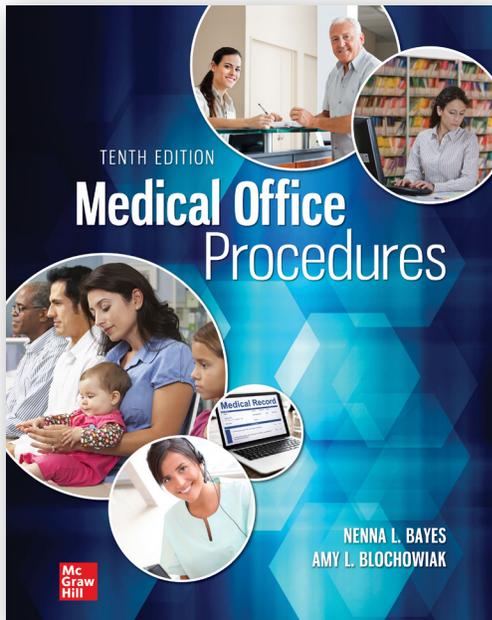


# Medical Office Procedures, 10e

Neena Bayes | Amy Blochowiak



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# Medical Office Procedures

**10<sup>TH</sup>**  
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## MEDICAL OFFICE PROCEDURES, TENTH EDITION

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# Preface

The medical profession is complex and demanding. The typical physician rarely has time to attend to the administrative responsibilities of the office. Successfully performing the work of an administrative medical assistant requires a foundation of procedural knowledge as well as continuing education to keep up to date with technology, including computer skills, new computer software, and legal guidelines. This tenth edition of *Medical Office Procedures (MOP)* provides the required background for the responsibilities of the administrative medical assistant. To prepare students for the ever-increasing use of technology in the medical office, this revision places continued importance on the computerization of routine tasks and of communications.

Job opportunities in the medical field often change with varying degrees of education and specialization required. This textbook allows for the integrated application of office procedures, skills, and knowledge in the classroom through the use of projects and simulations. Students learn to perform the duties of the administrative medical assistant under realistic conditions and with realistic pressures that require them to organize the work and set priorities.

## HERE'S WHAT YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS CAN EXPECT FROM *MOP*:

McGraw-Hill's new electronic health record tool, EHRclinic, provides a practice environment, giving students the look and feel of a real EHR system. EHRclinic is fully integrated with Connect and autograded.

- Chapter projects, end-of-chapter material, and simulations are available online in Connect, making it even easier for you and your students to access all the necessary materials in one convenient place.
- Connect provides simulated EHRclinic exercises in select chapters. These exercises simulate the use of a practice management software system to complete various tasks.
- Each chapter has been matched up with updated ABHES and CAAHEP competencies, which are listed in the chapter opener.
- The end-of-chapter material—including the Using Terminology matching questions, Checking Your Understanding multiple-choice questions, and Thinking It Through critical-thinking questions—has been updated.
- The chapter projects have been updated and aligned with the organization of the book.
- The updated Working Papers are both at the back of the book and available electronically on the Instructor Resource site in Connect.
- Art and screenshots have been updated.

## ORGANIZATION OF MOP

MOP is divided into four parts:

Part	Coverage
<b>Part 1: The Administrative Medical Assistant's Career</b>	Introduces the administrative medical assistant's career, defining the tasks, describing the work environments, and introducing medical ethics and medical law as they apply to the administrative medical assistant. Includes section on HIPAA as it relates to the role of the administrative medical assistant.
<b>Part 2: Administrative Responsibilities</b>	Introduces specific administrative responsibilities, including a chapter on managing health information with technology, and provides opportunities for practice.
<b>Part 3: Practice Financials</b>	Discusses procedures for preparing and organizing patients' charts and bills/insurance. Includes section on compliance and introduction to the new <i>ICD-10-CM</i> code set.
<b>Part 4: Preparing for Employment</b>	Prepares students for employment by covering all steps of the job-search process, from completing applications to interviews and follow-up.

## NEW TO THE TENTH EDITION!

The following are the key changes in the tenth edition. Chapter updates include:

- new EHRclinic exercises available in Connect.
- CAAHEP and ABHES competencies aligned with that chapter.
- updated photos.
- updated key terms.
- updated professional organization information.
- new Breach Notification section.
- updated medical laws.
- end-of-chapter tabular summary correlated with the learning outcomes.
- end-of-chapter matching and multiple-choice review questions.
- updated Thinking It Through questions.
- updated EHRclinic screenshots.



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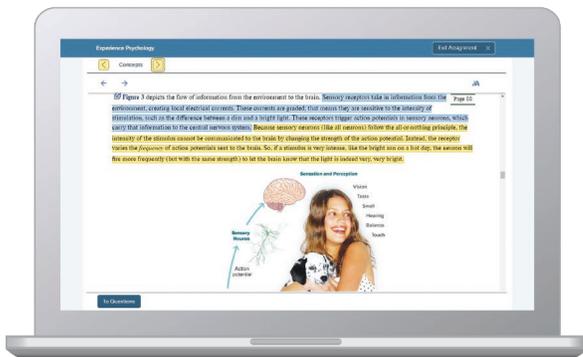
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*"I really liked this app—it made it easy to study when you don't have your textbook in front of you."*

- Jordan Cunningham,  
Eastern Washington University



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## SIMULATIONS

We know that hands-on experience is an extremely valuable tool for your students. To provide that “real-life” experience, *Medical Office Procedures* features simulations that help students understand what it feels like to work in a medical practice. A 4-day simulation appears at the end of Chapters 5 and 9. The text provides instructions for the completion of the simulation. In each simulation, the student listens to the “Simulation Recordings” that accompany the program (available on Connect). The recordings contain conversations between Linda Schwartz (the doctor’s administrative medical assistant, with whom the student will identify) and Dr. Karen Larsen, various patients, and other office callers. (Note: The student may use the simulation recordings individually, or the recordings may be assigned for use by the class as a whole. A complete transcript of the Simulation Recordings appears in the *Instructor’s Manual* located within the Instructor Resources on Connect.)

### Student Materials

In the “Working Papers” section at the back of the text, there are forms, medical histories, handwritten drafts, incoming correspondence, and other communications needed to complete the projects and the simulations that are provided. These Working Papers, as well as additional Project Resource Materials, are available on the Instructor Resource site in Connect.

### EHRclinic Exercises

The tenth edition of *Medical Office Procedures* now includes McGraw-Hill’s new electronic health records tool, EHRclinic. EHRclinic provides realistic experiences in online electronic health records, practice management applications, and interoperable physician-based functionality. Integrated within Connect, EHRclinic allows instructors to easily incorporate these exercises into their curriculum with assignments that are assignable and autograded. EHRclinic exercises are closely aligned with course content and include assessments that measure and map student performance, allowing instructors to save time while improving outcomes.

### Chapter Projects

Chapter projects, which are a critical part of practice associated with *Medical Office Procedures*, give students the opportunity to get hands-on experience with medical office tasks. Completing on-the-job tasks, especially those related to practice management software, is an important aspect of an administrative medical assistant’s work. *MOP* now offers these options for completing these tasks:

- Connect Simulated EHRclinic Exercises: Connect provides EHRclinic exercises that *simulate* the use of a practice management software system. The simulated exercises cover key practice management tasks to provide experience in working with patient, insurance, procedure, diagnosis, and transaction databases. Students will experience the look and feel of using live software, without actually having to download any software. Instructors can add them to their course by accessing them in “Assignments.” Students can follow the instructions printed in the relevant chapter projects and simulations. More detailed instructor information can also be found in the Instructor Resources site in Connect.
- Hardcopy or manual work: As always, your students will also have the option of experiencing the manual version of these practice management exercises, using the various resources included in the Working Papers and Connect. See the chapter projects for specific instructions regarding the manual options.

## Instructor Resources

You can rely on the following materials to help you and your students work through the exercises in the book. The following supplements can all be found with the Instructor Resources, located through the Library tab on Connect:

- Instructor's Manual with course overview; sample syllabi; project and simulation documents; answer keys for end-of-chapter questions; and correlations to competencies from several organizations, such as ABHES and CAAHEP.
- A PowerPoint slide presentation for each chapter, containing teaching notes correlated to learning outcomes. Each presentation seeks to reinforce key concepts and provide a visual for students. The slides are excellent for in-class lectures.
- Test bank for use in classroom assessment. The comprehensive test bank includes a variety of question types, with each question linked directly to its learning outcome, Bloom's Taxonomy, and difficulty level. The test bank is available in Connect, a Word version, and a computerized version (TestGen).
- Instructor Asset Map to help you find the teaching material you need. These online chapter tables are organized by learning outcomes and allow you to find instructor notes, PowerPoint slides, and even test bank suggestions with ease! The Asset Map is a completely integrated tool designed to help you plan and instruct your courses efficiently and comprehensively. It labels and organizes course material for use in a multitude of learning applications.
- Additional materials needed to complete chapter projects.

Knowing the importance of flexibility and digital learning, McGraw-Hill has created multiple assets to enhance the learning experience no matter what the class format—traditional, online, or hybrid. This product is designed to help instructors and students be successful, with digital solutions proven to drive student success.

# To the Student

You have chosen a fascinating, challenging profession. The field of healthcare is growing at a rapid pace, providing many opportunities for the trained professional. Welcome to an educational resource designed to prepare you for immediate and long-range success as an administrative medical assistant. In this course, you will use *Medical Office Procedures (MOP)* not only as a source of practical information but also as an instrument for realistic practice in applying what you have learned. Throughout the chapters, you will be asked to apply your newly acquired knowledge—not simply to tell how or why you would use the information on the job. You will then repeatedly apply the information throughout the text.

As you complete the designated projects within the text, you will accumulate many of the medical records and correspondence needed in the simulations that occur after Chapters 5 and 9. You will be asked to assume the role of Linda Schwartz, an administrative medical assistant. During each simulation, you will handle various tasks assigned by the physician, the patients, and other office callers after listening carefully to recorded conversations. With some instructor guidance, you will perform your duties in an appropriate manner. You will be performing a variety of closely related administrative medical office tasks in the simulations: answering the telephone, scheduling appointments, taking messages, filing, preparing bills, and so on. You will gain proficiency in performing a wide range of administrative activities and in coping with a variety of problems and pressures in the medical office. All these activities will help you strive to organize work, set priorities, relate one task to another, and manage time. After completing these simulations, you will find that you are well prepared for the transition from classroom to office.

Starting with Part 2, you will be “working” for Dr. Karen Larsen, a family practitioner. As directed, **save your work from the chapter projects.** This work will form the basis for your “office files.” In the simulations, you will use and add to these files. Essential patient data and forms are provided in the Working Papers section of the book, Connect, or your instructor’s learning management system. You will also need the following supplies:

- File folder labels and 31 file folders
- A ring binder or a file folder to serve as your appointment book if you are not using Connect to complete exercises
- An expandable portfolio to serve as your file cabinet (all your office files can be stored in this portfolio)
- Paper for printing
- External storage device, such as a USB flash drive, to store the projects as directed
- Miscellaneous items—rubber bands, a notepad, pens, pencils, paper clips, and so on

# Acknowledgments

Suggestions have been received from faculty and students throughout the country. This is vital feedback that is relied upon with each edition. Each person who has offered comments and suggestions has our thanks. The efforts of many people are needed to develop and improve a product. Among these people are the reviewers and consultants who point out areas of concern, cite areas of strength, and make recommendations for change. In this regard, the following instructors provided feedback that was enormously helpful in preparing the tenth, and previous editions, of *MOP*.

