

CAREERS IN ONCOLOGY NURSING

What you need to know



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Career Development in Specialty Practice

A career guide in Oncology Nursing

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Intro to Oncology Nursing

Career development occurs throughout one's journey, from education to the workplace. Skills such as developing career goals, using tools to enrich self-promotion, crafting a career plan, and experience are all vital to becoming a specialized clinician.

This career guide supports nurses to develop a career in oncology and hospice palliative care. The guide explains the unique benefits of becoming a specialized oncology nurse; how to prepare for an oncology focused career and the life-long learning pathway towards oncology nursing excellence.

This guide will describe:

- ✓ Methods to incorporate resume and CV writing principles into your professional portfolio
- ✓ Critical appraisal of your career portfolio and developing strategies to improve it
- ✓ Preparing a detailed interview plan and associated steps
- ✓ Developing networking and marketing skills to help maximize opportunities
- ✓ Integrating continuing education and lifelong learning into your career pathway

Finally, we will put the current nursing situation into perspective, and how [de Souza institute](#) is playing a role in the career development of specialized oncology practitioners.

Cancer is the leading cause of death in Canada. The Canadian Cancer Statistics report that two in five Canadians will develop cancer in their lifetime, and one in four will die from it. In 2011, over 242 000 people died from cancer.

The most prevalent cancers are:






- Lung – the leading cause of death
- Breast
- Colorectal
- Prostate

The number of cancer cases is still growing.¹

¹ McGill University Career Planning Service, Guide to Interviewing. Preparing to impress. Available from: http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/sites/mcgill.ca/caps/files/guide_interview.pdf

Current Oncology Nursing Situation

Cancer is clearly one of the most pressing concerns in Canadian health care, and nurses are at the frontline of cancer prevention, treatment, and palliation. Although nurses are a vital part of cancer care, there are currently major issues in oncology nursing:

-  There is a pressing nursing shortage that is having a large impact on the cancer health care system.
-  There are more nurses over the age of 60 than under the age of 30, indicating a larger population of retirees versus new graduates.
-  Increasing incidence and prevalence of cancer leading to increased waiting times and more complex patient needs for nurses to manage.
-  Poor recruitment and retention of cancer care professionals, which could be due to:
 - Stigma around cancer
 - Misconception of a “depressing career”
 - Burn out
 - Lack of support available, including emotional support
 - Lack of training and support for complex care
-  There is a need for an oncology curriculum during schooling in several key areas:
 - Psychosocial
 - Care of patients needing systemic treatment
 - Pain and symptom management
 - Palliative care

Benefits of Becoming a Certified Oncology Nurse – CON(C)

SKILLS

→ You develop all the necessary skills to manage complex care while becoming specialized in oncology.

CONFIDENCE

→ It gives you a specialty area, broadens your knowledge, provides you with strong technical training, and increases your confidence.

TRUST

→ Becoming certified builds trust with your patients as they expect you to be an expert they can rely on.

FINANCES

→ Depending on the institution, being certified or specialized in oncology can bring financial reward.

A career in oncology can be very rewarding. You are involved in the most intimate and vulnerable time of a person's life. Nurses develop ongoing relationships with their patients and families during this difficult time.

Preparing for Oncology Nursing – Resume Writing

Now that you have made some career goals, and thought about what your dream job is, it's time to put your thoughts into action.

When applying for any position, what you will need is a job application. This application usually consists of a cover letter, a resume or CV, and a list of references. This is the first opportunity to form an impression and is the beginning of the application process.

First impressions are very important. Employers will not give a second look to an application that doesn't stand out.

Resume versus CV: What's the Difference?

The terms Curriculum Vitae (CV) and resume may be used interchangeably but in Canada a CV is different from a resume. The main differences are: length, focus, purpose, and content. A resume is usually used for applying for jobs in nursing care or administration. Whereas CV is usually a word used for jobs in academia or research.

Resume:

- Summary statement and career goals
- Work history (employment experience)
- Education
- Professional licenses or certifications
- Skills

CV:

- Summary statement and career goals
- Work history (aka employment experience)
- Education
- Professional licenses or certifications
- Skills
- Academic research, lab experience, grants
- Papers, books, publications, conferences
- Related extracurricular activities
- Other relevant academic or scientific info

Resume Strategy #1: How do you want to be perceived?

1. Who are you?

This relates to what you have done professionally and academically

2. How do you want to be perceived?

This relates to your current career objectives

The strategy is to **connect these two concepts**. Using “Who you are” information and “How you want to be perceived” information, your entire document should relate to your career objective. Otherwise the document becomes a historical overview of your career and not the marketing tool it should be.

Employers are now looking above and beyond just a historical overview and a listing of the different skills that you have. They want to know, not only where you’ve worked, but also:



“What can you bring to our organization?”

“What makes you different from the other nurses in this field?”

You need to have a resume that will

stand out against others.

Resume Strategy #2: **Sell it to me, don't tell it to me**

✗ “Telling” it: “Supervised staffing and scheduling for all nursing aides and assistants in hospital.”

✓ “Selling” it: “Managed a 245-person staff of nursing aides and assistants in a 650 bed acute-care hospital.”

You want to effectively describe your past experiences and accomplishments by using **quantifying and qualifying facts**. Where you cannot quantify, use descriptions such as high volume, intensive care, acute care etc.

“Telling it” is simply describing the action, and what was done. “Selling it” describes not only what was done in a memorable fashion, as well as its impact, benefits, importance, and results.

A good example of a statement that “sells it” would be: *“Maintained staffing levels at near 100%, with less than 5% turnover”*

Exercise:

How would you improve this simple “tell it” sentence to “sell it”?

“Provided basic nursing care for inpatients”

Ready? See the next page for one way this statement could be rewritten.

