

Naked at the Interview

*Tips and
Quizzes to
Prepare You
for
Your First
Real Job*

Burton Jay Nadler



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This book is dedicated to:

Family

Teri, Jordan, and Justin: You've tested me for many years and I hope Poppy has passed the exams to date. Our course is far from over.

Those from New Jersey to California to Texas: I've tested you over the years, and vice versa. Everyone seems to be doing quite nicely. Thanks for supporting my years of formal and personal education.

Grandpa David: I'm sorry you didn't read this one, but I thought of you while it was being written. We shared some of the same experiences at Penn and may have sat in the same seats when taking exams. We all miss you.

Uncle Zum: You didn't read this one either, but at least you knew it was being written. Your tests were some of the most challenging I've ever experienced and I hope I passed a few. Yes, you were a good teacher. We all miss you too.

Friends

Jud and Shelly: I most definitely have failed a few tests of time, but my feelings have never diminished, nor have my memories faded. I hope friendship will be judged by quality of time and thoughts, not quantity of time spent together.

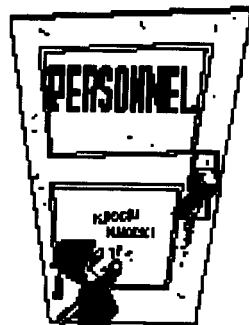
Professional Colleagues and Co-workers: I've passed a few and I've failed a few, but we've always learned from our tests together. Thanks for listening. Thanks for learning. Most sincerely, thanks for teaching. Mary, Skip, and Terry, special thanks to you!

Special Students

Thanks to all of you who worked with me over the years I've spent in career services, especially those who tracked me down after I left a school. Each of you tested me as I tested you. Without our interactions, this book would not have been possible. You taught me so much and I hope I gave something in return. I came back to career services from recruiting because of you and for you. This book, and my ongoing efforts, are dedicated to everyone of you past, present, and future.

PREFACE

Study Skills as Job Search Skills



At last! A job search publication designed for those who love taking tests—soon-to-be and recent college graduates. I know some will deny, deny, deny. At the writing of this book I've spent over 19 years in higher education (7 as an undergraduate and graduate student and 12 as a career services professional), so I know they do like tests, particularly final exams. I've been a student and I've counseled and taught students. I've worked for student and alumni job seekers in career services capacities at several diverse and well-respected institutions. So, from personal experience I conclude that college students really do enjoy the challenge and exhilaration associated with quizzes and final exams (as well as take-home essays and term papers).

Think about the social dynamics and intrigues of midterm or final periods. "How'd you do?" "Did you study this part of the text?" "Do you think the prof will focus more on lectures or readings?" "Can I borrow your notes?" "Do you want to prep together?" "Is this worth an all-nighter?" These oft-heard questions reveal a bit of anxiety and a great deal of empathetic as well as tactical thinking. Facing the unknown with varying degrees of preparation, students handle these circumstances somewhat differently. Yet, all know how much preparation results in success.

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A quick and unscientific survey (I don't have to cite statistical significance or provide hard data) reveals a few of the many approaches individuals and groups use to study for final exams:

- ✓ Reviewing and rewriting notes and outlining readings; condensing as much information as possible into as few pages as possible. Ultimately, creating concise study notes to review, synthesize, analyze, and (depending upon the subject and a twisted desire to rhyme) "memorize."
- ✓ Anticipating possible questions or reviewing old exams (obtained in honorable ways), outlining possible answers, and internalizing concepts behind the questions or simply memorizing answers (or both).
- ✓ Finishing all readings (at the last minute for most); highlighting important materials from texts, periodicals, and notes with color highlighter; creating study lists (not crib notes for unsavory purposes).
- ✓ Reviewing all quizzes taken to date, hoping the professor has a sense of logic (some call it fairness) and inquires regarding critical points or the cumulative sum of information covered to date.
- ✓ Sleeping with texts and notes and hoping that the required knowledge seeps through via osmosis.

