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Career and Job-Hunting Tips for Older, Mature, and Baby-Boom Job-Seekers

Older Worker/Job-Seeker Resume Strategies:

- Many hiring decision-makers, especially recruiters, are adamant about seeing every job listed from your college graduation to the present. They argue that background checks -- or even just seeing you in person at an interview -- will reveal your age anyway, so why hide it? Others recommend going back 15-20 years, with the idea that jobs beyond that point are likely not relevant to your next career move. If you have the opportunity to contact the decision-maker before sending your resume, you can always ask his or her preference. Another option is to include your jobs that are more than 15 years old, but list them in bare-bones fashion (title, employer, location) with or without dates of employment (instead of dates, you could give length of time worked at each older job). You may want to title this section Previous Professional Experience. Even if you opt to leave off the dates, the recipient will at least know that you have provided full disclosure by listing all jobs. A similar strategy is to insert a disclaimer statement to the effect that "additional employment history is available upon request."
- De-emphasize dates. Certainly don't list your birth date. Omit college-graduation dates that are more than 10-15 years old.
- Some experts suggest softening the job titles you list on your resume so you won't seem overqualified. For example, "senior manager" instead of "vice president."
- Be sure to list all courses and professional-development activities that illustrate your willingness to learn and keep your skills updated.
- Definitely list all the computer and other technological skills you possess that are relevant to the type of job you're applying for.
- Emphasize results, accomplishments, and achievements. List accomplishments that set you apart from other job candidates. You will likely have a greater quantity and quality of achievements than will younger workers. In each job, what special things did you do to set yourself apart? How did you do the job better than anyone else or than anyone else could have done? What did you do to make it your own? What special things did you do to impress your boss so that you might be promoted? How did you leave your employers better off than before you worked for them? Accomplishments are the points

that really help sell you to an employer -- much more so than everyday job duties. For more about how to identify your accomplishments, see our article, [For Job-Hunting Success: Track and Leverage Your Accomplishments](#) and our [Accomplishments Worksheet](#).

- If you are just entering the workforce after a career as a homemaker or volunteer or have large gaps of unpaid experience in your history, learn to portray your skills on your resume as transferable and applicable to your next job. See our article, [Strategic Portrayal of Transferable Skills is a Vital Job-Search Technique](#) and our [Transferable Skills Worksheet for Resumes and Cover Letters](#).
- For an overall refresher on resumes, see our [Resume Tutorial](#).

Older Worker/Job-Seeker Cover letter Strategies:

- Avoid cumulative experience statements. Older workers are justifiably proud of their work histories and have a tendency in cover letters to make statements such as this: "My 25+ years in management would enable me to make a significant contribution in the position you're advertising." With that much experience, it's probably best *not* to quantify in your cover letter. Stick to expressions such as "significant experience" or "extensive experience."
- An "autobiography letter" or one that rehashes the job history you've already laid out in your resume is never a good idea, but it's especially harmful for older workers who will only call attention to their age with such a letter.
- Include language in your cover letter about flexibility, adaptability, and willingness to learn.
- Emphasize that you are a proven commodity (in unspoken counterpoint to a younger worker who may be untested).
- For a general tune-up on cover letters, see our [Cover Letter Tutorial](#).

Older Worker/Job-Seeker Job Interview Strategies:

- Realize that you will probably be interviewed by someone younger than you, and don't be unnerved by that situation.

- Overcoming the obstacles that may be inherent within your resume and cover letter is a major victory, but once you've gotten your foot in the door with an interview, you have to do more than younger workers would need to do to show yourself as a value-added employee. "Despite your age, you've got to show that you're still very current in today's workplace, such as with your computer skills," says Deborah Russell, who manages information and resources for older workers at AARP, as quoted in the *Washington Post*. "Tell how flexible, adaptable, creative you can be, that you're a team player and able to work with multiple-age generations."
- Stress your willingness to learn. One of the biggest obstacles to the hiring of older workers is the concern that their skills are outdated and they aren't willing to learn new skills. Writing in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Margo Frey urges older workers to demonstrate their willingness to learn based on their past record and future commitment to keeping skills updated:
 - If you've taken courses and attended workshops, seminars, conferences, and other professional development events throughout your career, be sure the prospective employer knows that.
 - Especially ensure the employer knows your technology aptitude is up to date, particularly as it relates to the job you're interviewing for.
 - Telling the prospective employer that you sought out and paid for learning opportunities on your own can be especially impressive.
 - Convince the employer that you are more than willing to get up to speed on any skills that may be lagging.
- Subtly suggest that your work ethic is unsurpassed (in possible contrast to that of younger workers). Be sure prospective employers know that your references will vouch for your reliability and stable work record.
- Convince employers that your maturity is an advantage because your experience makes you wise in the ways of problem-solving. "Wisdom involves using past experience to help solve a current situation," writes Frey. "Having successfully survived difficult situations, older workers can apply their knowledge and experience to make better judgments than a young person might make. Wisdom also means keeping an open mind to better or more appropriate ways to solve a problem."
- Stress interpersonal skills, especially your delight in working with people of all ages. If you're interviewing for a job with client or customer interaction, the AARP suggests you might want to mention your ability to identify with an aging customer base.
- Be prepared for interview questions that are inappropriate, borderline illegal, or downright unlawful. Surprisingly, it's not illegal for an interviewer to ask how old you are, although it's certainly inappropriate. If you are asked any question that suggests the employer wants to know how old you are