

THE SECRET TO APPLYING FOR JOBS WHEN YOU MAY BE UNDER-QUALIFIED

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You've probably come across job openings that sound interesting, but you notice that you're lacking some of the desired qualifications. Is it okay to apply anyway? In most cases, it's worth taking a chance.

Of course, there are some exceptions, like when you have to be an attorney or know how to play the violin. Otherwise, it's usually a matter of seeing if you can reframe your background to address the employer's needs.

In fact, many employment advertisements are more like wish lists than precise formulas, so there is substantial room for flexibility.

Take a look at three of the most common situations where you may be able to make the case for why you're a candidate worth considering.

When You're Changing Careers

Do you want to switch to a new industry or a different kind of position? Many adults have made a successful transition at various stages in their professional lives. A career change could help you discover a job you'll love.

These strategies will help you make the switch:

- 1. Research the field.** Before making such a big move, do your research carefully. **Clarify your reasons for the switch**, so you can explain them to an employer as well as yourself. Look up data on starting salaries and employment prospects.
- 2. Interview colleagues.** Professionals already working in the field are an important source. Attend networking events where you can make new

contacts. Join groups on LinkedIn and reach out to someone whose profile looks interesting.

3. **Focus on transferable skills.** Review your resume to see how you can apply what you've done to your new area of interest. **Many tasks are similar even when the job title changes.**
4. **Ask for referrals.** Your current network is still an asset. See if there is someone you know who can introduce you to others who may be willing to share advice and job leads.

When You Lack Experience

Maybe you're brand new to the job market or have limited experience. You can still impress employers with your talents and accomplishments.

Try these techniques for highlighting your talents and gaining some experience:

1. **Volunteer your services.** Build up your resume while you advance a worthy cause. Offer your assistance to a charity you already support or call your local volunteer clearinghouse. Propose a project that will give you valuable experience.
2. **Do an internship.** While internships are usually designed for students, there are also programs for adults. **Contact companies where you would like to work and ask about formal or informal opportunities.**
3. **Polish your cover letter.** Customizing your cover letter is even more important when your resume needs support. Develop engaging stories that present your skills and abilities. Ask friends and family for feedback.

When You're Missing Specific Skills

Soft skills can be just as important as your major or computer knowledge. With a few extra steps, you may be able to prove that you can do the job even if you're unfamiliar with a program that could be outdated by next year anyway.

1. **Study the job description.** Review the qualifications to **see which requirements are essential and which are less significant.** While an international company might like each employee to be multilingual, it may not be a significant part of the position you're seeking.
2. **Pick out keywords.** Automatic programs and human resources departments focus heavily on keywords these days. If a particular skill is stressed repeatedly, you may need to look elsewhere.
3. **Continue learning.** On the other hand, you can keep strengthening your qualifications. Take advantage of training on the job or in your free time.

If you've done your homework and concluded that you're an excellent fit for the position, **ask to be considered.** Even if you're missing a few items on the qualifications checklist, you'll feel better knowing that you made an effort. Plus, you may even land your dream job.