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*Nenna Bayes*

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*Amy Blochowiak*

# Preparing for Employment

## CHAPTER 10

### Preparing for Employment in the Medical Office

Part 4 discusses the importance of preparation as the administrative medical assistant begins and progresses through the path to a medical career. Presented are steps and strategies to make the career search as successful as possible.

**CONSIDER THIS:** Self-analysis can help the administrative medical assistant match skills and attributes to a career choice. *What are your top five skills and personal attributes and how can they be used in a medical environment?*

## Chapter

# 10

## Preparing for Employment in the Medical Office



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### LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

- 10.1 list and explore visible and hidden career/employment resources.
- 10.2 assimilate information and prepare an employment application.
- 10.3 compose a cover/application letter.
- 10.4 assimilate data and compose résumés using different format styles.
- 10.5 assemble personal and professional information and appropriate dress for the interview process and conduct a mock interview.
- 10.6 compose a follow-up thank-you letter.

### KEY TERMS

Study these important words, which are defined in this chapter, to build your professional vocabulary:

chronological résumé  
cover/application letter  
e-portfolio  
functional résumé

hidden job markets  
key words  
personal reference  
plain-text résumé

power words  
professional reference  
scannable résumé

shoulder surfing  
visible job markets

## ABHES

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- 1.a.** Describe the current employment outlook for the medical assistant.
- 7.a.** Gather and process documents.
- 10.a.** Perform the essential requirements for employment such as résumé writing, effective interviewing, dressing professionally, time management, and following up appropriately.
- 10.b.** Demonstrate professional behavior.

*[www.abhes.org/accreditationmanual](http://www.abhes.org/accreditationmanual)*

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## CAAHEP

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- V.C.7.** Recognize elements of fundamental writing skills.
- V.P.2.** Respond to nonverbal communication.
- V.P.8.** Compose professional correspondence utilizing electronic technology.
- X.C.9.** List and discuss legal and illegal interview questions.

2015 Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Medical Assisting, Appendix B, Core Curriculum for Medical Assistants, Medical Assisting Education Review Board (MAERB), 2015.

## INTRODUCTION

Just a short time ago, employment opportunities were mostly confined to a local, state, or national job market. Many employees worked at and retired from first jobs with very little mobility. Times have changed, and so have opportunities for employment. The workforce is very fluid and the Internet presents a global market.

Whether the job search is local or international, one key to being successful is being prepared. It begins with evaluating your skills and goals and matching them to various career opportunities. The search continues through exploring sources of career opportunities, composing a professional cover/application letter and accurately completing an application, preparing a résumé (or more than one), interviewing for a position, and conducting follow-up techniques.

### 10.1

## SEARCHING SOURCES OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### Your Skills and Goals

As you begin your search for employment, first evaluate your skills (personal and professional) and your overall goal. Make a list of your personal traits and professional skills. Many individuals are not content in their current position for various reasons, one of which may be that their personal and professional skills are mismatched with their current job requirements. Following are some questions to ask yourself as you begin your list:

- Am I skilled in public communications?
- Do I enjoy searching for answers or solving problems (do I like word puzzles/word searches, etc.)?
- Am I more productive working on my own or as a member of a team?
- Do I organize my personal and professional lives?
- Have I held or do I hold positions of leadership, such as club officer?
- What are my technical skills?
- Do I pursue above and beyond what is required of me?

As you begin to evaluate yourself through these and other questions, match your answers to general job requirements or environments. For example, someone who enjoys and is proficient at solving word searches may be suited to finding errors in submitted insurance claim forms and submitting corrected claims to carriers. An individual who frequently holds an office, such as president or treasurer, within an organization may not be content in a professional position that does not provide an opportunity to grow professionally and assume more responsibility. Listing and objectively evaluating personal and professional skills is the first step in seeking employment.

### Sources of Employment Opportunities

After you have compiled an evaluation of your skills and traits, the next step is to begin searching for employment opportunities. Some sources are more visible and traditional, while others fall within the hidden job market of opportunities. At times, employers want a large number of responses for available positions; however, some position vacancies are complicated by a vast number of applicants. Traditional job markets, or **visible job markets**, also referred to as published markets (job markets composed of resources that are traditional and the most obvious), produce a greater number of responses to positions, while nontraditional job markets, or **hidden job markets** (job markets that are less obvious and require more initiative by the job seekers to access) are more confined.

**Visible Resources.** Many resources are available to job seekers through easily accessible venues. Following is a sampling of some visible job markets:

- *Internet.* Doing a topic search for job listings will produce a vast number of results. Several online employment services are available, such as [www.Monster.com](http://www.Monster.com) and

www.linkedin.com. Some sites collect résumés, which they forward to employers, while some sites list complete position information, including the employer. One advantage of using Internet employment websites is the number of choices they provide. However, corporations listed on these sites may receive a great number of résumés per day.

Résumés that are not prepared in a computer-friendly format (discussed later in this chapter) may not convey the intended information, and therefore may not be reviewed.

- *Social media.* Career opportunities can also be located through social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.). Many organizations maintain their own links through various social media venues. Also, personal contacts through social media sites may post employment opportunities, sometimes prior to the organization posting the vacant position.
- *Classified ads in national and local newspapers.* Ads may include desired information, such as the name and address of the organization, but many do not include specific data other than the position requirements. Résumés are frequently sent to a P.O. box, and no company or individual name is listed. Most newspaper classified ads can also be found on the newspaper's Web page.
- *Professional publications.* Journals published by professional organizations contain position opportunities. Student memberships are available through most professional organizations, usually at a discounted rate. National organizations typically have local chapters, which can supply information about local career opportunities.
- *Career/job fairs.* Most schools will host an event that brings together prospective employers and employees. Local communities may also host a career fair. When attending a fair, an applicant should be professionally dressed, have an application/cover letter (discussed later in this chapter), and have résumés in various formats (also discussed later in this chapter).
- *Job boards.* Schools and businesses post available positions on accessible traditional and/or electronic forums. For businesses, positions may first be posted to provide currently employed individuals the opportunity to apply first (known as in-house posting). Beginning and ending dates are listed on the vacancy notice. For example, a volunteer within a medical facility will know when positions have been internally posted and when external applicants may apply for the position. School career centers and/or placement offices also post the available positions that have been sent to them.
- *Temporary employment agencies.* Short-term exposure to various positions can be gained through local temporary job services. Job seekers who have little or no experience may find it beneficial to use these services to gain documentable experience. There may be a fee for the services. The temporary position may change to a permanent opportunity; however, the goal of a temporary employment agency is to provide short-term coverage of job responsibilities.
- *Employment services.* Companies may fill positions through local and governmental employment services. Companies that have a vacancy contact the employment service and ask to review the files of individuals who meet the job requirements. Those selected are interviewed by the service or by the company. Individuals should keep the file with the employment service up to date. Privately owned employment services may charge a fee for their services.

This list is not inclusive of all career resources but gives job seekers some avenues to pursue for employment.

**Hidden Resources.** Many times, less obvious job markets are overlooked and opportunities are lost. Job seekers must have the initiative to seek out these markets and opportunities. Following are examples of hidden markets:

- *Face-to-face networking.* Everyone has a network of individuals, which frequently is overlooked in the job-seeking process (Figure 10.1). People in your network can

**Figure 10.1**

Practicing Networking  
Skills mimagephotography/  
Shutterstock



provide up-to-date information on industry trends and changes, as well as current and upcoming vacancies. Teachers and classmates typically have the same or similar interests and goals. Relatives and friends, fellow club or organization members, and acquaintances from the community frequently know about upcoming vacancies before the positions are posted. If someone with whom you work is leaving, an opportunity could be provided for you to apply for the vacancy. A network also includes people from sporting events, health clubs, workout classes, and physicians' offices. The list continues to include many, varied places where other individuals can be encountered.

- *Electronic networks.* These kinds of networks also are a vast source of employment opportunities. However, you should be careful of seeking information electronically if you are currently employed and have not submitted a letter of resignation. Also, refrain from posting negative comments about your current employment and colleagues. Electronic information, once posted, spreads quickly.
- *Telephone directories.* Yellow pages, traditional or electronic, are a valuable source of employers in a specific area. It is easy to locate all the physicians in a given specialty by using yellow pages.
- *Chamber of commerce.* The chamber of commerce in an area can provide a list of local businesses and organizations.
- *Direct contact with companies.* Information about available positions can be obtained from personally visiting a business. Keep in mind, however, that this is a “fact-gathering” visit. From the visit, a position-related cover/application letter and résumé can be prepared. An applicant should take a generic application letter and résumé, in case there is an opportunity to speak with a manager. A clean, neat, professional appearance will make a favorable impression.

It is common for prospective employers to ask candidates to fill out an application prior to interviewing. Information requested on an application frequently is more complete than information provided on a résumé. A complete educational and work history, such as exact dates of employment, complete company addresses, supervisors' names and contact information, and salary or wage amounts, is commonly requested. This information is typically summarized on a résumé. Applications serve as a snapshot of the applicant, which helps employers choose interview candidates. Additionally, applicants must attest to the completeness and truthfulness of the presented application data by signing a statement of authenticity on the application. Individuals have been hired for a position and later fired because they provided false information on an application and/or a résumé.

Online applications are an effective and efficient method of submitting data. An advantage of submitting electronically is the opportunity to correct data. When preparing an application traditionally, applicants must either key the information in on a computer or fill it in by hand. Read through the entire application before inserting information. By doing this, the applicant will have a better idea of where to place information, thereby avoiding possible mistakes. If a computer is used to fill out an application and print it, errors can be easily corrected; however, applications prepared by hand require more effort to submit correctly. Correction fluid may be used to correct the occasional error on a handwritten application; but unless the applicant is skilled with using correction fluid, the correction will be obvious. The company may require the correction to be initialed by the applicant. It is best to redo the application. For this reason, when an applicant knows the application will be prepared by hand, additional copies of the application should be available. Blue or black ink should be used to complete an application. Be sure to look for specific instructions on the application concerning ink color. Data on a handwritten application should be printed and neat.