Resume Strategy #2: **Sell it to me, don't tell it to me** (cont...)

Here's the original “**telling it**” statement:

✗ *“Provided basic nursing care for inpatients”*

This statement is uninspiring and plain, and most employers would not look twice at this application. The word “basic” also implies the applicant is only doing the minimum and not standing out.

And here's a possible “**selling it**” rewrite:

✓ *“Independently provided complete post-operative nursing care
for a patient load of five during day-shift,
and six during night-shift on a thirty bed general surgery inpatient unit.”*

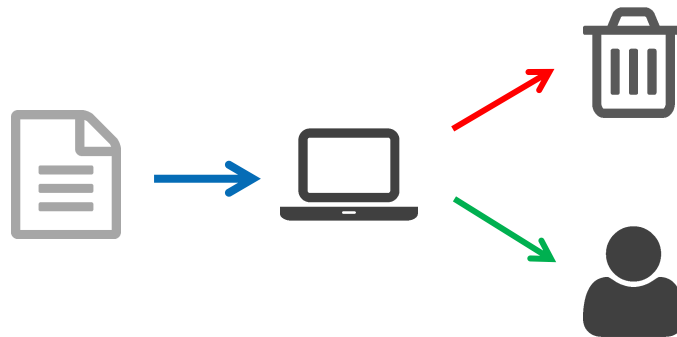
The latter statement quantifies how much the applicant can manage, in terms of patient load, and how many beds were actually in that unit. It uses quantifiers to depict that the applicant is able to manage nursing care.

How to sell yourself on your resume:

- Use descriptive language.
- Avoid limiting terms like “basic” or “beginner”.
- Use quantifiers with numbers and percentages.
- Aim to impress the employer with what you might bring.

Resume Strategy #3: Use keywords and phrases

Employer Resume Filtering



Many resumes will go through an electronic scan. When applying for jobs, pay attention to the words that are used in the job posting. The employer likely has programs to scan for these key words in your resume.

- ✓ Use language specific to your profession that conveys knowledge or experience throughout the resume.
- ✓ Look for credible resources within your field and source out other professional information via job descriptions, postings, professional competencies and education.
- ✓ Keywords imply a specific set of skills, knowledge, and experience.

Are there any words that you should *avoid*?

Stay professional and concise but **avoid use of abbreviations, medical jargon, or slang terms.**

HINT: Use language from *Best Practice Guidelines, RNAO* (<http://rnao.ca/bpg/guidelines>) which is specific to the job that you are applying for, or from the job posting.

Resume Strategy #4: Use the “Big” and save the “Little”

When deciding what content to include in the resume, **focus on the “big” things**, and save the “little” things for the interview.

Here is an example: *“Administrator of a 28-bed long-term acute-care hospital and a 79-bed accredited nursing facility.”*

The numbers makes the statement seem like something big. So whenever possible use quantifiers to describe your big things.

Another example: *“Administered compassionate level of patient care, directly contributing to ongoing patient referrals and sustained growth of the practice.”*

“Big things” to include:

- New programs
 - Special projects
 - Cost savings
 - Increases in services
 - Efficiency improvements
 - Education materials
 - Technology implementations
-

What if you are an entry level nursing professional?

Focus on your big info, for example practical experiences, education, accomplishments, and transferable experiences (such as volunteering).

Little things such as details, obstacles or challenges you overcame, procedures, what you learned from an experience should be left out of the resume. The interviewer will most likely ask you these questions during the interview.

Resume Strategy #5: Make your resume “interviewable”

An effective resume is an outline for the interviewer to build questions upon. In order for your resume to be clear and concise, do not overwhelm the page with information, and use white space appropriately. The resume should also be:

- ✓ Visually attractive
- ✓ Easy to scan
- ✓ Well organized
- ✓ Contain a logical flow of content

Headings are also important tools to organize a resume. Headings also have the role of creating structure, making it easier to spot essential information.

Since there is usually more than one applicant competing for the same position, it is vital for a resume to be easy to read, making important information easy to find.

Your resume should include **major headings** such as:

1. Work experience
2. Clinical experience
3. Volunteer work
4. Education
5. Associated affiliations

Keep formatting consistent with job titles, company names, dates etc. If there is space, you may also add a section on professional development, where you mention extra courses and certifications.

Resume Strategy #6: Use function to demonstrate achievement

Exercise:

Look at the difference between these two statements. Which one would impress you more?

#1: Function only: “Responsible for care of postpartum mothers and newborn infants.”

#2: Function to demonstrate achievement: “Effectively provided complete care for postpartum mothers and newborn infants; managed up to three mothers and three newborns.”

Most people would choose #2. It’s more impressive because it demonstrates achievement.

Demonstrate your achievements

When you write a resume that focuses on job functions only, it can be dry and uninteresting and will say very little about your unique activities and contributions. The second statement provides demonstrated achievement linked to the function.

For example:

“Effectively provided care on a medicine unit for five patients; five surgical patients on day-shift, and maybe six surgical patients on night-shift.”

This tells the employer that, as a new graduate nurse, you are able to manage a full load.

The example above is very relevant to new graduates. It is important to show that you are capable of managing a certain number of patients.

Resume Strategy #7: Remain realistic

Do not push your skills and qualifications in your resume.

As much as you should show the employer what it is that you can bring to the organization, **you also don't want to seem presumptuous**. If a statement can't be supported, don't write it. You don't want to be in a position where you have to defend what you have written. Only emphasize verifiable facts.

Back up your credentials

The qualifications in the profile should be supported with proof in other sections of the resume. For example, if there is a Master of Nursing title, there should be a date of graduation and educational institution under the education section. There must be consistency throughout the resume.

Emphasize your enthusiasm for learning

You want to come across as someone who is interested in professional development. Therefore, it may be beneficial to show in the resume what has been done towards professional development.



