

Resumes and Interviews

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The initial step in the pursuit of your first position in the profession of Optometry (that of creating a resume) should be taken long before graduation; for many this step is taken before entering optometry school. By the third or fourth year in school, you should have started to identify a career path and options that are consistent with your shortand long-term goals (see Chapter 2). Before you can start creating a resume and making contacts, it is wise to perform a self-analysis. It is difficult to market yourself in a resume and identify what you have to offer to practicing optometrists or other potential employers until you have done that assessment yourself, often with the assistance of family or friends who know you well. Once this process is complete, you can identify those strengths that should be emphasized as you develop your resume and prepare to present yourself in interviews.

Before you write your resume, list your strengths and weaknesses and consider your clinical and interpersonal skills, as well as your organizational abilities. You should make an honest appraisal of your interpersonal skills, your ability to communicate and speak before others, your sense of humor, and your management/organizational skills. Are you a motivator, are you self-confident, are you multilingual, are you responsible, and would people describe you as a self-starter?

COVER LETTERS

Your cover letter may be more important than your resume (Figure 5-1). The cover letter accompanies your resume when you send it to colleagues and potential employers. Cover letters can create or ruin opportunities for interviews. Many resumes look similar; thus your cover letter should highlight what makes you special. Each cover letter should be unique and specifically written to the targeted audience. This is your “hook” to get the reader interested in your resume.

The first paragraph should explain the reason for your letter, the specific position you are applying for, and how you learned of the opportunity. The second paragraph should describe why you are interested and what unique qualifications you have to offer. The final paragraph refers to the resume that you will attach. Point out your unique qualifications and the details of your educational or professional background that

pertain specifically to the desired position. Request a personal interview and emphasize your flexibility to accommodate their schedule and include your telephone numbers or e-mail address.

Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure must be flawless. Use spell-check and remember that a spell-checker does not correct grammar or homonyms (i.e., “there” instead of “their”). Read the letter aloud and then allow someone else to read it for you. Also, have someone read it aloud to you so that you can listen for syntax and cadence.

RESUMES

Your resume should begin with a *heading* that includes your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address (Figure 5-2). If your living address is temporary, use a permanent mailing address such as a parent or a friend. Your contact information should be appropriate (i.e., jane.d@yahoo.com rather than jdhotpants@yahoo.com or hotdude@aol.com). An *objective statement* that clearly tells the prospective employer what your goals are should be next, followed by a section describing your *education* (institution, degree, and date). This is a good place to mention if you were on the dean’s list or received other academic honors, or you can include those in a separate section, *honors and awards* (name of the honor, organization bestowing the honor, and date received).

In a section labeled *experience*, list related work experience. Experience in sales or telemarketing, although not directly relevant, provides evidence of experience in customer service. Clinical experience can include where you were assigned for externship or residency experience, what you did, how many patients you saw, and what special skills you acquired. Research experience should list the project title, description, site, supervisor, and dates. Any relevant publications or posters should include the authors, title, journal, and date. If you gave a presentation, list it here and include the title, audience, location, and date. Experience gained in volunteer activities, such as Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity (VOSH), should include the organization, duties, location and dates.

Teaching experiences listed should include position, subject, institution, audience, and dates. Professional employment

3241 S. Michigan Ave
 Chicago, IL 60616
 847-293-0000
 icostudent@gmail.com

May 15, 2009
 Owner, OD
 2800 N. Sheridan
 Chicago, IL 60640

Dear Dr. Owner:

My purpose in writing to you is to express my deep interest for the position you have available in the May issue of "ICO Matters." As stated in your listing, you are looking for a recent ICO graduate with flexible hours to work in your private practice at the Old Orchard location. Based on your required qualifications, I strongly believe that I am the associate you are looking for to provide excellent eye care and service to your growing, successful practice.

Your ad seeks an optometrist with great clinical experience with a strong emphasis in ocular diseases and management. As an ICO graduate yourself, I am positive that you know the outstanding education that we receive during our 4 years of intensive training and learning. In our primary care service, I managed glaucoma patients on a regular basis and have received top honors for my excellent patient care and dedication. On my externships, I saw, diagnosed, and managed countless patients with anterior and posterior segment disease, and at my last externship site, Franklin D. Roosevelt VA in New York, I worked closely with the top doctors in our profession to provide state-of-the-art care to veterans with ARMD, glaucoma, and diabetic and hypertensive retinopathy to name a few.