Whether the application is filed electronically or traditionally, several tips apply:

- Determine the information you will need and have it accessible. Samples of information include the following:
  - *Personal information:* In addition to complete name and address, an applicant's Social Security Number may be requested (used to do a background check of the applicant), but date of birth is not. Daytime and evening contact landline telephone numbers and cell phone number are requested. E-mail addresses may also be requested.
  - *Name of position desired:* State the name of the position or positions to which the application applies; whether full-time, part-time, seasonal, or shift work is desired; the date you are available to begin work; and the desired salary. So that you do not eliminate yourself from possible employment because of a stated salary requirement, it is best to answer by giving a range, such as \$25,000–\$30,000, or using the words "Open" or "Negotiable" to the desired salary. While it is easiest to state "Open" or "Negotiable," you should research similar positions in the geographic region and have an idea of the salary requirements, to help you avoid under- or overpricing yourself for the available position. However, if you require a certain amount and will consider nothing less, then state your desired amount.
  - *Work history information:* Your work history is your employers' names and complete addresses, your supervisors' names and contact information, your

dates of employment, beginning and ending salary or wage information, your responsibilities, your titles, and your reasons for leaving (if separated from employment). If you were fired or laid off, it is best not to place blame when stating the reason for leaving. Statements such as “My professional goal became different from the company’s goal” or “The organization went through realignment” show a positive attitude.

Address any gaps in your work history. Individuals have a variety of reasons for not being in the workforce. Reasons should be very brief statements, such as attending school, caring for aging parents, and the like. Be prepared to address reasons for frequent changes in jobs. Reasons such as seasonal work or temporary positions should be listed. If you have more work history than there is room for on the application, the short statement “Additional work experience is available upon request” may be used on the application. Most applications ask for work experience in reverse chronological order.

- *Criminal history*: Honesty is the best policy. State the facts—what happened and how you have changed from the experience.
- *Military history*: Be prepared to record dates, ranks, awards, and commendations.
- *Education*: Have available postsecondary education information. Applications usually ask for the names and addresses of institutions, dates attended, degrees/credentials earned, hours completed, and grade point average (GPA) or ranking in class. Some employers also request high school information, including the name and address of the high school, diploma or GED, and class ranking or GPA. Any specialized training, awards, or honors may also be requested. Some employers will require an official transcript to prove educational accomplishments.
- *References*: Stating “References are available upon request” is not a best practice for completing an application. A minimum of three references is typically requested. After asking permission, list three (or the requested number) individuals who know your work ethic, skills, and personal aptitudes. Relatives or clergy should not be listed as references. Fellow workers and committee members with whom you have served are good candidates for references. Sometimes an applicant has been out of the workforce, training for a new career. In this case, a fellow long-term classmate or an instructor may be used as a reference. Whomever you use, be sure of what they will say! Provide each person’s name, title, address, e-mail, and phone number. State how long you and the reference have known each other, as well as any company information for professional references.
- Spell every word correctly, apply correct punctuation, and use proper grammar.
- Fill in every question. If the question does not apply, then mark “Not Applicable” or “N/A” in the blank.
- Follow all directions on the application.
- Use only positive wording. Also, use wording on the application that reflects desired requirements of the position, such as Web design training and electronic health records experience. This is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.
- Describe your skills using action verbs and concrete nouns. Consider using “keys at 70 words per minute with no errors” instead of “good keyboarding skills” or “interpersonal verbal and communication skills” instead of “good with people.”
- Refrain from using acronyms. Spell them out completely.
- Sign and date the application.

Continue the same style of wording when preparing all employment documents—applications, cover letters, résumés, and follow-up letters.

The purpose of a **cover/application letter** is to personalize the application process by introducing the applicant to the employer and to gain an interview. It can be referred to as either a *cover letter* or an *application letter*. The letter places a name and snapshot of relevant information in front of the reader and should entice the prospective employer to schedule an interview. An application may or may not accompany the cover letter.

Prior to writing a cover/application letter, do research to gather data about the company and the position(s). Learn specific job requirements, and try to locate the name of the person to whom you will address your letter. The more you know about a company, the better prepared you will be to write a cover/application letter and to link your skills or traits to specific position requirements. Information can be obtained through the Internet, local business chambers of commerce, libraries, and newspapers, as well as the human resources departments of organizations. If it is a small company and the position has been advertised, information can be obtained through an office manager. However, if the position has not yet been advertised, obtain information and submit an application on the first day that applications are being accepted.

Although there are variations of cover/application letters, correct format, grammar, spelling, and punctuation are essential. The format style should be consistent in the cover/application letter, résumé, and follow-up letter. Left-justified letters and résumés are standard. However, a modified-block-style letter may also be used with a modified-block-style résumé and follow-up letter. When preparing the three employment documents, print them on the same color of high-quality paper. Bright colors (pink, purple, orange) should not be used. Neutral pastel colors, such as beige, wheat, or gray, are easier to read.

The parts of a cover/application letter are the letterhead or return address, inside address, salutation, typical three-paragraph body, and closing.

- *Letterhead or return address:* Many cover/application letters contain personally created letterheads with the applicant's name, address, phone number, and e-mail address. The format should be professional and not distract from the body of the letter. E-mail addresses should always be professional and not offensive. For example, the e-mail address hotmom@hotmail.com or ivoryqueen@gmail.com should not be used as professional contact information. If sending a cover/application letter by e-mail, include the return address contact information at the end of the e-mail after the name.
- *Date:* If the date that you composed the letter is different from the date that you are sending it, use the date you send the letter.
- *Inside address:* This is the name and address of the organization to which you are applying. Through prior research, you should know the name of the person to whom you will address the cover/application letter.
- *Salutation:* Correctly spell the name of the individual and use *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Ms.*, *Dr.*, and so on with the name. Since this is a professional business letter, a colon (:) should follow the salutation. It is not professionally appropriate to use "To Whom It May Concern:" or "Dear Human Resources:." This sets a negative tone—one of not caring enough to find out the receiver's name. Sometimes, after extensively researching but not finding a name, the writer may use "Dear Members of the Search Committee:" or address the letter to the manager of a specific department, such as "Dear Coding Department Manager:."
- *Three-paragraph body:* Extensive work experience or education may necessitate a four-paragraph format, although it is usually possible to use concise wording and maintain a three-paragraph format. Prepare the body of the letter in the "you" approach, and refrain from the "I" approach. In other words, state how the organization will benefit from your skills and traits.

- Paragraph 1 is the most important position of the letter. The opening sentence should be professional yet grab the reader’s attention. State the position for which you are applying and how, where, and when you learned of the position; also, refer to the position title and how your qualifications match those of the position. Also state if someone has referred you for the position.
    - Ineffective example: “I heard about your administrative medical assistant position and would like to apply for the job.” This example is missing how, where, and when the applicant learned of the position and is written in the “I” approach.
    - Instead use: “Your advertisement in the October 23, 2028, *Washington Central Post* seeks an administrative medical assistant, and the 11 years that I have worked in a progressive medical environment will be an asset to your established office. Please consider this letter as application for your administrative medical assistant position.”
  - Use paragraph 2 to sell your skills and qualities to the employer. Three main topics are addressed: work experience/traits/skills, education, and résumé. Each of the topics should be related to the job requirements, placing first the category that most closely relates to the position. Use concrete nouns and action verbs to create a specific verbal portrait.
    - Ineffective example: “I am creative and able to multitask.” The example uses the “I” approach.
    - Instead use: “During a rapid patient-growth period, I redesigned limited office space to maximize office workflow. This was accomplished while also implementing a new electronic health records system.”
    - Avoid repeating information that will be contained in the résumé.
- Compare the following two second-paragraph examples for their overall effectiveness.

**EXAMPLE ONE (INEFFECTIVE)**

“I have had 11 years of medical office experience, where I was able to work with people, function as a team member, and learn new duties. I received an associate degree in office systems with an emphasis in medical coding and billing. My résumé is enclosed.”

**EXAMPLE TWO (EFFECTIVE)**

“Serving as a liaison between patients and insurance carriers enabled me to enhance my analytical and problem-solving skills. The result was an overall yearly increase in collectible accounts of 43 percent. During a 5-year period, my democratic leadership style led the office team in developing requirements for and implementing an electronic health records system. Computer technology, medical office, and coding skills acquired through my associate degree training have been and will continue to be an asset in technological environments, such as Anywhere Medical Center. You may further review my relevant work experience and education on the enclosed résumé.”

- Paragraph 3 is the “action” paragraph. The primary focus of paragraph 3 is a polite request for an interview. Provide contact times and phone numbers through which the employer may contact you. If the greeting on your contact phone is not professional, change it to a more appropriate greeting. A statement of appreciative anticipation of the next step or of further discussion about the position can be

1234 Any Street  
Somewhere, USA 12345-5555  
October 23, 2024

Dr. Mike Doe  
5555 St. Christopher's Street  
Somewhere, USA 12345-5555

Dear Dr. Doe:

During our October monthly medical coders' meeting, Nancy Smith referred me to your office vacancy for a medical insurance specialist. After discussing the position requirements with Nancy, I am confident that the skills and experience I possess would match those required in the position, and I am, therefore, applying for the position of medical insurance specialist.

Your position requires a certified coder. Since graduating from Anywhere Community and Technical College with an associate degree in health information technology, I have attained two national credentials (Certified Professional Coder [CPC] and Chart Auditing) and have worked with local physicians to implement policies and procedures that proactively detect auditing errors. This has resulted in an 80 percent reduction in rejected claims and a 75 percent increase in revenue. During the same 10-year period, I worked with the medical office team to develop patient satisfaction surveys, analyze results, and incorporate changes into the office environment. The enclosed résumé lists further work and educational achievement.

During an interview we can further discuss how to put these and other qualifications to work for your orthopedic practice. Please contact me at 555-555-5555 or at [nennabayes@anyspace.com](mailto:nennabayes@anyspace.com) Monday through Saturday prior to 9 P.M. to arrange a time for an interview.

Sincerely,

*Nenna Bayes*  
Nenna Bayes

Enclosure

Figure 10.2

Cover/Application Letter

added to the third paragraph. Following is an example of a correctly worded third paragraph.

- “Putting my skills to work in a highly reputable medical office such as yours is an opportunity that I have been seeking. May I discuss my qualifications with you further during an interview? Please use the phone number in the letterhead to contact me Monday through Saturday prior to 10 P.M. to schedule a time for us to meet.”
- *Closing:* Many acceptable closings may be used in a cover/application letter, including “Yours sincerely,” “Sincerely,” and “Respectfully.” Follow the closing with a comma and leave room for the signature. How much room is left depends on the software being used. No less than three spaces should be left. If the letter is being submitted electronically, attach the electronic signature to the letter. Be sure to include the “Enclosure” notation under the name for the enclosed résumé.

The following is an example of a proper closing.

Sincerely,  
Nenna Bayes  
Enclosure

Figure 10.2 provides an example of a cover/application letter of an applicant who is applying for the position of medical insurance specialist in an orthopedic surgeon's office.

Investing time and energy into preparing a professional résumé pertinent to your career goal(s) is time and energy well spent. The primary goal of a résumé is not to obtain a position but to gain an interview with the employer and to convey what you can do for the employer. Employers may have numerous résumés to review and only a few seconds to spend on each one. Résumés should be brief, easy to read and/or scan for relevant information, and well written. Just one typographical or grammatical error could land the résumé in “File 13”—the trash can. Investing time to learn about the company and the available position and developing a résumé are the first steps to passing through the initial sorting process.