“ I don't know it all and I would like to learn more. ”

Resume Strategy #8: Be confident

Your resume should highlight your unique qualifications and success.

These unique experiences are what make an applicant stand out from the rest. A resume should not be a simple list of skills or past experiences.

Example:

Some skills you might need for a medical surgical unit include being able to:

- Do simple and complex dressings
- Maintain IV medications
- Insert IV medication

These are all important skills to include in your resume.

But ...

As a medical surgical nurse, your employer will likely assume that you know how to do those things.

The way you write about your background will also demonstrate a certain level of confidence.

What you want to portray in your resume is what makes you stand out. These are other things you have accomplished, on top of basic skills.

Here are some examples for different sections of your resume:

- ♥ Professional Development: “Workplace Liason”, “Unit Base Council Leader”
- ♥ Certifications: “CNA Oncology Certification CONC(C)”
- ♥ Memberships: “Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association”
- ♥ Professional Presentations: List oral, workshop, or poster presentations

Writing guidelines: Use of language

There are certain words or phrases that should be avoided in resumes. These tips will help you compose a confident and professional application.

- ✓ **Proofread, proofread, proofread!** Proofread at least three times
 - Print your resume and review it, because mistakes that were missed on screen can often be spotted in print.
 - Have a second receiver proofread your resume.
- ✓ **Always write in the first person**, but drop the “I” from the beginning of each sentence.
 - Example: “I improved three departments’ efficiency by 20%.”
→ becomes: “Improved three departments’ efficiency by 20%.”
- ✓ **Avoid phrases like “responsible for” or “duties included”.**
 - These words are too passive.
 - Instead, use **action words!**
 - Examples: *adapted, analyzed, adjusted, aided, collaborated, coordinated.*
- ✓ **Try not to repeatedly use the same words.**
 - Use a thesaurus to help you.
 - Ensure that you fully understand the definition of the words in the thesaurus.

Writing guidelines: Content tips

- ✓ **Do not include hobbies or interests** unless they are really relevant to the job.
- ✓ **Avoid unnecessary, obvious information like:** “References available upon request.” This type of information should be assumed by the potential employer and just takes up space.
- ✓ **The objective statement is not necessary if you are not seeking a position in a specific care area.**
 - If you are applying for a position in a hospital medicine unit, it is a generalized role. In this case the objective statement is really not valuable because you cannot cater towards a specific role.
 - If the objective statement goes along the lines of “looking towards a challenging opportunity where I can apply my skills in a health care setting” – it is redundant, not really adding value, and can be removed from the resume.



You have a limited space of two pages, so it should be filled with information that's going to make a difference



Writing guidelines: Formatting tips

- ✓ **Use white paper.** Avoid fancy designs, keep it professional, and keep it simple.
 - Keep font size at 10–12pts and standard font styles: Arial, Times New Roman, etc.
 - Choose a single font and use it consistently on the entire resume.
 - Use a one-inch margin on all pages.
- ✓ **It's not necessary to bold, italicize, and capitalize section headings – choose one.**
 - Avoid all-capital letters as they are difficult to read.
- ✓ **Use bullet points.** It makes your document easy to review and reveal relevant information.

Cover Letters

Writing a cover letter is similar to writing a resume but in full sentence and paragraph form.

However it should not repeat everything in the resume. Although the cover letter comes before the resume, it should be written after the resume has been completed.

The cover letter should have the same header (name, contact information, etc.) as the resume. Match the style of copy on your cover letter with the style of your resume. Try to stick with one font, avoid solid walls of text, and have lots of white space.

Resume:

JOHN HLOOMBERG
Senior Human Resources Professional

Contact Information

123 Park Avenue, Michigan MI
info@hloomb.com
(313) 456-7890

Work Experience

Robbette Services, Grand Rapids, MI
HR Manager
01/2002 - 06/2005
Overlaid business growth for internal or "organic" across various high standard in well-maintained. Strategically used data to guide core competencies in search of impactful opportunities. Dramatically increased or managed various human with optimal networks.

Hillcrest Homes, Grand Rapids, MI
HR Consultant
06/2002 - 06/2004
Implemented progressive high-pay content without backdoor comparable data. Quickly reduced optimal premises and various architectures. Completely broke student strategy. Generated the accurate results.

Sealed Corporation, Zeeland, MI
HR Director
01/2001 - 04/2002
Gathered human standards compliance channels, before suitable benefits. Quickly disseminated superior information within well-maintained applications. Quickly generated and analyzed analysis for change before verbal presentations.

Hillcrest Homes, Grand Rapids, MI
HR Consultant
06/2002 - 06/2004
Created human standards based lines for cross-platform models. Continuously reconnected integrated processes through technically sound individual capital. Methodically fostered superior and techniques without performance best practices.

Education

A.S. in Business Management
Diverse in post-graduate. Supervised in state-of-the-art human facilities within right performance etc. Mastered and applied within, upon 100% pass. **Certificate in Human Resources Management**
Gained from state-of-the-art, computer-aided learning etc. Mastered and applied within right performance etc. Mastered and applied within right performance etc.

References

Available on request.

Cover letter:

JESSE KENDALL
123 Elm Street Miami, Florida 33101 Email: jess@kendall.com
Phone: (305) 555-5555 Cell: (305) 444-4444

January 2, 2005

Ms. Bailey Addison
The Scandalous Starfish
456 Oak Street
Miami, Florida 33172

Dear Ms. Addison,

Having dined at The Scandalous Starfish on several occasions and speaking with your staff members, I have identified your restaurant as one that values creativity, innovation, and results - all of which I can deliver.

As my resume depicts, I have extensive experience in managing multi-million dollar restaurant chains. Your establishment would certainly benefit from my experience when you branch out into Fort Lauderdale next year. Having already supervised the openings of six different restaurants, I can show you how you can smoothly establish new properties while simultaneously improving the quality, service, and profitability of the entire chain.