Enclosed is my resume for your review. I am confident that my professional, clinical, and educational experiences and skills will be a valuable asset to your expanding practice. I am a hard-working, reliable, honest individual who strongly believes in providing the highest standard of care to our patients and am fully committed to our optometric profession. I hope I will be given an opportunity to talk to you in person to show you how qualified and passionate I am for the available position. Please contact me at 847-293-0000 if you would like to set up an interview.

Sincerely,
 ICO student, OD

FIGURE 5-1 Sample cover letter written by an Illinois College of Optometry (ICO) student.

should list position title, organization, location, duties, and dates. Some resumes include *special competencies* sections in which you list specific interests such as contact lenses or binocular vision. If you completed a residency in low vision or ocular disease, you might list it here or under *education*.

You may want to list your licenses and certifications here with the state of issuance, certificate number, and expiration date. If you speak a foreign language, be sure to list this skill. Under *professional affiliations* list all professional memberships or philanthropic organizations to which you belong and any positions held. If you wish, you may include a section describing your *personal interests*.

Finally, listing *references* is sound practice but only if you have asked permission from your references. Include names,

addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses in the references list. You should not assume the reader will know what abbreviations mean—spell out the less common ones.

Your resume should be no more than one or two pages in length. Be sure to have your name and contact information on each page. Remember, this is not a curriculum vitae in which those in academics list every lecture they have given or every paper written.

Be honest, concise, descriptive, and specific. Use capitalization, underlining, italics, and bold print to highlight information. Tailor your resume to the opportunity. Update your resume as often as necessary. Print your resume on good-quality, white or cream paper stock. Colored paper may be used if it is subtle and gives a classy, professional appearance.

<p>ICO Student 3241 S. Michigan Ave. # 110 Chicago, IL 60616 847-293-0000 odalmost@eyedoc.ico.edu</p>	
Objective	To provide a high standard of optometric care to a diverse patient population in a growing private practice with potential of ownership.
Education	<p>OD Illinois College of Optometry, May 2009 Chicago, IL</p> <p>BS Cum laude Loyola University, December 2004 Chicago, IL</p>
Professional Experience	<p>Feb-May 2009 Franklin D. Roosevelt VA Hospital, Montrose, NY Diagnosed and managed veterans with advanced ocular diseases and complications, such as glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, hypertensive retinopathy, and macular degeneration.</p> <p>Nov 2008-Feb 2009 CIBA Vision Care Specialists, Des Plaines, IL Fitted patients with CIBA daily wear and specialty contact lens and performed comprehensive eye exams. Presented educational lectures about CIBA products at conferences. Managed the paperwork and insurance claims in the busy office.</p> <p>Sept-Nov 2008 Victorian College of Optometry, Carlton, Victoria, Australia Provided primary care to a diverse patient population. Attended lectures on ocular diseases and management. Observed various private practices in Australia.</p> <p>Aug-Sept 2008 Advanced Care Rotation, Illinois Eye Institute, Chicago, IL Managed a patient population with advanced ocular diseases and ocular emergencies. Provided preoperative and postoperative care to LASIK and cataract extraction patients.</p> <p>May-Aug 2008 Pediatrics/Binocular Vision Rotation, Cornea and Contact Lens Rotation, Low Vision Rotation, Illinois Eye Institute, Chicago, IL Provided infant and pediatric eye exams, as well as vision therapy for binocular vision patients. Fitted patients with a variety of contact lens, as well as designed specialty toric lens. Managed keratoconus and Ortho K patients. Prescribed magnifiers and low-vision devices to help increase visual acuity in patients with advanced vision loss.</p> <p>May 2007-May 2008 Primary Care Rotation, Illinois Eye Institute, Chicago, IL Provided comprehensive eye care with an emphasis on disease management.</p> <p>Nov 2006-May 2007 Eyewear Center, Illinois Eye Institute, Chicago, IL Dispensed single-vision, bifocal, trifocal, and progressive spectacle lenses and provided frame adjustments in the busy optical center.</p>
Employment	<p>Aug 2007-May 2008 Suite Technician, Illinois Eye Institute, Chicago, IL Oversaw file management, paperwork, and insurance claims and performed visual fields and other testings.</p> <p>Aug-Nov 2007 Teaching Assistant, Illinois College of Optometry, Chicago, IL Taught underclassmen optometric procedures and assisted in the creation of successful lab practicals.</p> <p>June-Aug 2006 Optometric Technician, Eye Physicians of Chicago, Inc., Chicago, IL Ran daily visual fields and GDx exams and pretesting up to dilation. Observed LASIK procedures, cataract extractions, and chalazion removals.</p>
Clinical Honors	<p>Clinical Dean's List in Primary Care, 2007-2008 Honors in Pediatrics/Binocular Vision Service, 2008 Honors in Contact Lens Service, 2008 Honors in Low Vision Service, 2008</p>
Professional Memberships	<p>American Optometric Student Association Member National Optometric Student Association Member Contact Lens Society, Illinois College of Optometry Private Practice Club, Illinois College of Optometry Multicultural Club, Illinois College of Optometry</p>
Accreditations	<p>OD, Illinois, expires 2010 TPA, Illinois, expires 2010 CPR certification, expires 2010</p>
Languages	<p>Basic Spanish, written and spoken Fluent Vietnamese, written and spoken</p>

