is grounds for dismissal and getting hired for being someone other than yourself may make you and your employer very unhappy.

✓ Approach the interview with sincere and undivided attention to demonstrate your interest in the employer and the opportunity presented.

✓ Evaluate the interviewer and the organization he/she presents. An interview is a two-way street and an opportunity for you to get any questions or concerns answered.

✓ Write a thank you letter to the interviewer promptly.

### Interview DONTs

✓ Don't make negative comments about previous employers or professors.

✓ Don't treat the interview casually, as if you are just shopping around or doing the interview for practice.

✓ Don't ask about salary or benefits until you have been offered a position and the interviewer addresses the issue.

✓ Don't act desperate for employment.

✓ Don't slouch or sit rigidly on the edge of your chair.

✓ Don't allow your cell phone to ring during the interview. If it does, apologize quickly and turn it off.

✓ Don't rely on your application to do the selling for you. You must sell yourself to the interviewer.

✓ Don't lie and don't over answer any questions presented.

✓ Don't take any other person with you to an interview. If someone else attends the interview you are sending a message to the employer that you are not an independent adult and you are unsuitable for the job.

✓ Don't bring up or discuss any personal issues or problems.

### References

(1996-2006). Interview DOs and DON'Ts. Retrieved June 11, 2009, from Career Services @ Virginia Tech

Web site: <http://www.career.vt.edu/jobsearch/interview/dodont.html>

Hansen, Randall S. Job Interviewing Do's and Don'ts. Retrieved June 11, 2009, from Quintessential

Careers Web site: <http://www.quintcareers.com/interviewing-dos-donts.html>

# RESOURCES

## COMMUTEINFO ARRIVES ON CAMPUS

- Is your commute between 5, 25, or even 50 miles?
- Getting ready to graduate and looking for a job? Finding that the “perfect” job is not close to home?

The CommuteInfo program can help you find transportation options to school and to that new job in Southwestern PA. Visit our website ([www.CommutelInfo.org](http://www.CommutelInfo.org)) - it takes just two minutes to fill out the Commuter Profile for your personalized list of options. Let the CommuteInfo ride-matching software do the work for you to find options for transit, carpools, van pools or biking when available. And the coolest part is the information is FREE and it might even save you a few bucks.

By sharing your ride, you will also be able to share your costs and expand the locations of where you can look for work! The CommuteInfo cost calculator ([http://www.commuteinfo.org/comm\\_calc.shtml](http://www.commuteinfo.org/comm_calc.shtml)) can show you how much you can save. And just think, as a student you could sure use some extra cash.

By ride-sharing you can:

- Put less miles on your vehicle
- Save money on gas and parking
- You may be eligible to receive discounts on auto insurance
- Get more exercise (especially if you are walking or biking to school)
- Reduce your Carbon footprint and improve air quality

CommuteInfo is dedicated to increasing the number of those commuters in Southwestern PA using an alternative mode of travel to school or work (transit, vanpools, carpools, biking and walking). CommuteInfo helps students, commuters and employers by providing information so they can choose the best option for them.

CommuteInfo is a program of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, operated in partnership with transportation management associations, transportation providers, businesses and non-profit service organizations throughout Southwestern PA. Commuting options are an integral part of life for the region’s employers and workers.

Learn more on the program’s website: [www.commuteinfo.org](http://www.commuteinfo.org) or by calling 1-888-819-6110

**[commuteinfo.org](http://commuteinfo.org)**  
**1-888-819-6110**  
**A better way to work**

### Web Resources

Interested in working for the government?

[www.usajobs.opm.gov/](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/)

[www.studentjobs.gov](http://www.studentjobs.gov)

## Sample Interview Questions—How would you answer them?

1. Tell me a little about yourself.
2. Describe a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker or supervisor and how you handled it.
3. What lead you to chose a major in...?
4. Tell me about a time when you planned a project and what steps you took.
5. Name 3 skills that you feel would be essential to this position and how you would demonstrate them.
6. Describe a recent challenge and how you resolved it. Would you have done anything differently?
7. What do you believe to be your greatest strength and greatest weakness?
8. Where do you see yourself in 5 years? In 10 years?
9. What do you know about the company?
10. Why do you think you are a good candidate for this position?