Various formats, which will be discussed later in this section, are used to present résumé data. Whichever format is chosen, there are basic dos and don'ts for résumé preparation.

### Do

- Use **power words**, action verbs, to showcase skills—“increased accounts receivable revenue by 23 percent in a 6-month period.” Power words are verbs that emphasize actions within a job position and should follow bullets (use professional bullets, not cute bullets) within the résumé—for example:
  - Billed and collected \$15,000 from previously uncollectible accounts receivable
  - Developed history and physical and other patient documentation forms for newly implemented electronic health records system
- Use correct tense. For activities that are still being performed, use present tense. For completed activities, use past tense.
- List military service, collegiate sports, leadership roles, and volunteer work. Military candidates are often viewed as responsible and reliable, with very good work ethics. Involvement in collegiate sports demonstrates teamwork and willingness to follow instructions. The ability to assume responsibility is evident through leadership positions and volunteer projects.
- Supply complete employment information, including company names, company locations (addresses, including phone numbers), and dates employed.
- Maintain a consistent, uncluttered format.
- Use left justification, not right justification.
- Use high-quality résumé paper. If you prepare a cover/application letter, use the same high-quality résumé paper for both the letter and the résumé.
- Prepare different résumés tailored to various career opportunities; rearrange bulleted items to fit the available position's requirements and skills. Have a traditional résumé even if you also have a scannable/electronic résumé.
- Include professional recognitions and awards; educational honors and a grade point average of 3.0 or higher may be listed.
- Limit the use of bold and other functional fonts to highlight data and a font size no larger than 13.
- Confine résumé data, if possible, to one page—use no more than two pages. Administrative positions, such as office manager, may require more pages.
- Ask a qualified individual to proofread the résumé for format, grammar, and content.
- Review social network sites for any comments, postings, photographs, statuses, and so on that may reflect badly on your image. What may have seemed funny at the time may suggest a lack of good judgment or immaturity to a prospective employer.

### Don't

- Don't handwrite a résumé!
- Don't use complete sentences or add unnecessary wording. This is referred to as “fluff.”

- Don't go back too far for work experience. The rule of thumb is approximately 10 years unless the last position is the only position listed.
- Don't lie about or overstate résumé data. This can lead to dismissal.
- Don't provide personal information such as age (including birth year), marital status, race, religion, physical data (weight/height, etc.), family, sexual orientation, or Social Security Number (unless necessary to perform mandatory background check).
- Don't break up words with hyphens. Press Enter and move the complete word to the next line.
- Don't use first-person pronouns.
- Don't use a work e-mail or professionally distasteful e-mail address, such as `singlegal@yahoo.com` or `loserboy@hotmail.com`.
- Don't list numerous classes on the résumé—have a transcript available, if applicable.
- Don't list references but prepare a list in case an employer requests one.
- Don't list salary data on the résumé.
- Don't supply reasons for leaving previous positions, but be prepared to discuss these issues. Also, be prepared to discuss gaps in employment history.

## Résumé Formats

After investing time in researching the company and available career opportunities, the next step is to match your employment, education, and other relevant history to the position requirements. Compile the information, and decide which résumé format is best suited to display the information. Basically, there are two categories—chronological and functional. A third format option is a scannable/electronic résumé, which is prepared in either chronological or functional format (or a combination of both) and formatted for optical character reading (OCR). The most widely used file format for submitting résumés over the Internet is the plain-text format.

**Chronological Format.** The traditional and most common résumé style is the **chronological résumé**. One advantage of this style is that employers can quickly view educational and employment-related information. However, gaps in these areas are also evident. Another advantage of this format is that it is relatively easy to compose. The following sections are included in a chronological format: a heading, a career objective, a summary of qualifications (a recent addition to résumé formats), education, work history, and optional components.

- *Heading:* This section contains identifying and contact information. State your name, address, phone numbers, and e-mail address. List your complete name, including your middle initial. Use a slightly larger font for the name. An address should include the street address, P.O. box number, city, state, and ZIP Code. List the phone number(s) to be used when more information is needed or to arrange for an interview. Include area codes with the phone numbers. As stated previously, e-mail addresses should be professional and not distasteful. Do not include a work e-mail on the résumé.
- *Career objective:* Opinions are divided as to whether a career objective should be included. If you choose to include a career objective, it should be specific to the position and written from the employer's perspective. A concisely written objective should be limited to no more than three lines. Consider the following examples.
  - Instead of "To obtain an administrative medical assistant position in a progressive medical office where I can use my training and skills"
  - Consider "Seeking an administrative medical assistant position where my training in medical front office and clinical skills can contribute to the efficient team dynamics of patient care"
- *Résumé profile:* As with the career objective, this is also an optional section. However, the inclusion of a well-written profile can entice the employer to read further.

Evaluate your experience (work, education, awards, accomplishments, technical and soft skills, etc.), and write a summary that targets the position's qualifications. A rule of thumb is to limit the number of bulleted items to five or six. **Key words**, words used throughout the résumé that directly relate to the position's requirements, should be used in this section. If a position requirement is "use of EHR clinic<sup>®</sup> software," consider using "Trained using EHR clinic<sup>®</sup> software" instead of "Medical office software training." Key words are especially important when résumés will be scanned. A résumé profile is also referred to as a *career summary*, *summary of qualifications*, *résumé summary*, or *profile statement*.

- **Education:** List your education in reverse chronological order (the most current first)—for many, this is collegiate information. List the school name and complete address as well as your major and minor. Grade point averages (GPAs) may be listed if they are at least 3.0 or higher. Academic awards and recognitions may be listed in this section or in a separate, later section. Only list classes that directly relate to the position, and the list should be concise. A transcript of classes should be made available for review. If college information is listed, it is not necessary to include high school information. If no college information is listed, supply the same data for high school education. If you obtained a GED, list the date on the GED.
- **Work history:** List employment in reverse chronological order. If work experience is most relevant to the available position, place it before the education section. List work experience and/or transfer skills, such as electronic health records experience, that demonstrate qualification for the position. For each position, list (1) employer's name and complete address; (2) dates of employment; (3) your most significant job title; and (4) significant duties, accomplishments, and promotions. An employment application may require complete work history, but a résumé can be selective. If selective employment is listed, be prepared to explain the gaps in employment. A statement such as "Other employment experience is available upon request" may be added to the bottom portion of this section. If this statement is added, have the additional listing prepared using the same format and style as the résumé. Use power words and action verbs to describe job responsibilities. Do not list every responsibility, only those that relate to the position you are seeking. Avoid using personal pronouns and complete sentences.
- **Optional components:** Special skills and capabilities, community service, professional affiliations and/or activities, military service, awards/honors/achievements, and references are examples of optional sections within a chronological résumé. Employers seek individuals who not only are qualified for the position but also demonstrate a sense of community interest and self-enhancement. Many employers require community service as part of employment. Volunteering for community service demonstrates caring for other individuals and community needs and/or goals. Opportunities for community service are varied—a few examples include community cleanup, food drives, and national organization functions, such as walking to raise money for Alzheimer's disease. Opinions are divided on whether or not to include the notation "References available upon request." Whether you place such a notation on the résumé or not, a reference page should be prepared and available for the employer—keep a hardcopy of the reference listing with you and available for a prospective employer. Prior to placing anyone on a reference list, always ask that person's permission, and be sure the individual will give a positive recommendation. List three to five references on a separate sheet prepared in the same format and on the same high-quality paper as the résumé. Most, if not all, of the references should be **professional references**, individuals who know your work skills. If necessary, a **personal reference**, someone who knows your ethics, honesty, and trustworthiness, may be used. For each reference, include
  - the reference's name, with a courtesy title, such as Mr., Mrs., or Ms. (many names can be either male or female).

- the reference’s position title, if applicable.
- the name and complete address of the company.
- the reference’s phone number(s) with area code(s).
- the reference’s e-mail address, if given to you by the reference.

Figure 10.3 provides a sample of a chronological résumé, and Figure 10.4 shows a reference list.

**NENNA L. BAYES**

1234 Any Street  
Somewhere, USA 12345-5555

Cell Phone: 555-555-5555  
E-mail: nennabayes@anyspace.com

**OBJECTIVE**  
A position in a medical facility in which medical billing and coding experience can be used to sustain and increase revenue from accounts receivable and increase positive patient satisfaction

**RÉSUMÉ PROFILE**

- Nationally certified professional coder (CPC)
- Nationally certified chart auditor (CCA)
- Developed, implemented, and analyzed patient satisfaction policies and procedures
- Implemented revenue-collection strategies that increased revenue by 23 percent in a 6-month period

**EDUCATION**

2021–Present, Pursuing Bachelor of Science in Health Information Technology, Anywhere University, Somewhere, USA 12345-5555

- Anticipated graduation date of 2024
- Presidential Scholarship for Academic Achievement
- 112 of 128 hours completed

2019–2021, Associate of Applied Science degree awarded May 2019, Anywhere Community and Technology College, Somewhere, USA 12345-5555

- National Collegiate Honor Society
- GPA 3.98 on a 4.0 scale

Technical skills include the following:

- Microsoft Office Suite Certification (Word, Excel, Access, Outlook, and PowerPoint)
- Proficient in medical office practice management and electronic health records software (EHR clinic®)
- Input technology—keyboarding skills of 85 corrected words per minute, voice-recognition software, and various scanning devices
- Records and database management

**EXPERIENCE**  
May 2019–Present

- Medical Insurance Specialist and Administrative Coordinator for Physicians Center of Somewhere, 8888 Center Street, Somewhere, USA 12345-8888
  - Created and implemented revenue-intensive procedures that reduced uncollectible debt by 23 percent
  - Conducted certified continuing education workshops for physicians and staff
  - Streamlined staff workload to increase staff and patient satisfaction
  - Updated all coding reference and course materials quarterly and annually

**COMMUNITY SERVICE**

- Chairperson for SkillsUSA
- Organized Zumba Community Fitness Fair
- Conducted update training for Somewhere area medical coders
- Volunteer for Humane Society

**PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION**

- American Academy of Professional Coders
- American Federation of Office Administrators

**Figure 10.3**

Chronological Résumé

Figure 10.4

Reference Page

**NENNA L. BAYES**

1234 Any Street  
Somewhere, USA 12345-5555

Cell Phone: 555-555-5555  
E-mail: nennabayes@anyspace.com

**PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES**

- Mr. Mark Someone, Office Manager  
Physicians Center of Somewhere  
8888 Center Street  
Somewhere, USA 12345-5555  
555-555-5555  
e-mail—marksomeone@pcos.com
- Ms. Susie Sunshine, Medical Assistant  
Physicians Center of Somewhere  
8888 Center Street  
Somewhere, USA 12345-5555  
555-555-5555  
e-mail—susiesunshine@pcos.com
- Mr. Allan Anyone, Regional President  
AAPC Organization  
9999 Local Avenue  
My Town, USA 55555-4444  
444-444-4444  
e-mail—anyone@aapcky.org
- Mrs. Annie Okley, Vice Chair  
Medical Assistants Foundation  
7777 National Boulevard  
Professionals, USA 44444-3333  
333-333-3333  
e-mail—aokley@maf.edu

**Functional Format.** **Functional résumés** organize skills and accomplishments into data groups that directly support the position goal, such as management, patient care, or software implementation. Being able to group skills together is one advantage of a functional résumé; however, it takes a little more thought and time to compose this style of résumé. It can best serve individuals who are changing fields and/or have gaps in their employment history. The typical organization of a functional résumé includes the following sections:

- Heading
- Summary of qualifications/skills (optional)
- Skills heading (use bulleted skills)
- Work experience with contact information; since skills will be listed in the previous section, only list the company name, dates of employment, and title
- Education—if education is most relevant to the position, list it prior to the work experience or skills section
- Optional sections

Figure 10.5 shows an example of a functional résumé. The same information was used to prepare both the chronological résumé (Figure 10.3) and the functional résumé samples. Notice the different placement of the information, such as the education section, in each résumé.