Some swear by the "the R.S.V.P. method." No, this doesn't involve confirming attendance at a pretest party designed to relax (or pickle) one's brain. It's a study approach, with the acronym illustrating: **R**eviewing information at hand, including notes, texts, and readings; **S**ynthesizing information deemed relevant, creating outlines, lists, or similar pieces; **V**erifying facts and researching areas with information missing; and **P**reparing to express information in multiple choice, fill-in blanks, short answer or written essay or, occasionally, verbal formats. *No matter the approach taken, effective preparation involves reviewing, rewriting, prioritizing, and internalizing in preparation for specialized written or verbal communications.*

This book is written for those preparing for job search, the most unique "cumulative final" of all. If you realize that the skills required of job search are similar to those required to study, after overcoming initial bouts of anxiety and disorientation over the prospect of finding "the J word" (a job), you will know how well equipped you are to succeed. All students and graduates have skills necessary for effective job search. Reusing the now-familiar (and I hope someday "best-selling") acronym, we identify how easily you can apply this approach to job search:

- ☆ **Review**, and document in writing, knowledge of self and knowledge of career fields and job options.
- ☆ **Synthesize** knowledge of self and information pertaining to careers and job functions in order to set tentative research goals (worthy of more inquiry) and job search goals (targeted for job search actions).
- ☆ **Verify** information regarding research and job search goals, fine-tuning job search goals, identifying and researching in greater detail potential employers, and developing job search strategies.
- ☆ **Prepare** to express information effectively via written (resumes, cover letter, fax messages, and follow-up letters) and verbal (telephone calls, informational and employment interviews, and voice mail messages) communications.

Whether you realize it or not, you have all of the skills to be a successful job seeker. You can prioritize, research, summarize, write, and speak toward a specific task. You have done so many, many times effectively in academic settings. All you have to do is apply study skills to a different type of exam, the test of job search.

Assessments (a fancy word for “tests” and “quizzes”) in this book are designed so you can progress easily and enjoyably through the process outlined above. They will develop and hone Job Search Study Skills, preparing you to be as successful a job seeker as you are a student (or were, if you’re an alum). Every reader should first complete *The Job Search Survival Quiz* (Chapter 1). This device has proven over many years that a humorous checklist can be an informational and motivational force, stimulating appropriate and effective actions. It will also provide a sense of direction, allowing you to determine which assessment you might wish to complete next. You can pick and choose those that relate to circumstance of job search reality or review them all. If, as an example, you are now in the process of developing a resume, *Resume Reality Checklist* (Chapter 4) and *Perfect Resume Review* (Chapter 5) would be of immediate value. If you are preparing for interviews, the *Interview Readiness Indicator* (Chapter 7) would be a timely exercise. In truth, completing all would be of highest value. Preparing for exams requires identification of what you know and what you *don’t know* (boy, that’s profound). That’s exactly what these devices will do. Each quiz is followed by elaboration on relevant topics. This information will be presented as:

- ◆ **Answer Key and Typical Questions**, with answers to all or selected inquiries and analyses of essential issues.

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- ◆ *Study Tips for the Retest*, action-oriented tidbits outlining skills-building and job search steps.
- ◆ *Helpful Resources*, a brief annotated listing of helpful people, places, or things.
- ◆ *Study Skills Summary*, overview of objectives of each chapter (so you can grade how well I did).

Sample resumes, correspondence, phone scripts, and other materials are also included. The *Job Search Secrets Quiz* (Chapter 10), an assessment designed to determine whether material was internalized and to summarize important concepts, is the last quiz. The book ends with an *Appendix: Tips Not Tests*, containing some additional advice for special readers. Now don't get lazy, reading the first and last chapters, thinking that you can fake your way through this self-paced course (see, I do know how students think).

Citing a traditional and thought-provoking homily (sorry, they just seem to pop out of my word processor), "giving credit where credit is due," I must note that students, alumni, and recruiters taught me everything you will read in subsequent pages. You will learn how to study for and pass your job search finals using time-tested techniques (oh, you better get used to alliterations too). We've all heard that tests are meant to teach as well as determine what we know, but we don't believe it. These are truly *tests that teach* (that would make a good header for a book review; get the hint?).

Remember that unscientific survey? It also revealed a universal nightmare shared by test takers . . . walking into an exam undressed! Psychoanalysts (or, more appropriately "pseudoanalysts") interpret this vision as representative of a lack of preparation or a sense of security. Without being too Freudian, being "naked" is a fear also shared by job seekers. Many dream the dreaded dream of walking into an interview without clothes. No, not without the *proper* clothes, without *any* clothes . . . buck naked!!! Concepts covered by this text should clad you with the confidence that knowledge of successful job search behaviors will bring. Once read, the insecurity-laden nightmare of nakedness will disappear.