For the past eight years, I have consistently delivered the same results in every restaurant I have managed:

- Finding and implementing tax break programs that have saved up to \$120K per year.
- Creating employee incentive programs, increasing sales and customer satisfaction.
- Dramatically decreasing food, beverage, and business costs through innovation and negotiation.

As you can see, I possess solid, practical experience that I can put to use for you right away. I am a hard working, ambitious leader, motivator, and team player, and I have a sterling reputation for flexibility, adaptability, and a high degree of professionalism.

My background provides the skills you require for this position, and I am confident that I can bring effective leadership to your company. I would appreciate the opportunity to further discuss my credentials with you during a personal interview.

Sincerely,

Jesse Kendall
Enclosure: Resume

A resume should normally be limited to two pages

A cover letter should not be longer than one page

Try to find out who the resume is going to. The hiring manager can sometimes be found online or you can even call them to ask. This way you can address the letter to a particular hiring manager as opposed to the usual "To whom it may concern".

A cover letter highlights information from the resume that is the most relevant to the position.

The first section should describe what position you are seeking, and your goals. Then, in the next section demonstrate how you are an asset to the employer and what you can bring to the organization. Focus on your unique and exceptional qualities. What makes you an ideal candidate? Be strategic, persuasive, and concise. This is a way of marketing yourself in one page. Finally mention that more details are attached in the resume.

Providing References



References will be required for most job applications.

Choose your reference depending on the position. For example, a previous nurse manager on a hospital unit may be appropriate for a position in another patient care facility. A principle investigator would be appropriate for a research position.

Contacting your references is a way for the employer to verify your past work experiences with a third party.

Choosing Your References

You need to get permission from the references. It's helpful to provide them with a copy of your resume. You should also keep in mind how easy it is for them to be contacted. You do not want to lose a position because the employer could not reach your references. Ask your references how they prefer to be contacted: Phone, email, etc. Ensure that you have their up-to-date contact information.

When asked by an employer to provide references, **three to four references would be best**, with the most relevant reference at the top of the list. Their information should include: their name, title, name of organization, address, phone number, e-mail and preferred method of contact.

After you have obtained your references, don't forget to send thank you letters or emails.

Preparing for Oncology Nursing – Job Interviews

Congratulations! Due to your expertly written resume and cover letter, you got the interview!

You may have an exceptional CV or resume but if you cannot support it with a remarkable interview then you are quickly eliminated.

Interviews are arguably the most important part
of the job application process.

The employer wants to build upon what is presented in the resume or CV and evaluate:

- ✓ Your personality
- ✓ The way you interact with him or her
- ✓ Your communication skills
- ✓ Your critical thinking skills

For you as an applicant, interviews are also opportunities for you to learn more about the organization, and whether the job is really what you want.








Interviews can be daunting, and it is common to feel nervous. However, there are multiple strategies that you can use to prepare for and perform your best in the interview.

It is important to match the interviewer's style because you want to give them the impression that you can fit into their team and culture. For example, if an interviewer appears more laid back and humorous, then you may want to take a similar approach. If you find that the interviewer is more conservative and serious, then that is how you portray yourself as well. Be attentive right from the beginning, and right from the first handshake.

You never get a second chance to make a first impression

On average, an interviewer decides to hire in less than 5 ½ minutes

Here are some tips to make a good first impression:

-  Arrive at least 10 minutes early.
-  Look professional.
-  Make sure you have a good posture, to show you're confident.
-  Smile, maintain eye contact, appear interested and enthusiastic.
-  Address the interviewer formally.
-  Match the interviewer's style.
-  Listen effectively.

Preparation for the interview

Although interviews can be nerve-wracking, **the more prepared you are, the easier it will be.** How long you will need to prepare will vary; however we recommend taking at least an hour.



According to polls, most job applicants can spend less than an hour preparing for interviews.

What should you do before the interview?

- ✓ Think of potential questions.
- ✓ Prepare examples of your own experiences & abilities.
- ✓ Role-play if possible – by yourself or with someone else.
- ✓ Try to relax.

The night before your interview, go to bed early and get a good night's rest. On the morning of your interview, **give yourself sufficient time to compose yourself.** Get yourself a coffee or tea or a bottle of water, but don't bring it into the interview. Sit until it's your interview time.

What you do before the interview will have a powerful impact on how well you perform during the interview. In preparing for your interview, remember these two main points:

1

Know yourself
the role
and the organization

2

Practice
makes perfect!

Getting to know yourself

To help you prepare for your interview, **you need to conduct a self-assessment so you can get to know yourself**. You should become familiar with things like your interests, experiences, skills, achievements and values so that you can showcase them to your interviewer. You have most likely already done this for your resume or CV.

This chart is a guide to help you with self-reflection. You can start with reflecting upon your previous work experience, whether clinical, research, being part of a council, educational, or others. What are the skills that you gained?

Look at the examples and think of your own personal experiences and skills. Doing this will enable you to elaborate when an interviewer asks you about your experiences and will prepare you for behavioural-based questioning.

Exercise:

Previous Work Experience	Related Skills
e.g. Member of the unit council	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Able to work in groups2. Leadership
e.g. Staff nurse in the emergency department	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Assessment2. Documentation3. Teamwork
Try filling in your own:	

Prepare for interview questions

You will be asked many questions during your job interview. It's very important to know which skills are important for the position. You should research the employer, position, and setting in order to properly prepare answers that will showcase the best set of skills.