## NENNA L. BAYES

1234 Any Street  
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E-mail: nennabayes@anyspace.com

Figure 10.5

Functional Résumé

### OBJECTIVE

A position in a medical facility in which medical billing and coding experience can be used to sustain and increase revenue from accounts receivable and increase positive patient satisfaction

### RÉSUMÉ PROFILE

- Nationally certified professional coder (CPC)
- Nationally certified chart auditor (CCA)
- Developed, implemented, and analyzed patient satisfaction policies and procedures
- Implemented revenue-collection strategies that increased revenue by 23 percent in a 6-month period

### ACHIEVEMENTS

- Billing and Coding Skills
  - Created and implemented revenue-intensive procedures that reduced uncollectible debt by 23 percent
  - Conducted certified continuing education workshops for physicians and staff
  - Streamlined staff workload to increase staff and patient satisfaction
  - Updated all coding reference and course materials quarterly and annually
- Administrative Skills
  - Supervised nine employees within the medical billing and coding department
  - Resolved patient complaints by taking direct, proactive action and conducted follow-up to resolution
  - Established work team and developed patient satisfaction survey—used results to implement patient satisfaction policies and procedures
  - Reorganized workflow within department, resulting in 45 percent, measurable increased productivity
- Technical Skills
  - Microsoft Office Suite Certification (Word, Excel, Access, Outlook, and PowerPoint)
  - Proficient in medical office practice management and electronic health records software (EHR clinic®)
  - Input technology—keyboarding skills of 85 corrected words per minute, voice-recognition software, and various scanning devices
  - Records and database management

### EXPERIENCE

May 2019–Present

- Medical Insurance Specialist and Administrative Coordinator for Physicians Center of Somewhere, 8888 Center Street, Somewhere, USA 12345-8888

### EDUCATION

2021–Present, Pursuing Bachelor of Science in Health Information Technology, Anywhere University, Somewhere, USA 12345-5555

- Anticipated graduation date of 2024
- Presidential Scholarship for Academic Achievement
- 112 of 128 hours completed

2019–2021, Associate of Applied Science degree awarded May 2019, Anywhere Community and Technology College, Somewhere, USA 12345-5555

- National Collegiate Honor Society
- GPA 3.98 on a 4.0 scale

*continued*

Figure 10.5

*continued*

**NENNA L. BAYES**

page 2 of 2

**COMMUNITY SERVICE**

- Chairperson for SkillsUSA
- Organized Zumba Community Fitness Fair
- Conducted update training for Somewhere area medical coders
- Volunteer for Humane Society

**PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION**

- American Academy of Professional Coders
- American Federation of Office Administrators

There may be a situation in which the best style to use is a combination of chronological and functional formats. If you choose to combine formats, be sure to use the proper format for each section but format the entire résumé in a consistent style, such as underlining all side headings.

**Scannable and Plain-Text Résumés.** In today's technological workplace, résumés frequently are scanned into a database and referenced for interviews. An applicant should be prepared to submit two, differently formatted résumés: (1) a traditionally formatted chronological, functional, or combined chronological/functional résumé; and (2) a scannable résumé. When preparing a **scannable résumé** for electronic (OCR) scanning, all of the formatting elements should be removed. Use only white paper and do not fold or attach anything to it. A folded résumé can lead to misreads by the OCR. Use black ink and a high-quality laser or ink-jet printer. Following are more tips for preparing a scannable résumé:

- Use an OCR-friendly font such as Times New Roman, Courier, Helvetica, or Arial.
- Use 10- to 14-point type font.
- Avoid using italics, underlining, shading, and other unusual elements. Some OCRs can read solid bullets, asterisks, and bold, but use them sparingly. It is best to remember that, when the OCR's capabilities are unknown, omit the "extras." "When in doubt, leave them out!"
- Place phone numbers on separate lines—the OCR may read numbers on the same line as one number.
- Use plenty of white space.
- Refrain from using columns.
- Limit the résumé to one page, if possible.
- Use key words listed in the job description. Electronic resumes are typically reviewed by a scanning program that looks for key words listed in the job description.

A **plain-text résumé**, a résumé with simplified formatting and electronically saved as a .txt file, can be e-mailed or cut and pasted into an online résumé drop box. A résumé prepared using guidelines for scannable formatting but not saved as a plain-text file may transmit misinformation. When preparing a résumé to be sent as a plain-text file, use the same simplified formatting features used to prepare a scannable résumé and save the file as a plain-text file (save the résumé using a .txt file). Plain text is the most widely used file format for submitting résumés via the Internet. When submitting through an e-mail, be sure the subject specifically states the purpose of the message. Use all the previously mentioned tips for a scannable résumé, but also

- use shorter lines.
- format all text to the left.

- remove all tabs. If indentations are desired, use the space bar.
- save the résumé as “Plain Text” or “Text Only.”
- correct any errors (after saving in previous step) and resave the résumé.

Figure 10.6 shows an example of the previous résumé saved in plain-text format.

**NENNA L. BAYES**

1234 Any Street  
Somewhere, USA 12345-5555  
Cell Phone: 555-555-5555  
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**OBJECTIVE**  
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- Anticipated graduation date of 2024
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May 2019-Present

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  - Conducted certified continuing education workshops for physicians and staff
  - Streamlined staff workload to increase staff and patient satisfaction
  - Updated all coding reference and course materials quarterly and annually

Figure 10.6

Plain-Text Résumé

Figure 10.6

*continued*

**NENNA L. BAYES**

page 2 of 2

**COMMUNITY SERVICE**

- Chairperson for SkillsUSA
- Organized Zumba Community Fitness Fair
- Conducted update training for Somewhere area medical coders
- Volunteer for Humane Society

**PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION**

- American Academy of Professional Coders
- American Federation of Office Administrators

**Employment E-Portfolios.** In today’s electronic age, employers expect their employees to be trained in the use of technology. Websites and links are provided for applicants to upload employment credentials directly or indirectly to the employer. Scanners are used to search for key words within applications and résumés, such as the name of software programs or applicants’ certification(s). Another source of technology usage in the employment process is e-portfolios. An employment **e-portfolio** is an electronic collection of data that showcases the applicant’s accomplishments, skills, and qualifications. Essentially, it is an expansion of a résumé.

Instead of producing paper or hardcopy employment documents, each document is placed in an electronic file. Similar to applications, the contents of an e-portfolio are varied but have basic elements that should be included.

The difference between a regular paper/hardcopy résumé and an e-portfolio is the expansion of the résumé elements. For example, a paper résumé has a Community Service section that gives short examples of volunteer service, such as “Volunteer for Humane Society.” In an e-portfolio, an applicant has the opportunity to expand on the type of service provided by the applicant and to include a letter of recommendation from a supervisor at the Humane Society. Pictures depicting the applicant working with animals could also be included. Following is a list of basic components that may be included in an e-portfolio:

- A copy of the résumé
- Letters of recommendation
- Listing of references
- Projects and/or presentations prepared by the applicant
- Expansion of résumé components. Examples could include scanned copies of educational transcripts, industry-related certifications, thank-you letters relating to community service, awards, and military service documents. Also include an expanded list of accomplishments, skills, and qualifications.
- Examples of work. For new graduates, include examples of classwork. Examples can include software-related work, class-related certificates (e.g., medical terminology certificate), written work, composed documents such as brochures and newsletters, screenshots of EHR software usage, and other applicant-produced class work examples. For an applicant who is changing from one position to another, the same examples would be appropriate; however, all examples should be void of any identifying information. All patient data should be removed.

This list is not inclusive of all possible e-portfolio components. Résumés and e-portfolios should be tailored to fit the employment opportunity. For quick and easy reference, include labels for each electronic file. E-portfolio files should follow the layout of the résumé (which should be the first item in the e-portfolio). Examples of file labels are résumé PROFILE and CODING CERTIFICATIONS.

## HIPAA TIPS

As part of the on-site clinical experience process, medical offices may require students to sign a HIPAA agreement stating that no personal patient information will be shared with anyone outside the office. Every staff member or volunteer is responsible for adhering to HIPAA privacy and security regulations to ensure that protected health information (PHI) is secure and confidential. Violation of HIPAA law can result in both civil and criminal penalties.

**What is the difference between a civil and a criminal penalty?**

Store an e-portfolio on an external device that can be transported and left at the end of the interview. Although the interviewer may not keep the external device, it is a good idea to be prepared to leave it with the interviewer. Additionally, an applicant can also take a hardcopy of the e-portfolio to leave with the interviewer(s).

 connect

**GO TO PROJECTS 10.4 AND 10.5  
AT THE END OF THIS CHAPTER**

## 10.5 THE INTERVIEW

An interview may be one of the most stressful steps of the employment process if the applicant has not prepared. Even with preparation, will the applicant be nervous? Yes! Will the interviewer know the applicant is nervous? Yes! However, there is a way to make the interview less stressful and as successful as possible, and that is to do the “3 Ps”—prepare, prepare, and prepare.

### Do the Research

It is more efficient to match skills to job requirements if the job seeker knows something about the company or office. Doing research will enable the applicant to learn more about the company’s philosophy, profitability, stability, community service, and reputation. Also, knowing information about the organization will enable the applicant to formulate answers to anticipated interview questions and to ask questions during the interview. Several sources of company information are available.

**Network Individuals.** Person-to-person information is a valuable resource. Former and current employees of a company are important sources of firsthand information. However, listen carefully to distinguish between facts about the company and individuals’ feelings. College placement offices and former students who are employed in your field of interest can also supply up-to-date information. As mentioned earlier, local chapters of professional organizations can provide information about local employers.

**The Internet.** Searching the Internet can yield a wealth of information. If the company has social media sites, blogs, and/or message boards, read through the postings, and remember to look for facts. If negative statements are posted, gather information from other sources, such as newspaper articles, to determine if the postings are valid. If you decide to post, only post professional questions about company facts—steer clear of any negative postings.

**Figure 10.7**

The Interview  
Latin Stock/Image Source/  
Alamy Stock Photo



**Company Printed Resources.** Most larger companies make available published literature, such as mission statements/philosophies and community involvement activities. These may also be published on their websites. Financial statements, organizational structures, and position descriptions also provide company details.