The book is written in a tone and with content that college grads can relate to and find enjoyable (if you like parenthetical quips mixed in with important advice and information). **Read on, enjoy, learn, and good luck on your job search finals!**

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CHAPTER 1

The Job Search
Survival Quiz



The following is a quick and easy assessment of your Job Search Survival Rating. Answer questions by checking the appropriate boxes, tabulate your score as instructed, and match your results with the comments on the following pages.

| | Yes | No |
|--|-----|-----|
| (1) Do you have a distribution-ready copy of your resume within arm's reach? | [] | [] |
| (2) Does at least one version of your resume have an objective statement with a job title and field cited? | [] | [] |
| (3) Have you visited or spoken to your alma mater's career services office in the past six weeks? | [] | [] |
| (4) Have you applied for a posted job within the past week and felt confident you would get an interview? | [] | [] |
| (5) Have you interviewed for a job within the past week without getting nauseous as well as nervous? | [] | [] |
| (6) Have you ever met someone who has a job you would like to have? | [] | [] |

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| | Yes | No |
|--|-----|-----|
| (7) Have you ever practiced interviewing with a friend, counselor, or family member? | [] | [] |
| (8) Have you recently followed up a rejection letter, requesting additional consideration? | [] | [] |
| (9) Can you write a thorough description(s) of the job(s) you want on 3x5 index cards? | [] | [] |
| (10) Have you recently solicited the help of a reference librarian for a job search-related task? | [] | [] |
| (11) Can you write the names of three books or magazines pertinent to your field(s) of interest? | [] | [] |
| (12) Has anyone ever looked puzzled and confused when you describe your ideal job? | [] | [] |
| (13) Can you cite the name, address, and phone and fax numbers of at least 25 potential employers? | [] | [] |
| (14) Have your parents promised to support you forever? | [] | [] |
| (15) Have you won the million-dollar lottery at any time in your life? | [] | [] |

For questions 1–13 score 5 points for each “yes” and zero for each “no.” Total up your scores for these 13 questions.

A score of 50–65 indicates that you will not only survive, but you will thrive because you have taken important first steps. You are very familiar with helpful resources and can be confident that you will be successful. You are intuitively aware of the nature of job search. *While you may wish to read on, you may want to return this book before you get fingerprints on it or you may wish to give it as a gift to the most needy job seeker you know.*

A score of 40–50 indicates that you may have taken some critical first steps, but don’t quite know what to do next. You may need to discuss your goals more carefully with a career services counselor or another job search support person and develop a clearer strategy. You may need to finish your resume or make some decisions on how to identify potential employers and how to follow up initial contacts, but basically you are on the right track. *Read this publication carefully. You’ll get a great deal out of it.*

A score below 40 indicates that either you have a unique strategy

or that you have yet to take steps in the right direction. *Whatever the case, a call to your alma mater's career services office and a thorough review of this book is definitely called for.*

If you answered "yes" to question 14 or 15, ignore your Job Search Survival Rating, because you obviously don't need a job and if you wanted to find one (just to keep from being too bored), you could depend upon luck, rather than your own efforts. *You may want to purchase and donate numerous copies of this book to your local public library or alma mater's career resource library.*

Seriously, this book has been written to educate as well as motivate. Unless you think you are a very, very lucky person, you should act upon the ideas presented. Every reader should take a critical job search step within a week after completing the book. Don't wait. Don't depend on luck. Utilize skill and intelligence. The assessments in each chapter will make you a more skilled job seeker, more knowledgeable of resources you can use, and more action oriented.

JOB SEARCH SURVIVAL QUIZ ANSWER KEY AND TYPICAL QUESTIONS

Don't be too hard on yourself if you scored below 40. There's always hope, and you (or your parents) might yet win the lottery. You definitely have the skills to be an excellent job seeker. The remaining quizzes will show that. Now, and after each assessment, let's review answers, examine typical inquiries, identify useful hints, and note useful resources.

Do you have a distribution-ready copy of your resume within arm's reach?

*Why is a resume so important and do I really have to
have it within arm's reach at all times?*

A resume is like a job search driver's license. It allows you to respond quickly to postings and effectively seek the help of others. While you really can't carry a resume with you at all times (although you should), it's best to view it as your job search calling card. In fact, I suggest you develop a business card that has your name, address, phone number, school, degree, and graduation date (and maybe, job search goal) noted. This will make it easier to "exchange cards" with someone to whom you

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should send a resume. Or, you might be creative and make a “mini-resume,” an abbreviated resume reduced to a 5x7 inch size, which you can carry with you. With or without an objective, large or small, resumes project the message “I’m looking for a job!” Resumes are more than symbols of job search, they are critical job search tools. You can’t complete the process without proper tools. But tools don’t finish a project, craftspeople do. The *Resume Reality Checklist* (Chapter 4) and *Perfect Resume Review* (Chapter 5) will address issues related to developing, critiquing, and using your resume effectively.

