

## Are you Ready for the Summer?

### **Teens don't have to be in between jobs for the summer. Here's how to get a jump on the search and stand out among other candidates**

By Christina Owens  
CTW Features

Baby-sitting, varsity track and advanced calculus may not appear under a professional's relevant experience section of a résumé, but they might for a teenager.

Professionalism is important for any job applicant. For a teenager, however, there is a way to balance professionalism with the reality of being an inexperienced student.

Laura DeCarlo, president of Career Directors International, Melbourne, Fla., advises teens to highlight their personalities, their careers as students and their extracurricular activities.



DeCarlo helped a student create a résumé that referenced her grade point average, school activities, sports, transferable skills developed through baby-sitting, and her outgoing personality. When the young woman went to a retail store to apply for a cashier's position, she introduced herself and offered a résumé in addition to filling out the application.

"The woman was so surprised," DeCarlo says. "The young lady ended up working at the customer service desk, which paid more than cashiering."

From being the captain of a sports team to student government, "any activity that demonstrates responsibility is worth having on your résumé," says Molly Delano Brennan, author of "Summer Jobs and Opportunities for Teenagers" (Da Capo, 2001). "It doesn't necessarily have to be some serious, 'real job.'"

Any activities from baby-sitting for a friend to washing a neighbor's car every Friday demonstrate responsibility and commitment. "List any areas of leadership you've had no matter how small you think they may be," says Shawn Boyer, CEO of Snagajob.com, Richmond, Va.

"They want to make sure you're not a couch potato. Anything you can do as a teenager to dispel the stereotype that you're lazy, you should do that," Boyer says.

Being up front and honest about hours of availability, transportation issues and eligibility to work also can make or break your job search, says Boyer .

In some ways, teenagers should be held to the same résumé standards as a professional; age is no excuse.

“The easiest way to get deep-sixed is to have typos on your application,” Boyer says. “Make sure when you’re putting down your contact information, if you’re going to list an e-mail, that you have a work-appropriate e-mail.”

Furthermore, while showing up in basketball practice attire might mean a more relaxing interview for the applicant, it easily can send the message to a prospective employer, that the applicant isn’t serious or professional.

Brennan says that she is shocked by the number of teenage applicants who “show up to job interviews wearing ripped jeans or flip-flops.

“Employers are more likely to hire someone who shakes hands and doesn’t mumble,” she says. “I think your appearance is a major factor.”

Learning how to create a résumé and how to approach finding a job in a professional manner can teach students the skills necessary to apply to college or pursue other activities after graduation. Many students even use experiences from work to help them write their college essays.

“Summer jobs are important for teens for a number of reasons: They let them begin to build experience that is helpful in obtaining future employment and improve their college applications, if they are college-bound,” DeCarlo says.

Postgraduate plans may not appear on an applicant’s résumé for an investment-banking firm, but for some teenagers, conveying ambition is just another way to set them apart from other applicants.

“If they’re applying for a job that they feel passionate about, then a personal statement could be really effective,” Brennan says.

Boyer also recommends that teenage applicants be forthright with their plans beyond summer.

“A lot of employers like to keep people on past the summertime,” Boyer says. “If it’s a position that you may want to have after the summertime, we always make sure to encourage people to tell them [the employers] that as quickly as they can.”

Brennan and Boyer both suggest doing mock interviews to prepare for the real thing and researching the company to help pinpoint questions you may have. Boyer recommends that after presenting a résumé and completing an interview, students should follow-up with a handwritten thank-you note.

A 2006 study released by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University in Boston put the teen employment rate at just under 37 percent, the lowest since 1948.

Boyer says, however, that part of the responsibility rests with the applicant. “A lot of teenagers, especially high school students, have the tendency to wait too long to start their search process, and when they do it, they’re too narrow when they cast their nets,” Boyer says. “So, start it now. Go ahead

and cast your net wide.”

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