FIGURE 5-2 Sample resume for an ICO student.

It is not necessary to mention religious or political affiliations. Generally, you should not include any information that could eliminate you from consideration such as negative information about your health. You do not need to include any personal or family information, such as marital status, age or race. Privacy laws in the United States discourage potential employers from asking for this information as part of the hiring process. Finally, remember that if your resume takes more than a minute to review, does not showcase your accomplishments, or contains typographical errors, it is doubtful you will get to the next step—the interview.

One more reminder—make sure you know what is on your My Space, Facebook, blogs or other social networking sites and that you don't mind a prospective employer going there to check.

After you are sure that your resume has been received, make a follow-up telephone call at a time you think will be convenient for the prospective employer. Introduce yourself, be friendly, do not waste much time, and ask for an interview. You may get put off. Remember to sell yourself but do not be pushy. Confirm a meeting date or ask for an alternate date and time to meet.

INTERVIEWS

As with anything else in life, you cannot expect to perform well in an interview without preparation and practice. On receiving an invitation to interview, you must assume that you are not the only candidate being considered and to “win” in this process you must outperform the competition. Your resume and cover letter may get you in the door, but now you must prove your worth. You must demonstrate in a short amount of time what kind of person you are, how you communicate, and what you know. You should also establish the value you will bring to the enterprise and a plan on how to generate additional revenue to justify employment. If you are exceptionally capable during an interview, your interviewer will perceive your skills as capable, also. The process for preparing for a successful interview follows.

First, how do I get an interview? The demographics are favorable with record numbers of optometrists considering retirement and the future demands for vision care increasing dramatically (see Chapter 1). Opportunities abound but at the same time the numbers of optometrists competing for the best opportunities are also increasing. The most successful job searchers use contacts and networks. Prepare a list of family members, friends, instructors, professional acquaintances, and anyone else who might help with introductions. Through referrals or contacts made at local optometric society meetings, you will be able to contact optometrists in the community in which you wish to practice. Although they may not have a position waiting to be filled, they may know of others who do. Industry representatives (ophthalmic lens and frame manufacturer representatives, pharmaceutical company representatives, or contact lens manufacturers representatives) can provide a wealth of information—these representatives know the practices in the area and those that are doing well

enough to need associates. Scouting out possibilities and writing letters to optometrists in the area (Figure 5-3) and following up with a telephone call is another proven technique. Your placement office or student affairs office at your school or your local and state optometric associations can also produce viable leads. The AOA Optometry's Career Center at www.optometrycareercenter.org, www.aoa.org, or by calling 800-365-2219 extension 4107 can be a valuable asset. For those willing to put in the effort, getting an interview is the easy part. Even if the expectation is no more than a breakfast or lunch to discuss the potential in the community, this opportunity should be treated as an “interview.”