Does at least one version of your resume have an objective statement with a job title and field cited?

Won't an objective limit me and stop an employer from thinking about other options?

Can't I simply put the name of any job I'm applying for under the objective heading?

Objectives don’t limit, they focus. Appropriate goal-directed phrases are like handing reviewers magnifying glasses. Resumes with an objective are focused and seem much “larger” than those without one. Early in the process, it’s okay to develop a multipurpose version without an objective. As soon as possible, you should create at least one, perhaps two additional resumes that clearly cite job search goals. Stating a desired position does not eliminate consideration for other options. More accurately, you will uncover these options through effective follow up. Resume communiqués (fancy word for “cover letters”) are not one-time-only, hit-or-miss propositions. You can cite an exact job title, and even a firm name, for posted openings or for thoroughly explored opportunities, but don’t simply change objectives. Rework your resume’s format to highlight skills and experiences that support each new objective. Don’t ever be afraid to state goals (in writing or verbally). One of the greatest ironies of job search is that those seeking “anything” often find “nothing.” A lack of focus is what truly limits you. Discussions and samples appearing in the *Resume Reality Checklist* and *Perfect Resume Review* will further clarify these issues.

Have you visited or spoken to your alma mater’s career services office in the past six weeks?

Why? Isn't it just for business and engineering majors?

If I go to a small school without any real on-campus recruiting, isn't it a waste of time?

If I'm a graduate living hundreds of miles away how can it help?

Career services operations may appear to anxious and, frankly, uninformed people to be primarily for business and engineering students, because highly visible on-campus recruiting projects this stereotype. Some larger universities do in fact have specialized offices targeted at particular majors, but most have wide-reaching centralized services designed to enhance the decision-making and job search potential of all students and alumni, no matter the major. While smaller schools may not have large on-campus recruiting programs, they often are better able to provide individualized attention and stress the importance of alumni networking. Visit or call your office as soon as possible! Learn about what they do and do not offer. Even if you live far away from your alma mater, contact the career services office to learn of services they offer alumni. Phone counseling and fax resume critiquing are becoming more regular offerings. Also, don't limit yourself to your school's services. Be curious, bold, yet polite, and visit the office nearest to you. Reciprocal services can be available and most counselors seem to melt if you ask for help in the right ways. *Mr. Recruiter's Tell it All Test* (Chapter 9) and *Tips For Recent College Grads* (Appendix) offer additional insights.

Have you applied for a posted job within the past week and felt confident you would get an interview?

If postings aren't the way most people get jobs, what good are they?

Aren't postings a waste of time, especially those "blind ads?"

How can I feel confident?

Postings (including want-ads and on-campus announcements) are *not* the way *most* people get jobs, but they are the way that *some* people are successful. Don't limit your efforts to postings, but don't ignore them. Responding to postings strengthens job search communication skills. Writing, calling, and conducting telephone or in-person interviews are all parts of "reactive" job search. The stronger your skills, the better you

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apply them to “proactive” (goal-directed) methods. Blind ads are frustrating, so don’t simply send a cover letter and resume, then wait and hope. Follow all responses to blind ads with two additional letters, one sent three days after the initial mailing and the other five to seven days later. Include copies of your resume and original cover letter in each. Your paperwork will be reviewed at least three times and you will be projecting enthusiasm and initiative. Also follow with another note if you have not heard after three weeks. Whatever approach, remember how critical ongoing communication can be. Confidence will come with a sense that you have done your best and that you have followed guidelines outlined in this publication (that’s confidence on my part!), and from an awareness that you can (and will) follow up assertively.

Have you interviewed for a job within the past week without getting nauseous as well as nervous?

Are you kidding?

While I never get nervous, I don’t get called back, why?