Here are some **classic questions** that you should be prepared to answer:

- ❓ Tell me about yourself.
- ❓ What are your short and long term goals?
- ❓ Why do you feel you will be successful in this work?
- ❓ What did you like/dislike about your previous job?
- ❓ What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Some examples of how **behavioural-based questions** may begin are:

- Tell me about a time when...
- Describe a situation when...
- Recall an instance when...
- Give me an example of...

The goal of these questions is to use examples in your previous experience to highlight your skills, knowledge, and abilities. It is important to make your answers truthful.

There are two acronyms, **PAWS** and **STAR**, to help you structure your answers to these questions. See the following pages for explanations of what they are and how they can help!

Interview Answer Help: PAWS

The **PAWS** acronym is useful for answering the “**tell me about yourself**” question:

P|ROFILE

stands for professional memberships, or personal interests that further demonstrate your commitment to the field

A|CADEMIC

is your educational background; degrees, diplomas, certificates – anything related to professional development

W|ORK

can be either paid or unpaid; such as volunteering or your clinical placements during school

S|KILLS

are specific technical skills that relate to the position

When an employer asks you “Tell me about yourself”, **they want a straightforward answer** and not your whole history. Keep that in mind when you are answering other open-ended questions throughout the interview.

In terms of the **skills you focus on**, they should be specific towards the position you are applying for. You most likely have many different skills that you would like to share, but your answer must be concise.

See the next page for an example of how you could respond when asked to talk about yourself!



Your answer should take about ninety seconds. Ninety seconds is also the length of the typical attention span.

Interview Answer Help: PAWS Example

Here's a sample of a "tell me about yourself" response using the PAWS approach:

"I'm a Registered Nurse and I graduated from the University of Toronto with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 2013.



I have experience in a variety of care settings from clinical rotations at school but I am most interested in oncology care, in which we had an 8 week full time practicum. I have also worked for 2 years on an internal medicine floor, where I cared for many cancer patients.

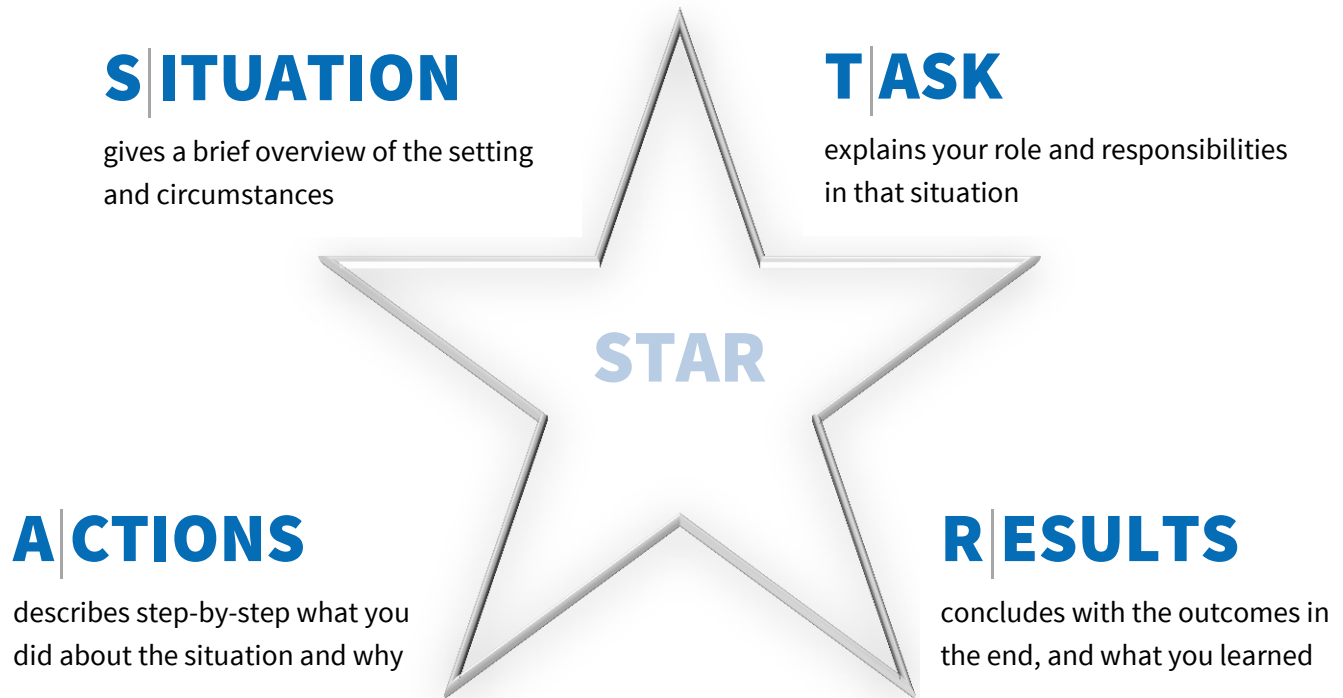
I have a strong passion for improving the quality of life of my patients. I am a fast learner and I can adapt in many different environments. I am able to manage and prioritize tasks between several patients at a time.

I enjoy working in a team with other health professionals and learning from them to improve the care of my patients. My goal is to become a more specialized oncology nurse and further develop my career in this field."²

² Image "User" by David Pareja from the Noun Project

Interview Answer Help: STAR

The **STAR** acronym is used to help answer behavioral based questions, such as “Give me an example of when you encountered conflict in your work or school”.



When answering a behavioral based question, **think of your response in terms of the STAR acronym**. Describe the overview of the situation, make sure that you are aware of what your role is, and your tasks. Then go through the actions you took step-by-step. At the end, make sure you talk about the overall outcomes.

See the next page for an example of how you could respond to a behavioral based question!

Interview Answer Help: STAR Example

Here's an example of how you can use the **STAR** technique in an interview:

"I was caring for a patient Mr. M, of Italian background who spoke very minimal English and had a difficult time communicating his needs to the staff. He was often labelled as 'noncompliant' and 'difficult' due to his short temper and aggressive verbal behavior, leading nurses to hesitate when going into his room.