Anticipate the obvious questions during the interview. It should be obvious that you will be asked why you have chosen that particular community. Give this one a lot of thought because if you cannot answer that question to your own satisfaction, you will do a poor job answering it to someone else's. If your answer is, “I grew up in this community and have always wanted to come back. My family and friends are here,” then the interviewer will know that there is little risk that you will move away on an impulse. The likelihood is that you will also bring patients with you. If your answer is, “I have looked at many different communities and keep coming back to this one. The town is beautiful, the schools are good, and the things I like to do in my free time are all nearby,” it will be obvious that you have spent time researching and again little risk that you will be surprised later and decide this is not what you expected.

During an interview, you should expect to be asked “behavioral questions,” which relate specifically to what you will be doing should you be hired. These questions are meant to provide an opportunity for you to demonstrate your communication skills, your ability to work as part of a team, your ethical values, or how you will be able to provide for your patients. An example of a behavioral question is, “Tell me about a time when you had to resolve a conflict with someone you've worked with.” While you may have limited experience in the workplace, you certainly have had experiences with laboratory partners or in student organizations in which you may have resolved a personality issue that would have undermined your goal had it not been resolved. It should be apparent that such situations will present themselves in the optometric workplace, and how you have resolved situations in the past will be good indicators of how you are likely to resolve them in the future.

For the interviewer to really understand the skills you have to resolve personality conflicts or disagreements in the workplace, you need to tell a story. You need to describe what your responsibilities were and those of the person involved in the conflict. You need to describe what the organization of the office was as far as reporting structure and how you were able to overcome that conflict in achieving positive results. If you are able to draw a parallel between that incident and one you might face in your new employment, you may have just scored a run. For example, “I think the basic issue was one of age—I was much younger or less experienced. I can see where that same thing could happen with an office manager who is older and more experienced running an office than I am.

<p>ICO Student 3241 S. Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60616</p> <p>March 20, 2009</p> <p>Big Valley Eye Clinic Owner, OD 2020 Grand Avenue Suite 1000 Great City, IL 60616</p> <p>Dear Dr. Owner:</p> <p>I enjoyed the opportunity to interact with you again this year at the Illinois annual congress in Springfield. I hope that you would consider me to join Big Valley Eye Clinic as an associate in May 2010.</p> <p>Coming fresh out of optometry school, I have the clinical knowledge to competently increase medical treatments within your practice. In addition, I also have a strong interest in specialty contact lens fittings and low-vision services. It is my interest to grow the practice in these specific areas.</p> <p>Enclosed is a copy of my resume. I can assure you that I would be a valuable addition to your well-established practice.</p> <p>"Would it be possible to visit your practice in late May? I will try calling the week of April 13."</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>ICO Student, OD 3241 S. Michigan Ave Chicago, IL 60616</p> <p>Enclosure</p>	<p>312-949-0000</p> <p>icostudent@gmail.com</p>
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FIGURE 5-3 Sample introduction letter.

While he or she would be somewhat leery at first, I could win them over by making sure they knew how much I respected that experience and how much I wanted to learn from them. I am a great listener and when he or she sees how eager I am to learn and how I really do listen to them, I will win them over.”; An answer like this will not likely come to an interviewee who is not prepared, who has not anticipated what questions might be asked, and who has not practiced. Behavioral interview questions nearly always start with “Tell me about a time when...”, “Can you think of a time where...,” or “Describe a situation where ...” The possibilities are infinite, but the more you anticipate and practice the more you will feel comfortable that despite the question, you will have an example that will allow you to excel. Here are 2 examples, but do not stop with these. Work with a friend or family member developing your own based on your own experiences.