Interviewing is perhaps the most universally feared undertaking, second only to an IRS audit. If you are prepared, it can be an enjoyable way to share your background with an interested (and often interesting) individual. While practice is the best way diminish physiological and psychological symptoms, an attitude adjustment is the best way to eliminate self-perpetuating negative thinking. If you think it’s going to be nerve-wrenching and stressful, it will be. Your own thoughts can heighten natural reactions to any situation. The image of walking into an interview naked may heighten anxiety in most, but it can be humorous. Think about the oft-used public speaking desensitizing technique of imagining an audience as naked. If it works, use it. But, don’t giggle too much. From this moment on, think of an interview as simply a “conversation with a purpose.” Also remember, even those who enjoy talking about themselves may be less effective if they don’t stay focused. You interview *for a job*, not *with a company*. The more you direct inquiries (before and during an interview) to understanding the nature of a job and the more you focus responses on qualities possessed to perform job-related tasks, the better. The *Interview Readiness Indicator* (Chapter 7) contains a two-part assessment that covers virtually everything you’ll need to be symptom-free, effective, and more important, feeling fully clothed and confident!

Have you ever met someone who has a job you would like to have?

So what if I did, what good will it do?

I don't know much about any jobs, isn't it too late?

As discussed in *Career Vocabulary Inventory and Goal Grid* (Chapter 3), goal orientation is simply a matter of describing job functions. Enhancing your career vocabulary by reading about or, better, by meeting people in certain professions, is essential to success. The more you know about a career field and about particular jobs, the more likely you will find a job within that field. Setting goals and identifying role models won't make a job appear by magic, but these steps will take you far on the path to job search success. Networking (a phrase you've heard over and over) with persons who do what you want to do is ideal. It isn't just using people you know, it's getting to know new people. Simply, it is telling as many people as you can (perhaps everyone) of your research and job search goals. Asking people what they do, how they got started in their field, and what advice they have for someone interested in either "learning more" or "breaking into the field" is effective networking. If you do this long enough and smart enough (you'll get better as you read on and as you practice), you will be successful. It's never too late to study for an exam or finish a term paper. I know you've pulled a few "all nighters" and received admirable grades. Just apply your study skills and research talents to this task, now. It is never too late to learn about careers, set goals, and find a job.

Have you ever practiced interviewing with a friend, counselor, or family member?

What good will practice do if you don't know what an interviewer will ask?

What good will studying for an exam do if you don't know what the professor will ask? What a question! Practicing interviewing is like studying. You don't memorize answers, but familiarize yourself with issues and prepare to face a number of possible questions. The interview test will definitely ask you to note qualifications, cite examples, and project enthusiasm. So, you do know the nature of most questions before you begin studying. Practice will place into short-term memory information that cobwebs or stress would make difficult to retrieve during an interview. Almost all career service facilities offer role-play interviewing. Some even offer videotaping (don't worry about the tilt of your head,

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where you place your hands, or count the number of pauses). Don't be too critical or analytical about any role-play efforts, no matter the technique. Practice brings to mind, then to mouth and tongue, pertinent information you might need for your oral exam (an interview). The *Interview Readiness Indicator* found in Chapter 7 presents a take-home role-play interview exercise to help you structure a practice session. You really wouldn't go to an interview naked, so don't go unrehearsed and ill-prepared.

Have you recently followed up a rejection letter, requesting additional consideration?

Isn't it "pushy" and inappropriate to follow up a rejection?

Once they determine I'm not a good fit, shouldn't I take "no" for an answer?

If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times (oh yes, as a parent, I am prone to using stupid paternal, authoritarian phrases), "job search is not an application nor a correspondence process, it is a communication process." If you think job search involves sending resumes and cover letters to employers and waiting, you will end up waiting, and waiting, and, perhaps waiting . . . on tables! You are the only person you can count on in this amazingly unpredictable process. If you continue to communicate appropriately, the process will continue to move in the right direction. Always be polite, but always find a next step to take. I recommend following a pattern of phone, fax, and mail communications over and over. Follow phone calls (even the ones when you can't get past the receptionist) with fax notes, and fax notes with brief letters, and letters with another call. But, don't phone or write simply to be persistent. Have something to say and, most importantly, a goal in mind and a request to make (like a request for information on entry-level options). Ultimately, we hope, this pattern will be positively disrupted with in-person meetings, either employment or informational interviews. When goal directed, persistence does pay off. *The Job Search Correspondence Quotient* (Chapter 6) and *Phone, Fax, and Voice Mail Etiquette Exam* (Chapter 8) highlight how important follow-up communications are.

Can you write a thorough description(s) of the job(s) you want on 3x5 index cards?

Why must I be able to write job descriptions on 3x5 cards?