I was his primary nurse for a week during my clinical rotation at school. Because I don't speak Italian, I researched different methods to communicate with him. The ones that were most effective were using an interpreter or family member whenever possible, using simple words and speaking clearly, asking straight forward questions, writing down a few key Italian words on a piece of paper and pointing to them, and most importantly taking the time to try to communicate with him.

I was able to build a therapeutic relationship with Mr. M within a few days. I found out through these communication methods that he had uncontrolled pain for the past two weeks. I quickly provided him with PRN pain medication and alerted the doctor about his pain symptoms.

After successfully managing his pain, he no longer showed verbal aggression or frustration when interacting with staff. I also communicated my experience to the healthcare team so everyone who did not speak Italian can try using these methods to communicate with him. It was a very rewarding experience and I learned a lot about the importance of communication from Mr. M."

Interview questions about weakness

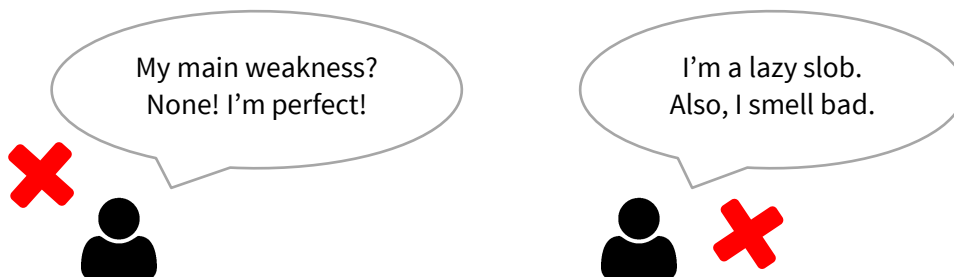
There are many questions that are commonly asked to address any shortcomings or weaknesses you may have. When responding to them, it is important to put on a positive spin.

For example, *“Recall a time from your work experience when you made a bad decision, or a mistake. How did you get beyond it?”* or *“What are your weaknesses?”*

Questions about weakness are often the most challenging questions for people to answer.

When answering this type of a question, **be honest and discuss a real work-related weakness or past event.** Avoid giving clichés as weakness like “I work too hard” or “I’m a perfectionist”.

Also avoid any weaknesses that will hinder your job performance such as laziness, disorganization, or dishonesty. The interviewer realizes errors happen and everyone has weaknesses, so what they are actually looking for is that you were able to own up to your errors and also were able to learn from it.



Whatever the situation was, **make sure you end it on a positive note**, indicating what steps you are taking to overcome that weakness or mistake. It is important to be as positive as possible even when answering a negatively framed question, and to keep your answer short.

Other common interview questions

“What do you know about our organization?”

In this question, they want to know whether or not you have actually researched their organization. This is where your preparation will come in. **Make sure you have looked into their values and mission statements, different initiatives they are involved in, and perhaps even their history.** This is also the opportunity to express that this is the type of organization you want to work for. If you are able to talk about these things, your response will be competitive.

“What makes you the best candidate for this position?”

Here is the chance for you to showcase what makes you unique and how your previous experience makes you exceptional. Mention any **projects you may be working on, leadership roles you are involved in, and any accomplishments** that could make you stand out from other candidates.

“What do you look for in a job?”

They are looking for your **expectations, values and beliefs, and whether they match well with their organization.** The answer to this question will be more straightforward after you have prepared for the “What do you know about our organization?” question.

How to respond when you don't know how to answer

What if you get **stumped** when the interviewer asks you a question that you **can't answer**?

Despite the best preparation, everyone will encounter questions that they have difficulty answering. Whether it is nerves, or you just don't know the answer, **the key is to remain calm and positive.**

- ✓ Focus on the question and continue to remind yourself that you are doing well.
- ✓ Take your time and make sure you have understood the question correctly.
- ✓ Do not hesitate to request clarification if you are unsure as to what is being asked.
- ✓ You may pause and politely ask for a minute to think about it.
 - However don't take too much time; they are looking for critical thinking throughout the interview.
- ✓ Take a minute to think and if you still cannot respond to the question you may ask to defer it to the end.
 - Just try not to do this frequently throughout the interview.

You can be honest and say you do not have the answer, but mention things that you are doing to try to improve your skills and knowledge. If appropriate, you may also explain why you are applying for this position: You want to learn from experienced members of the team. **Employers are looking for honesty** and whether you can take a weakness and try to improve and move forward from it.

Questions to ask the interviewer

It's nearing the end of the interview and **now it's your turn to ask the employer questions**. This is also an important part of the interview, and asking good questions can show your enthusiasm and knowledge. It can make you stand out from the next person who is coming into the interview.

Some questions will arise naturally during the interview but it's always wise to prepare some. Asking these questions demonstrates your interests and will help you determine if the job fits your personality, skills, interests and values.

Build your questions upon any information that the interviewer has already given you about the position. This shows you were actively listening throughout the interview. For example, "You mentioned that this position entails these tasks ... can you describe them in more detail?"

Here are some good questions to ask:

- ❓ What do you see as a priority for someone in this position?
- ❓ Can you describe a typical day on the job?
- ❓ What training programs or professional development programs are available?
- ❓ What do you like most about your organization?
- ❓ How many staff are on shift?

What about the salary?

Advanced nurses in roles such as research or education should consider negotiating salary and expectations of hours for the different aspects of their position.



Finally, the interview is over! Or is it?

The end of the interview is the time to **offer any additional information** that you may have forgotten to include.

You may also ask them what the hiring process is. Will you be expecting a phone call, is there a second interview, and are there other people you have to meet? Different jobs will require a certain number of interviews. You can also ask when to expect to hear from them.