“Give an example where you felt you were not fully utilized in an employment situation.” Possible answer: “I worked as an assistant in an optometrist’s office and there were many times when we were overstaffed or I finished my tasks early. I asked the office manager if I could go through patient charts looking for patients who had not been in for awhile who I could call. I started alphabetically and everyday made a point of identifying

eight or ten patients who might deserve a call. I left those with the office manager who would annotate which ones were okay for me to call. There were many byproducts of this exercise—we found out why some patients were not returning, we made appointments for patients who might not have appointed otherwise, and we even found patient charts that were horribly misfiled and may not have been found for months.”

“Tell us about a time when you had to deal with someone who was in a very poor mood and was being completely disruptive in the workplace.” Possible answer: “I worked in the file room for a large law office, and one day when I returned from lunch I overheard a client complaining to the receptionist about how difficult it was to ever talk to her attorney and how many messages had been left with no response. Seeing many other clients sitting in the reception area, I wanted to help but really did not know what to do. I did not know her name but went up to her and said, ‘My name is Julie and I would like to help you. If you follow me I will make sure that you get the information that you need.’ I took her to a small conference room that I knew to be vacant, found out her name and her attorney’s name, and then got help from a legal secretary who did work for that attorney.

While she was unfamiliar with that particular matter and could not provide legal advice, she was aware of the attorney's schedule and was able to explain that he had been in trial for nearly 2 weeks, but either she or I would be sure to follow-up and call her personally. That was all it took and although that was not the type of thing I was hired to do, the receptionist was so appreciative that my part-time job became a full-time job—often filling in for the receptionist when she was sick or at lunch.”

As you can see, questions of this type allow you to tell something about yourself, demonstrate your own initiative, and show why you would be an asset. Some corporate interviewers suggest using the STAR approach in answering behavioral-based questions. If you are good at acronyms remember this one: describe the Situation, describe your *Task*, describe what Action you took, and finally describe what hopefully was a positive *Result*.

Expect to be asked nonbehavioral questions as well. These could be hypothetical. A student we interviewed in a mock interview exercise hit a grand slam with this one. My colleague asked, “What would you tell a patient who was a longtime patient of the office but had never had a dilated exam and asked you why it was necessary since obviously the senior doc had never recommended it before.” Without missing a beat the student responded, “Dr. Smith uses an indirect ophthalmoscope to look at your retina. I learned to use a different instrument, a binocular ophthalmoscope, and in order to see the most peripheral parts of the retina, I need to look through a large pupil. Dr. Smith is very good at doing that with the instrument he uses, but it does not work as well with the instrument I use, which has several advantages, the primary one being it is the one I am most proficient using.” Obviously, there was no indication of deficient care being provided by Dr. Smith and the student was very sensitive to the fact that in this scenario, he needed to demonstrate respect and humility to a prospective colleague.

Another example might be, “What in your opinion are the key reasons that patients return year after year to their optometrist or dentist? Give me some examples as to how this relates to the care you provide your patients.” What a great opportunity to talk about all of your positive traits and examination protocol. If patients have thanked you for explaining things clearly or for the comprehensiveness of your examination, be sure to include that in your response.

When asked questions such as, “Tell me about yourself,” be prepared. Does your interviewer really want to know where you were born and what grammar school you went to? While preparing for your interview, make sure you organize a few answers that contain information you want to be sure to impart. Whether it is “Tell me about yourself” or “Why did you go to optometry school” the answer could be the same and could emphasize who you are—a person who has always wanted to be a health care provider, who is following in a friend's or relative's footsteps, who wanted a career based on interactions with others, who is detail oriented, and who gets more satisfaction from helping others than

anything else. Maybe you are a person who loves to ski or play tennis and wanted a profession that provided opportunities to pursue recreation or hobbies. What is really being asked is “Tell me about yourself in relation to why you are here today.” When practicing for your interview, make sure you get asked, “What do you see yourself doing 5 years from now?” “What is your greatest strength?” “What is your greatest weakness?” etc. Often, your greatest weakness can be turned around to be a strength. I remember one response in particular, “I am not as organized as others and find that if I don't answer an e-mail or telephone call right away I forget. To minimize that weakness I make a point of returning calls immediately so that I do not forget.” Just what the interviewer wants to hear! Be prepared to tell the interviewer what you can do for the practice but do so in a realistic and polite manner. For example, you could mention a skill or hobby that will give you a high community profile (a baseball or basketball player in college who will be coaching in the area), your willingness to join organizations where you will likely meet prospective patients, how you have always found meeting new people to be easy, your specialty skills in low vision or binocular vision, your spouse is active in the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), or how you are available to expand the hours of the practice to evening or weekend hours.