### Preparing for the Interview

Remember the “3 Ps”—prepare, prepare, and prepare. After researching the company, it is time to start preparing physically and mentally for the interview. Before the day of the interview, call the company for directions and make a trial run. As you travel to the interview site, note how long it takes to arrive. On the way, observe any detour or construction signs, school buses, or other factors that require more travel time. Look for parking areas, observing the availability of spaces and cost. Plan to arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled interview time and add those 10 minutes into the travel time. Also, if taking a bus or subway, add wait time. When traveling the route, look for alternative ways to the company—plan for the unexpected!

**Gather Materials.** If necessary, purchase a folder to use for interview materials. In it, place *copies* (not originals) of your résumé, your reference listing, recommendation letters, a list of additional work experience, your transcript, and examples of your work. De-identify any medical examples (Figure 10.7). These items may also be placed into a portfolio binder. If everything is equal between two competing applicants, the applicant who has expended the time and effort to assemble information into a portfolio may have the advantage. Take a pen or pencil and a notepad to the interview. The interviewer may ask for additional documents or information, which you should note. In today’s technological age, it is also acceptable to take notes on a small, handheld device, such as a smart device. Ask permission of the interviewer to take notes. Place the device in Silent mode. An applicant who is prepared to take notes appears organized. If using a cell phone to take notes, be sure to turn the ringer off.

**Dress Appropriately.** Clean and pressed—this should be the interviewee’s overall physical presentation (Figure 10.8). The person’s attire should reflect what he or she would



**Figure 10.8**

Dressing for the Interview  
Fredrick Kippe/Alamy Stock  
Photo

wear if employed in the position. However, there are some exceptions. When interviewing for a position that requires a uniform (such as scrubs), professional office dress, not the uniform (scrubs), is appropriate. If you are unsure about how to dress, it is best to be conservative. In other words, when in doubt, don't! Here are some basic guidelines for female and male interview attire.

### Female Attire

- Business dress should have a modest length and neckline. Select a color that is not too flashy. Red and pink are examples of less favorable colors for an interview. Business pants or a skirt and blouse/top are also appropriate.
- Stockings (hose) should be worn with a dress or skirt. Wear closed-toed shoes with a modest heel—no sandals. Be sure shoes are clean and free of scuff marks.
- Nails should be clean, trimmed, and a modest length. If wearing nail polish, use clear or neutral colors.
- Rings and other jewelry should be limited. Many companies have a policy concerning the type and amount of jewelry to be worn. Check prior to the interview and follow any company policy. If one does not exist, follow these suggestions: no more than one ring per hand—engagement and wedding band are considered one ring; one bracelet (which does not make noise); a watch, if desired; no more than two modest earrings in each earlobe; and a conservative necklace. Tattoos should be covered for the interview—the applicant should investigate the company's policy on body art. Also, nose rings, tongue rings, or other body piercings (excluding earrings) should be removed for the interview; again, the company policy on body piercings should be known prior to the interview. What is trendy in one social circle may not be considered professional dress.
- Perfume and/or scented lotions should be a very light scent or not worn at all to the interview. The interviewer may be allergic to the scent.
- Undergarments should be worn but should never be visible through clothing.
- Hair should be clean and conservatively styled. Keep hair away from the face and out of the eyes.

## Male Attire

- Pants (cotton, wool, etc.) should be clean and free of wrinkles and a business-conservative color, such as black or blue. Wear a collared, tucked-in shirt that matches the pants. If wearing a suit, select a professional, button-up shirt and matching tie. Be sure socks are the same color as the pants.
- Shoes should be casual if wearing business casual pants and shirt; however, a more professional shoe, such as a wing tip shoe, should be worn with a business suit. Make sure shoes are clean and free of any scuff marks—no sandals.
- Fingernails, piercings, and tattoos should follow the same guidelines as those previously listed for females.
- Hair should be clean and well styled. Keep hair out of the face and eyes. Trim facial hair according to company policy.

Purchasing appropriate clothing for the interview does not have to be expensive. Many thrift and secondhand consignment shops offer a wide variety of business clothes at a fraction of new-store prices. Determine a budget and stick to it. Be a better consumer by using store advertisements and coupons.

Be aware of your personal hygiene. Take a shower or bath the day of the interview, use deodorant, clean your nails, and wash and style your hair. Oral hygiene is also important—brush your teeth and tongue and use mouthwash. Take breath mints and use them just before the interview. When nervous, some individuals have sweaty palms—take tissues to absorb the moisture. To help you feel alert, get at least 8 hours of productive sleep the night before. It is best not to smoke prior to the interview; smoke smell tends to attach to clothing and hair. Check documents, such as résumés, to be sure they are free of smoke smell.

**Prepare for Interview Questions.** Another way to prepare for an interview is by anticipating the questions the interviewer may ask and developing appropriate responses ahead of time. Employers want to know about the applicant's skills, training, experience, availability, and future plans. Although not every question can be anticipated, the following are some common, general interview questions and statements:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why should we hire you?
- What is your strongest asset?
- Tell me what experience you have that relates to this position.
- Why do you want to work for our company?
- Can you travel?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- What do you see as your greatest weakness, and what have you done or are planning to do to overcome this?
- Do you work better individually or as part of a team?
- Why are you looking for a position?
- What have you learned from past mistakes?
- Professionally, where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- Do you plan to continue your education?
- Do you view yourself as a leader or as a follower?
- Have you ever been fired from a position? (Be honest and tactful when you answer this question. Placing blame on another individual may give the impression that you cannot take responsibility. State the reason for the separation and what you have learned from the experience.)
- What are the two most important accomplishments in your life so far?
- How would another person describe you?

Practice answering these and other interview questions several times before the actual interview. Even though the wording may be different, the intended content will probably be the same. For many interview questions, there is no right or wrong answer. Most questions are subjective, allowing interviewees to display their work ethics and character through their answers.

In an interview, it is illegal to ask questions about certain areas of an applicant's life. Under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and subsequent amendments, it is illegal to discriminate against an employee or job applicant based on several factors: race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, family status, or political views. Basically, an interviewer is prohibited from asking any question(s) of the applicant that could or may lead to bias. If such a question is asked, the interviewee has three options: (1) Let the situation go and answer the question; (2) mention that the question is illegal, and choose either to answer or not to answer the question; or (3) file a complaint. The choice is up to the interviewee.

Sometimes the wording of the question itself, not the intention, makes it illegal. Such questions are legal only if their content directly relates to a position's requirements. Illegal questions can be grouped into the following categories:

- Affiliations
  - *Not Allowed:* “To which organizations do you belong?”
  - *Allowed:* “Do you belong to any professional organizations that you feel are relevant to this position?”
- Age
  - *Not Allowed:* “How old are you?” “Are you a Baby Boomer?” “When did you graduate from high school?”
  - *Allowed:* “Are you over the age of 18?”
- Arrest Record
  - *Not Allowed:* “Have you ever been arrested?”
  - *Allowed:* “Have you ever been convicted of one of the following crimes?” (The crime must be related to the position, such as a drug conviction relating to a position in a medical office.)
- Citizenship
  - *Not Allowed:* “Are you a U.S. citizen?”
  - *Allowed:* “Do you have the proper paperwork to work in the United States?”
- Health and/or Disabilities
  - *Not Allowed:* “Do you have any disabilities?” “Have you been hospitalized for any major illness in the last 3 years?” “Are you under the care of a mental health professional or have you ever been treated for any type of mental illness?”
  - *Allowed:* Upon completion of the interview and after receiving a thorough description of the job's duties, the applicant may be asked if he or she can perform the essential functions of the position. Many employers require a medical examination after the applicant has been hired. There are also stipulations regarding the release of the information obtained from these exams.
- Gender
  - *Not Allowed:* “Do you have any problem with having a male/female supervisor?” “What is your opinion of office romances?”
  - *Allowed:* “Please tell me about any previous supervising experience.”
- Height/Weight
  - *Not Allowed:* “How tall are you?” “How much do you weigh?”

- *Allowed*: “Are you able to lift a 100-pound patient from the examination table back into a wheelchair?” (Questions concerning height and weight are allowed only if they relate to minimum position requirements.)
- Marital and/or Family Status
  - *Not Allowed*: “Are you married?” “Are you single?” “How many children do you have?” “Do you plan to have children or more children?”
  - *Allowed*: “Are you willing to work overtime as needed?” “Can you travel?” (If asked of one candidate, these questions must be asked of each candidate applying for the position.)
- Military
  - *Not Allowed*: “Did you receive an honorable or a dishonorable discharge from your military service?”
  - *Allowed*: “What type of training did you receive while in the service?”
- National Origin or Race
  - *Not Allowed*: “Where are you from?” “Were you born in the United States?” “Your name is unusual—what is the origin of your name?”
  - *Allowed*: “Have you ever worked under a different name?”
- Religion
  - *Not Allowed*: “Where do you go to church?” “Which religious holidays do you celebrate?”
  - *Allowed*: “Are you a member of any organizations that you feel are relevant to and would enhance your performance in this position?”

Keep in mind that this list is not inclusive of all illegal questions and legal wordings, but it is meant to be a guide. Positions such as those in security or medical facilities do require the interviewer(s) to extract the candidate’s position-related knowledge and qualifications in some of these areas, but the questions must be directly related to the position requirements. Credit history and background checks are commonly performed on applicants in certain areas.

## Requests for Private Social Media Data

Social networks are considered a source of public information and are being referenced by employers to access public information posted by applicants. However, some job applicants are being asked to give login information to employers or to log in accounts from the employer’s computer network so that nonpublic information, protected by privacy settings, may be viewed. This practice is called **shoulder surfing**. Shoulder surfing is a direct violation of social media networks’ privacy policies, which state that users are to protect login information and forbid anyone from soliciting the login data or accessing another individual’s account. Maryland is the first state to pass legislation banning employers from asking for social media passwords of job applicants and company employees. Several other states have laws prohibiting employers from accessing social networking accounts. An interviewer may not ask for login information but may, instead, ask the interviewee to log into the social media site or to “friend” certain company individuals, such as the human resource director or a department director. Both of these actions are considered shoulder surfing.

What do you do if you are asked for your social media login information during an interview? Ultimately, the decision of whether to reveal login data is up to the interviewee. Before making the decision to reveal login information, consider how it could be perceived. If an applicant is willing to divulge protected information during an

interview, this same person, if hired, may be willing to divulge protected health information or company information in other situations. Following are examples of how to decline the request for login information, logging into an account, or “friending” a company official.

1. “I take my privacy agreements seriously, and it is against my user agreement to share login information with anyone else. I must respectfully decline your request.”
2. “Privacy is a matter that I take seriously. Should I be employed with ABC Healthcare Systems, I would honor all patient protected health information and all company information just as I am now honoring my own privacy, even if this means losing this great employment opportunity with your organization. If presented with a similar situation, I would not jeopardize patient or company information. Therefore, I would prefer to keep my social media profile private.”