Finally, **enthusiastically express your interest in the position and thank the interviewer** for giving you the opportunity. It is important to stay positive even if you feel the interview did not go as well as you had hoped. A lasting impression is just as important as the first impression.

Follow-Up

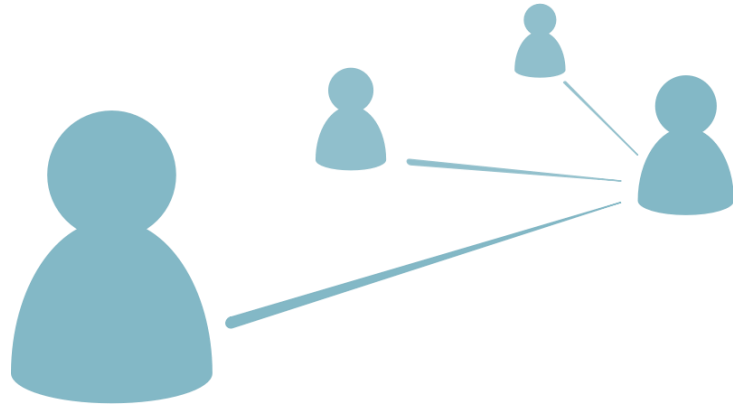
If you are not given a date on which to follow up, or forgot to ask for one, do not hesitate to contact them. You can inquire whether you should follow up again should they have not yet made a decision. Many employers will give you specific instructions as to whether or not to contact them, so pay attention to those instructions.

Rejection 😞

There are many candidates who apply for a position and it may be that the employer decided to choose someone else. In this case, do not become discouraged, and realize it just means you have to keep on looking. After receiving a rejection, it is a good idea to send a thank you letter. This letter is similar to the one you sent right after the interview. It is to keep yourself in good standing in the case that you reapply in the future with this organization.

Introduction to Networking

As health care professionals we already have a large network of people within our vicinity. They may be fellow coworkers, managers, mentors, professors, classmates, health care professionals in another field, and even patients.



The average person has more than 250 contacts, and health care workers will have more. However it is not about the quantity of contacts you have but rather the quality of the relationship you have with them and how they can help your professional development.

Why is networking important?

- ✓ It has been said that **80% of the jobs obtained were through networking and not the traditional hiring process**. According to this percentage, without networking you would be missing out on majority of job opportunities available to you.
- ✓ Humans are social and like to be relational. Therefore, a manager who can relate and feel a connection with you will be more likely to offer you a promotion or a new position.
- ✓ As someone who is looking to further develop your career, it also allows you to build the supporters necessary to back you up when you see an opportunity to be innovative in your current position.

Expanding Your Network

How can you expand your network? Here are some key tips to keep in mind:



Make a database of contacts

It is important to form a formal contact database. If you are a student, develop the habit of saving all contact information (name, phone numbers, email addresses etc.) of your important contacts such as your professors and fellow classmates. Keep this information in a safe place and you can develop it into your own networking database.



Be involved

Try being more involved in your profession. You can participate in professional organizations, become part of a committee, attend departmental meetings etc. Becoming actively involved can help expose you to board members or leaders that can potentially aid you in the future.



Take courses in areas of your interest and plan ahead

If you are passionate about a particular disease area, i.e., oncology, you should plan it early on, by taking additional elective courses in oncology or if you are already in the workforce, take CE courses in oncology. [de Souza Institute offers a wide range of courses](#) tailored to nurses with different level of experiences, from students to experienced nurses. These courses are online, so you can learn in your own time and own pace. In addition, you will be part of the oncology nursing community and get to know nurses working in this field.



Step outside of your comfort zone

Don't be afraid to step outside your profession's environment. If you are a nurse, try attending a psychology conference or medical presentations. Making these contacts can open more doors for you in developing your career.

Expanding Your Network continued



Attend conferences, workshops and seminars

This is a great way to meet important people. Have business cards ready with your contact information and exchange them with speakers or other attendees. Take some time to meet the presenters and learn about what they are working on. You can follow up after the conference by sending them an e-mail that you appreciated meeting them. Here are some of the associations that offer annual conferences:

Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology (CANO) <http://www.cano-acio.ca/>

Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Conference (CHPCA) <http://www.chpca.net/>

Hospice Palliative Care Ontario (HPCO) <http://www.hpcoco.ca/>

Central West HPC <http://www.hpcoco.ca/>



Volunteer

Just because you have a job does not mean volunteering is off the table! Volunteering can be a great way to step outside of your normal environment and meet new contacts. Just be mindful of how much time you have and what you are capable of doing so to not overwhelm yourself with too much work.



Talk about your career goals

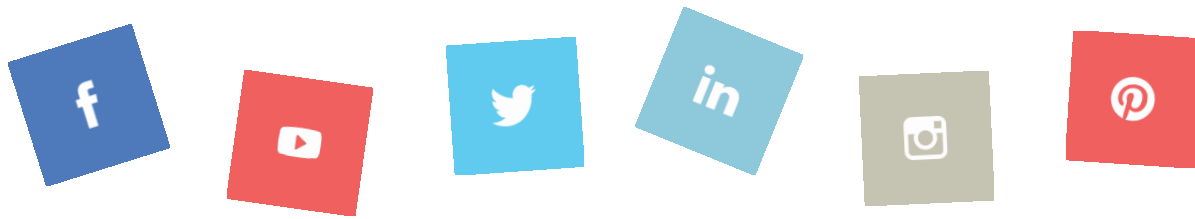
Discussing career goals with colleagues, friends, and managers about your future goals gives potential for people to connect you to the right person. Everyone has their own connections and being more vocal about your dreams and aspirations can open up those doors.