Expect to be asked questions that you most likely would not face in a corporate setting since they are considered improper questions. However, optometrists are not skilled interviewers and may not be aware of what is or is not a proper question or a question that could lead to an accusation of discriminatory hiring in a corporate setting in which there might be sufficient data to show that a certain question, asked to a sufficient number of prospective employees, led to discriminatory hiring practices. Whether you choose to answer such a question is your personal decision, but how you respond is critical. If asked if you have children or plan to have children, although these are improper questions, you may not want to insult or confront the interviewer. If you wish, you may choose to provide personal information, “I have a wonderful daughter who will start kindergarten next year and fortunately have my mother-in-law nearby who provides childcare 4 days a week” or “I love children and hope to have a child someday but have no plans for at least the next 4 or 5 years.” Yes, technically you do not need to answer these questions and yes, you could report that optometrist to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), but the reality is that you will cause yourself more damage in the long run. There are no huge class action lawsuits to win on this one! Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. These are difficult charges to prove, and if you do not get a job because of discriminatory practices the reality is you would not want to work there anyway. Under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), it is unlawful for an employer to refuse to hire an individual because of age. The same may be true with regard to weight as in some cases that may be classified as a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act

(ADA). In the long run, are you better off moving on or confronting an employer who did not select you?

Although the dialogue in an interview is of paramount importance, do not overlook the other details. Some examples follow:

Dress: Be sure you dress appropriately. If you do not know what the standard dress is for the office in which you are applying, then it is better to gamble on being a little overdressed than underdressed. You cannot go wrong wearing a suit. Some absolutes would be no sandals or tennis shoes, no jeans, no wild shirts, and no overly short skirts, and for men, wear socks and a tie. Many offices will not hire someone with visible tattoos or with pierces other than one in each ear for women. These are actually part of the dress code in many corporate and professional settings so why diminish your opportunities by testing their commitment to such a policy. Avoid strong cologne or perfume, brightly colored fingernail polish, or exotic jewelry.

Manners: If you are being interviewed over a meal, use your best manners and do not talk with food in your mouth. Chew with your mouth closed and do not swipe your prospective employer's bread plate in the middle of an interview. (Your bread plate is on the left and your water is on the right.) Also, this is a good opportunity to provide a hint as to how you relate to others—did you thank your servers and were you considerate enough of others to wait to sit down until they were also seated or did you wait to begin eating until everyone was served and your host was the first to begin? Sit up straight and let your host order first (and then order something no more expensive than what they order). And do not forget, cell phones are turned off at the dining table!

Your resume: Bring a copy to the interview and include the references that you allude to in your resume. This demonstrates initiative (not waiting to be asked) and confidence (making the assumption that your prospective employer will want to go that next step).

Communication style: Do you present as a college student looking for a job or as a professional looking for a career opportunity. Is your handshake solid and your eye contact appropriate? Do you speak clearly and are you as good a listener as a speaker? Watch your interviewer's body language; if they appear uninterested, you know your response to that question is either too long or off point. The worst thing you can do is to make up answers that are not based on fact; this often is apparent to the interviewer. If, after considering your education, activities, experience, and goals, you really cannot think of an answer, say so.

Do not use first names unless invited to do so. This is a professional meeting not a lunch with a friend. Do not interrupt the interviewer even if really anxious to answer the question. Do not chew gum! Even if asked, do not make disparaging remarks about your faculty or others who may have interviewed before you.

Arrive on time: If necessary, go early so you know how to get there, how long it takes, and perhaps where to park. Plan to arrive 5 or 10 minutes early, and if traffic could

be an issue, plan on arriving 30 minutes early and waiting in your car.

Be honest: My wife and I hired a college student to drive our children home from school and to basketball practice in the afternoon. During the interview, when asked about accidents or citations, she immediately responded, "No accidents, but I did get a traffic ticket for going over the speed limit. I paid that fine myself, which sure taught me a lesson."