Currently, there are a few exceptions to shoulder surfing requests, one being candidates for law enforcement positions. However, this, too, is being legally challenged.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, an applicant’s social media comments, photos, blogs, and so on may be used to evaluate a potential employee. Items that are protected through an applicant’s privacy settings but are shared by our social media friend may create a possible opportunity for employers to view an applicant’s social media information. It is wise for job applicants to remove potentially offensive postings from their social presence before applying for a position. Following are some tips for maintaining an online presence:

1. Search yourself electronically. Because of cookies, caches, etc., on an individual’s computer, use a different computer to search for yourself.
2. Update, if needed, privacy settings.
3. Search for individuals having the same name. This could create a mix-up of social information.
4. Review photos and comments that are public.

## Conducting the Interview

During the interview is when the applicant presents his or her skills, training, and experience to the employer. The employer will determine the applicant’s suitability for the position through a series of questions and observations. It is basically a question-and-answer session. Most of the work has already been completed—the applicant has gathered information, compiled the necessary documents, practiced questions and answers, and made physical preparations (e.g., dress, rest). The old saying “You never get a second chance to make a first impression” is extremely important during the interview process. The interviewer will be assessing not only the applicant’s verbal communication skills but also his or her nonverbal communication. The interviewer will evaluate the applicant’s confidence, respect, and attentiveness through various ordinary actions, such as a handshake. When you are asked to enter the interview area, wait until a hand is offered before shaking hands. It is a sign of respect to wait for the interviewer to first extend a handshake. Use a firm, but not crushingly firm, handshake. Shake using the whole hand and avoid the “finger” shake (only touching the tips of another individual’s fingers).

Be aware of nervous habits or the perception of nervous habits. Consider the following real-life example. During an interview, an applicant was asked if she was a nervous individual. She responded that normally she was not but that today she was. The

applicant inquired of the interviewer why the question was asked. The interviewer answered that he had noticed the applicant's very short fingernails and had thought them to be a sign of chronic nervousness. The applicant then explained that she played the piano and needed her nails to be short, a sign of practicality that had been misinterpreted as a sign of nervousness.

Address the interviewer using a courtesy title, such as Mr., Ms., or Dr., and allow the interviewer to be seated and to extend an invitation to be seated before sitting down. This is another sign of respect and courtesy. The following are some more guidelines for being successful in an interview:

- Be on time. Arrive approximately 10 minutes early—and alone. Don't take a friend into the interview venue.
- Refrain from chewing gum, eating candy, or drinking a beverage. However, it is acceptable to take a bottle of water into the interview. Remember to take it with you when the interview is over.
- Maintain consistent eye contact with the interviewer.
- Maintain good posture, both when standing and when sitting. Sit up straight and do not lean. Place your feet flat on the floor or crossed at the ankle. Crossing the legs may be interpreted as too relaxed, and for females wearing a skirt or dress, modesty may be jeopardized. Keep your hands still and comfortably folded in your lap or placed at your side.
- Smile! Smile sincerely and frequently during the interview. Fake smiles are noticeable.
- Listen attentively to the interviewer. Active listening will help you formulate questions for the interviewer.
- Use concrete nouns and action verbs when discussing your experience, your training, and other related position information.
- Avoid saying “um” and “like” when answering questions.
- Turn off your cell phone. Even when a cell phone is placed on vibrate or silent mode, the incoming call or message may still be a distraction. As mentioned earlier, if you use the phone to take notes, turn off the ringer and ask permission of the interviewer and let the interviewer know you are taking notes on the phone.
- Ask questions of the interviewer at the point, usually near the end of the interview, when you are asked if you have any questions. Never say no. This conveys disinterest in the position. Instead, ask questions that will help you gain more knowledge of the position and its requirements. Questions concerning job duties, workload, schedule, evaluation strategies, company structure, and immediate supervisor are all applicable. Salary and benefits questions are best left for the next level—the job offer. Sample questions include the following:
  - Will my duties also include taking patient histories?
  - Are periodic meetings conducted for clinical and administrative medical staff?
  - Should I supply my own blood pressure cuff and stethoscope?
  - Does the practice have a mentor assigned to new employees?

An applicant may be presented with different types of interviews. Panel interviews (a group of interviewers) will ask the applicant interview questions. Some panels are set up to ask questions in a predetermined sequence, while other panels are designed for members to randomly ask questions. You should greet each panel member with a smile and direct eye contact. Shake hands with each panel member. Prepare for a panel interview in the same manner as you would prepare for a one-on-one interview: Use good posture, take notes, answer questions fully, be prepared to ask questions of the panel, and so on. Look at each panel member; do not focus on just one or a few members.

Phone interviews are becoming more common in today's global and fast-paced society. Mentally and physically prepare for a phone interview just as you would for a face-to-face meeting. Prior to the phone interview, confirm the interview time—be sure to consider differences in time zones. Locate a quiet place where you can fully concentrate on the interview without interruptions. Assemble all your employment credentials (e.g., résumé, transcript, and samples of work). Be sure to have a pen and paper to take notes and a glass of water to clear your throat. Dress professionally for the phone interview—no jeans or sweatpants.

During a phone interview, follow these tips:

- Disable the call-waiting feature.
- Do not use speakerphone.
- Listen for and eliminate any background noises, such as a fan, prior to the phone interview.
- Smile and use good posture. This will give you a feeling of physically presenting yourself to the interviewer in a positive nonverbal manner. If you prefer, stand.
- Concentrate totally on the phone interview—do not try to multitask.
- Listen attentively to questions, and ask for clarification if you did not understand.
- Speak at a slightly slower pace than normal.
- Refrain from chewing or eating during the phone interview.
- Keep your answers to less than 2 minutes in length. It is easier to continue talking on the phone than in person.
- Apologize if you accidentally interrupt, and allow the interviewer to finish.

Prior to the interview, an applicant should ask if any testing will be conducted either prior to or during the interview. In the medical setting, it is common practice for an applicant to be tested on his or her knowledge of medical terminology. If applying for a medical coding position, medical coding scenarios will be given for the applicant to code. Keyboarding or computer skills evaluations are common employment tests. “What ifs” scenarios, known as situational interview questions, are used to evaluate an applicant's soft-skill level, such as problem-solving and critical thinking. To reduce the stress level and increase the opportunity for successful testing, the applicant should remember the “3 Ps”—prepare, prepare, and prepare.

## Ending the Interview

After all questions have been asked and answered, it is time to conclude the interview. The interviewer normally will nonverbally signal the end by standing or by verbally thanking the applicant. This is a good time, if not answered earlier, to ask what action is next and the anticipated time frame. It is also an opportune time for the applicant to reiterate his or her desire and qualifications for the position. When offered, shake the interviewer's hand and thank the interviewer by name. Also, thank others who were involved, such as an administrative assistant or a receptionist, when leaving the interview.

## 10.6 THE FOLLOW-UP CONTACT LETTER

After leaving an interview, you should immediately make notes of what happened during the interview, the information you gave and received, the names of people you met, and other details. Write a thank-you letter to the interviewer within a time frame of no more than 2 days. A thank-you letter serves two purposes. It (1) expresses gratitude to

**Figure 10.9**

Follow-Up Contact Letter

1234 Any Street  
Somewhere, USA 12345-5555  
October 30, 2024

Dr. Mike Doe  
5555 St. Christopher's Street  
Somewhere, USA 12345-5555

Dear Dr. Doe:

Talking with you on Wednesday, October 30, about the medical insurance specialist position was informative and interesting. Your medical facility is progressive, and interviewing with you confirmed my belief that our professional goals are the same. Thank you for describing details of the position.

Your recent implementation of electronic health records at Advanced Treatment Center utilizes a software program with which I have previously worked and updated. Designing the history and physical interface was both challenging and rewarding and was an experience that your facility can utilize to increase physician/patient productivity and satisfaction. Our discussion on accounts receivable reinforced my interest in becoming an integral part of your medical office team. Since the interview, I have considered different options for conducting internal documentation auditing on a consistent basis and am anxious to discuss the two different plans with you.

It is exciting to be considered for the medical insurance specialist position with Advanced Treatment Center, and I look forward to joining your staff. If you have additional questions or would like to discuss the position further with me, please contact me at 555-555-5555 or at [nennabayes@anyspace.com](mailto:nennabayes@anyspace.com).

Sincerely,

*Nenna Bayes*  
Nenna Bayes

the interviewer and (2) places the applicant's name and qualifications in front of the interviewer one more time.

Prepare the follow-up contact letter using the same format and paper quality as you used for your cover/application letter and résumé. Use very few, if any, first-person pronouns at the beginnings of sentences. Like the cover/application letter, the thank-you follow-up letter should have three paragraphs:

- Paragraph 1 expresses gratitude for the interview opportunity.
- Paragraph 2 emphasizes the applicant's qualifications and any information you may have forgotten during the interview. Refer to specific topics discussed in the interview.
- Paragraph 3 is forward looking in content. Show enthusiasm and eagerness to join the office team.

Figure 10.9 shows a sample follow-up letter.

It is easy to become discouraged during an employment search. Rejection is inherently part of the process; however, view rejection as an opportunity to learn, to improve, and to move forward. Rejection may have nothing to do with your level of skill or education but with timing, and a rejection becomes an opportunity to seek other career possibilities.

<p>10.1 List and explore visible and hidden career/employment resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many rich sources of employment opportunities are available for job seekers. Examples of visible/traditional markets include classified advertisements, professional journals, career job fairs, job boards, the Internet, temporary employment agencies, and employment services.</li> <li>• Less common markets for career opportunities include telephone directories, chambers of commerce, company websites, and social/professional networks.</li> </ul>
<p>10.2 Assimilate information and prepare an employment application</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete and accurate information is needed when completing an employment application:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Personal information</li> <li>— Employment information—including dates of employment and addresses</li> <li>— Educational information</li> <li>— Reference information</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Complete all blanks.</li> <li>• Print legibly using blue or black ink.</li> <li>• Be truthful.</li> <li>• Sign and date the application.</li> </ul>
<p>10.3 Compose a cover/application letter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first impression of a potential employee is frequently made through an application letter.</li> <li>• Use a properly formatted letter containing correct grammar and punctuation. Block-style format is common.</li> <li>• Prepare the letter using a suggested three-paragraph format:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Paragraph 1 informs the reader from whom, where, and when the applicant heard of the position—the company may have more than one position to fill; actually state which position you are applying for.</li> <li>— Paragraph 2 presents your qualifications (experience/education), linked to the available position. Refer to the enclosed résumé. If electronic, refer to the résumé attachment.</li> <li>— In paragraph 3—an action paragraph—request an interview and provide contact data for the reader.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use high-quality paper.</li> <li>• Proofread, proofread, and proofread!</li> <li>• Sign the letter using blue or black ink. If electronic, use an electronic signature.</li> </ul>