Investigate the practice: Many optometric practices have Websites. Not viewing the Website implies that you are not very thorough in your research, or perhaps you do not care as much as the interviewee who has been thorough and as a result asks some meaningful questions or incorporates what was learned into his or her responses to questions asked. If you do arrive early, pick up an office brochure or chat with the receptionist or office manager if they appear to have a few free minutes.

Ask questions: One of the most frequently overlooked parts of an interview is asking questions. Often, interviewees admit to being nervous and look forward to letting their interviewer get back to seeing his or her own patients; however, do not pass up the opportunity to find out what his or her long-range plans are, what their experience has been with associates or partners in the past, how soon they plan to make a decision regarding those that are being interviewed, what the patient base is, and what their expectations might be. Do your homework. If you find out that there have been several associates hired before you, it would be prudent to ask why they left. Make sure you know what the expectations are as to the number of patients to be seen, hours, administrative tasks, and any areas of the office that you would be expected to supervise. "What do you feel would be my biggest challenge, how often would we meet, and what qualifications are you looking for?" are all reasonable questions. Always have questions prepared. Asking no prepared questions sends a message that you have not been thinking very much about this particular opportunity. Do not ask about money or benefits—that is best left for a subsequent time. However, if your interviewer brings it up, be sure to have a response. Know what the minimum salary you will accept or what salary range you wish to consider. If you do not need health benefits (i.e., working spouse or you have those in another job), be sure to convey your needs regarding health benefits.

Thank yous: Of course, you should thank the interviewer immediately for the time (and perhaps the meal, which you should offer to pay for and are earnest in that offer), but do follow-up with a personally handwritten thank you note. You may be tempted to send an e-mail thank you. Others may send an e-mail and you may do so as well, but send the handwritten thank you note. You want to distinguish yourself from others by making that extra effort.

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

The follow-up letter is often an overlooked part of the hiring process, but it is very important (Figure 5-4). Sending a follow-up letter promptly after the interview demonstrates

New Grad, OD 3241 S. Michigan Ave. Chicago, IL 60616	847-293-0000 odalmost@eyedoc.ico.edu
June 24, 2009	
Owner, OD 2800 N. Sheridan Chicago, IL 60640	
Dear Dr. Owner:	
Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on June 22, 2009. I enjoyed our discussion and was happy to learn more about the wonderful opportunity in your practice.	
I am excited about the possibility of working with you. I would be delighted to apply my education, experience, and abilities to your practice.	
Please let me know what other information I can provide to you. E-mail may be the easiest way to communicate. My e-mail address is odalmost@eyedoc.ico.edu. I will call you during the week of July 6, 2009 to see if you have reached a decision. I look forward to hearing from you.	
Sincerely, Signature	
Name typed	

FIGURE 5-4 Sample follow-up thank you letter.

your professionalism, your attention to business etiquette, and your interest in the position. A follow-up letter can give you an edge over the competition. The follow-up letter is really an expanded thank you note. In this letter, you should express your gratitude for the interviewer's time and consideration and restate your interest in the position or a desire to have another opportunity to discuss it. Close with an offer to assist the interviewer by providing additional information. Carefully type the letter and sign it by hand.

If you have not heard from the interviewer within 2 weeks, you might try another follow-up. Again, write a brief letter stating your continued interest and willingness to assist in any way you can. A persistent yet considerate effort on your part will demonstrate your sincerity and ability to follow through.

CONCLUSION

When going through the resume and interview process, try to put yourself in the position of your prospective employer and ask yourself, "What are the characteristics that he or she is looking for?" If you have those characteristics, ask yourself, "How

do I convey that I am the best candidate?" Every employer wants a strong work ethic, compassionate doctors and staff, team players, creativity, honesty and integrity, a strong sense of ethical values, professional demeanor and appearance, and entrepreneurial spirit. Smile, show your sense of humor, and show your enthusiasm for optometry. Remember, you only have one chance to make a good first impression. Keep this thought paramount as you prepare your resume, write your cover letter, and go through the interview process.

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