<p>10.4 Assimilate data and compose résumés using different format styles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The main purpose of a résumé is to secure an interview.</li> <li>• Data compiled for an application, such as personal information, addresses and dates of employment, and education information, may be used to compose a résumé.</li> <li>• Résumés take the “snapshot picture” provided on the application or within the application letter to the next level by providing more detail.</li> <li>• Formats are chronological and functional. Sometimes a combination of chronological and functional formats is used. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Chronological format supplies data within categories (e.g., education) in reverse chronological order (the most current is placed first).</li> <li>— Functional format supplies data in related skills and experience categories, such as management or administration.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Plain-text format résumés should be prepared for electronic or electronically read submission.</li> <li>• Categories commonly included in résumés are heading, objective, summary of qualifications, work experience, education, and optional categories (such as awards and community service). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— References should be listed on a separate reference page containing three to five professional references. The reference page should be available when requested.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Electronically collect employment credentials, samples of work, and other employment documents, and compile them in an e-portfolio. Label each electronic file, and arrange them in a format that reflects the format of the résumé.</li> </ul>
<p>10.5 Assemble personal and professional information and appropriate dress for the interview process and conduct a mock interview.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather all requested and/or anticipated interview materials, and assemble them for review into a hardcopy or electronic portfolio. In addition to a cover/application letter and résumé, supply examples of professional work and educational documentation (transcript). Be prepared to leave information with the interviewer—take copies, not originals (unless an original transcript or other documentation is requested).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dress should be professional and conservative. Check company policy on dress and accessories, such as rings, earrings and other piercings, and tattoos.</li> <li>• Use good personal hygiene—bathe/shower and use deodorant, brush teeth and use mouthwash, clean hair and nails, and refrain from using strong colognes and/or scented lotions.</li> <li>• Assemble a list of anticipated interview questions and questions to ask the interviewer.</li> <li>• Practice shaking hands, sitting, and standing.</li> </ul>
<p>10.6 Compose a follow-up thank-you letter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within 24 hours—no more than 2 days—after the interview, compose and send a thank-you letter to the interviewer. The letter serves two purposes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Expression of gratitude</li> <li>— Reminder of your qualifications</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use the same format for the follow-up letter as you used for the cover/application letter. If you used block style for the cover/application letter, use block style for the follow-up letter.</li> <li>• Prepare the follow-up letter using the same high-quality paper you used for the cover/application letter and résumé.</li> <li>• Construct the letter using a three-paragraph format: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— In paragraph 1, express gratitude for the interview.</li> <li>— In paragraph 2, remind the reader of your qualifications.</li> <li>— In paragraph 3, express your anticipation of employment with the company.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# Chapter Projects

## **Project 10.1** (LO 10.1) Preparing Interview Questions

Imagine that you have the opportunity to interview a number of administrative medical assistants about their jobs. What information would you like to learn from them? With a partner, brainstorm a list of questions to ask the administrative medical assistants. Divide your list of questions into three categories: tasks, skills, and personal attributes. Be prepared to discuss your questions and/or submit your project findings to your instructor.

## **Project 10.2** (LO 10.1) Locating Positions

Research various sources of available administrative medical assistant positions and select a position. Research and collect data about the position and the company. You will use this information to compose employment credentials. If possible, locate job opportunities in your geographic area by visiting the websites of your state's department of labor and of local newspapers.

## **Project 10.3** (LO 10.3) Preparing a Cover/Application Letter

Using the data you collected in Project 10.2, compose a cover/application letter for the position of administrative medical assistant.

Use block-style formatting for the letter. Prepare it in the three-paragraph format discussed in this chapter.

## **Project 10.4** (LO 10.4) Preparing a Résumé

Prepare a résumé to accompany the cover/application letter you prepared in Project 10.3. Select the style (chronological or functional) that best suits your qualifications. After preparing the résumé, save it and reopen it. Save a copy of the résumé as plain text.

## **Project 10.5** (LO 10.4) Compiling an E-Portfolio

Begin collecting documents for your e-portfolio. The application letter and résumé prepared in Projects 10.3 and 10.4 are a good beginning. Refer to the e-portfolio section within this chapter, and compile electronic data to be used in your e-portfolio. You may need to scan documents into an electronic file. After you have gathered all documents to be included in your e-portfolio, electronically arrange the documents in a format that is the same as the format of your résumé. Label each electronic file to reflect categories on your résumé and the additional documents. Examples of labels are EDUCATION and TRANSCRIPTS. Save the e-portfolio, and be prepared to submit it to your instructor.

## **Project 10.6** (LO 10.6) Composing a Follow-Up Letter

You have just completed an interview for the position in Project 10.3. Prepare a follow-up thank-you letter addressed to your interviewer, using that person's name. If you were not able to obtain an individual's name, address the letter to Dr. Karen Larsen, 2235 South Ridgeway Avenue, Chicago, IL 60623-2240.

### Interpersonal Skills (LO 10.5)

Interpersonal skills are all the behaviors and feelings that exist within all of us that influence our interactions with others. These skills are also referred to as communication skills, people skills, and/or soft skills. We learn them by watching our parents, the television, and our peers. Healthy interpersonal skills reduce stress, reduce conflict, improve communication, increase understanding, and promote joy. Improving these skills builds confidence and enhances our relationships with others. **How can interpersonal skills improve your chances when applying for a job? Can interpersonal skills make or break your interview?**

### Positive Attitude (LO 10.5)

A positive attitude helps you cope more easily with daily life and helps you avoid worry. A positive attitude makes you happier and more successful. With a positive attitude, you see the bright side of life and expect the best. If your attitude is positive enough, it becomes contagious. Choose to be happy. Find reasons to smile more often, and associate with happy people. **Why is surrounding yourself with positive people so important?**

### USING TERMINOLOGY

Match the term or phrase on the left with the correct answer on the right.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| _____ 1. [LO 10.1] Hidden job market        | a. Document that concisely presents an applicant's specific traits that match a career opportunity |
| _____ 2. [LO 10.3] Cover/application letter | b. Career opportunity resources that are less visible  |
| _____ 3. [LO 10.4] Chronological résumé     | c. Words that are directly related to a position   |
| _____ 4. [LO 10.4] Professional reference   | d. Data presented in categories, with the most recent listed first                                 |
| _____ 5. [LO 10.4] Functional résumé        | e. Individual who can attest to an applicant's work ethic  |
| _____ 6. [LO 10.4] Key words                | f. Data organized by categories that directly support a position goal                              |
| _____ 7. [LO 10.5] Shoulder surfing         | g. Employers asking for access to private social media data  |

### CHECKING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Select the most correct answer.

- [LO 10.1] Latisha recently graduated from a medical office program. While attending school, she worked part-time during evenings in the records department at a local hospital. She is now ready to seek full-time employment in her field of study. Where could she go to begin compiling employment possibilities?
  - Friends and social networks
  - Website for the hospital where she works
  - School career center
  - All of these are correct.
- [LO 10.2] When filling out an employment application, periods of unemployment should be
  - left off the application.
  - placed on the application with a short explanation, such as "attending college."
  - placed on the application and left blank.
  - placed on the application and highlighted, so that it can be discussed during the interview.
- [LO 10.2] Which of the following would not be considered an appropriate reference for an application or a résumé?
  - Work colleague of the applicant
  - Applicant's instructor during recent training
  - Applicant's clergy
  - Fellow committee member

4. [LO 10.3] Which of the following is an example of a sentence composed using the “you” approach?
- “Training during the past 2 years in the medical office program at Anywhere Community and Technical College has provided me with skills that can be used to complement your HIT department.”
  - “I have attended school during the past 2 years at Anywhere Community and Technical College.”
  - “My skills and training in the medical office program during the past 2 years can be used by your HIT Department.”
  - “I recently became certified in medical records and would like to use my skills in your HIT department.”
5. [LO 10.3] As Latisha composes a cover/application letter, she is unsure of where to mention her résumé. In which paragraph should she place a reference to her enclosed résumé?
- First
  - Second
  - Third
  - Second and third
6. [LO 10.4] During her search for employment opportunities, Latisha found an open HIT position with a multi-physician clinic. The résumé is to be submitted online. Which format should she use to submit her online résumé?
- Functional, because she likes it better and already has a résumé prepared using this format
  - Chronological with bold side headings
  - Chronological, because her recent educational training and certification directly relate to the position requirements
  - Chronological/plain-text format, because her recent educational training and certification directly relate to the position requirements
7. [LO 10.4] Which of the following statements is composed using the most effective power wording?
- “Implemented revenue collection strategies that increased the collection ratio from 22 percent to 62 percent during a 9-month period.”
  - “Assisted in increasing the collection ratio from 22 percent to 62 percent.”
  - “Increased the collection ratio from 22 percent to 62 percent.”
  - “Worked with the office team to increase the collection ratio rate.”
8. [LO 10.5] During an interview for a medical coding position, which requires AHIMA or AAPC coding certification, which of the following questions may legally be asked of the interviewee?
- “To which organizations do you belong?”
  - “Are you a certified coder through AHIMA or AAPC?”
  - “Do you hold membership in organizations?”
  - “May I see a list of all the organizations to which you belong?”

9. [LO 10.5] Which of the following questions should not be asked by the applicant during the first interview?
  - a. “How many patients does the practice see during a normal working day?”
  - b. “Will I be cross trained with other members of the medical office team?”
  - c. “Do you prefer I wear scrubs or other office dress?”
  - d. “Will I receive a yearly cost-of-living salary increase?”
10. [LO 10.6] Which of the following salutations should be used for a follow-up thank-you letter?
  - a. Dear Human Resource Director:
  - b. To Whom It May Concern:
  - c. Dear Mr. Sanders:
  - d. Dear Allen,

## THINKING IT THROUGH

These questions cover important points in this chapter. Using your critical-thinking skills, play the role of an administrative medical assistant as you answer each question. Be prepared to discuss your responses.

1. [LO 10.5] Donna Smith is an administrative medical assisting student who is currently finishing her education and preparing to seek employment in the healthcare field. Donna does not have transportation, so she has to rely on others for transportation or uses public transportation. As a result of this issue, she has arrived late to several interviews.  
Now, it is your turn to think it through!
  - a. Should Donna discuss her lack of transportation during the interview? Why or why not?
  - b. If Donna has a problem with transportation, should she be seeking employment?
  - c. Due to Donna’s transportation issue, she was repeatedly tardy for her last job. Should this information be shared during the interview process? Why or why not?
2. [LO 10.5] Nathan was granted an interview for an administrative medical assistant position. During the interview, the employer asked Nathan how the medical office’s mission statement (displayed in the waiting area and on the facility’s website) aligned with Nathan’s professional goal(s). Also, Nathan’s résumé, which was referred to during his interview, contained the old name of the medical practice. Nathan was not offered the position. Why do you think Nathan was not offered the position? Why is it important to learn about a potential employer before attending a job interview?
3. [LO 10.5] Addison was nervous during her interview and consistently looked from the floor to a picture located to the right of the interviewer, Ms. Jackson. Ms. Jackson asked Addison if something was bothering her, since she seemed to be distracted. Why is good eye contact important when meeting and speaking with potential employers?
4. [LO 10.2] “Getting a job is a full-time job in itself.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
5. [LO 10.5] Why is being late for an interview one of the most serious mistakes a job applicant can make?