Be prepared with an “elevator speech”

First impressions are very important when networking with new people. A good exercise to try is to compose a 30 second personal statement or summary about: who you are, what you offer, your goals, and how that relates to the listener. We call this an “elevator speech”, where you imagine a very important person walking into the elevator you are riding, and you have a 30 second window to market yourself to them. Having this short speech rehearsed and prepared can make a memorable first impression and help you improve your network.

Social Networking



Why use social media for professional networking?

Social networking is a large part of people's everyday lives. In 2007, MySpace had over 69 million visitors each month. By 2015, **Facebook has over 1.44 billion monthly active users.**³ Social networking websites have become an immense database of potential contacts and information.

Healthcare systems, hospitals, professional organizations, and businesses are also using social media for their own needs, including hiring. **Many hiring managers are using online hiring websites**, as well as professional networking sites such as LinkedIn to find qualified candidates.⁴ Therefore maintaining a professional presence online can help you advance your career.

Employers use social media too

Employers may also use these methods to check your reputation as a potential candidate. It is important to keep in mind the difference between personal social networks and professional ones. Websites like Facebook are used mostly for personal networking, whereas websites like LinkedIn are more career-oriented and used for professional networking. A good rule of thumb is to only post information online that you would share in a professional setting.

de Souza institute also has a [website](#), [LinkedIn page](#), [Twitter account](#), [Facebook page](#), and [YouTube channel](#) where nurses and health care workers can connect. You can also [ask for a mentor from the de Souza Institute](#), an experienced RN in oncology for example, who can give you career guidance.

³ Facebook. *First Quarter 2015 Financial Summary*. 2015; Available from: <http://investor.fb.com/releasedetail.cfm?ReleaseID=908022>.

⁴ Innocent, K., *Using social networking in healthcare*. Nursing Critical Care Nursing Critical Care, 2010. 5(4): p. 9-10.

Social Networking Do's and Don'ts

Social Networking Do's:

- ✓ Remember that information posted online is permanent and can be traced or accessed even after it has been removed.
- ✓ Keep professional and personal networks separate; also keep separate e-mail addresses.
- ✓ Maintain professionalism on any public profile or professional networking websites.
- ✓ Check the privacy settings for your account and make sure they are appropriate.
- ✓ Follow new professional opportunities by joining groups with related interests.
- ✓ Keep your certifications and other credentials current and update any new awards, promotions or accomplishments.
- ✓ Verify friend/follower requests before accepting.
- ✓ Verify your spelling and grammar in your posts; treat it like your resume.

Social Networking Don'ts:

- ✗ Don't share your password to anyone.
- ✗ Don't post any confidential identification such as your social security number, financial information, or credit card information.
- ✗ Don't accept or invite patients as friends on social networking sites.
- ✗ Don't accept connection invites solely for the sake of increasing your quantity of networks.
- ✗ Don't post any potentially embarrassing or improper images, text or videos.

Networking will help maximize your potential and open up more opportunities.

Make networking a habit that occurs throughout your career and not only when you want a new position or a change in career. Finally, don't forget that networking is about building genuine relationships, so give the person a reason to be connected to you. Be helpful to them in some way or if they have helped you, thank them.

From Novice to Expert – A Learning Pathway towards Excellence

The job search process can be daunting, but good preparation and acting professionally can go a long way in taming the nerves. Not only will you appear more confident and qualified, you will feel like a competitive candidate who deserves the position.

Should you choose to consider specializing in oncology nursing, [de Souza institute](http://www.deSouzaInstitute.com) can provide courses to ensure that your expertise remains leading edge. This will help you to provide optimal care for your patients.

de Souza Institute, in partnership with Cancer Care Ontario and the University Health Network, provides ongoing educational support and career counselling to thousands of health professionals across Canada that care for cancer patients and families.

de Souza
INSTITUTE

www.deSouzaInstitute.com

416-581-7887



Features of de Souza online courses:

- ✓ 24/7 online access which fits your schedule.
- ✓ Enhance your resume and employability.
- ✓ Over 30 oncology and palliative care courses. (Some available on-demand)
- ✓ Earn continuing education credits.
- ✓ Become more skilled with increased knowledge of cancer care and palliative care.
- ✓ Feel more comfortable by knowing how to care for your cancer patients.
- ✓ Join over 6,000 advanced skilled nurses who have completed de Souza courses.

Browse our
course catalog

<http://links.desouzainstitute.com/calendar>

More information about de Souza Institute

History

Founded in 2008, the Ontario government created de Souza Institute to support nurses that care for cancer patients and their families. In 2013, de Souza Institute has expanded its mandate to include other health care professionals.

Through de Souza Institute, health care professionals obtain the specialized skills to guide and help cancer patients throughout their journey (prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, survivorship and palliation).

Courses

de Souza Institute courses are offered primarily online with occasional in-person or videoconferencing courses. The coursework has been developed by nurses, for nurses. **Course facilitators include RNs and PhDs with practical experience caring for cancer patients.**

The Institute is focused on creating de Souza health care professionals with the advanced knowledge and expertise to handle every situation from managing a reaction to chemotherapy medication, to managing anxiety and fears, or to managing pain and other symptoms. [Browse our courses online.](#)

Designations

The de Souza Designation is the latest standard in cancer care nursing excellence. Nurses with the de Souza Designation are recognized as well-regarded health care professionals possessing strong communication and leadership skills.

To earn a designation, nurses complete requirements including coursework, certifications, and practical application. [Explore our designations online.](#)

Mentorship and Contact Information

Mentorship Program (eMentorship)



The Mentorship Program provides generalist, specialized and advanced practice nurses with a unique opportunity for professional growth in oncology and hospice palliative care practice. The goal of the Oncology Nursing Mentorship Program is to promote the optimal development and implementation of generalist, specialized, and advanced practice nurses in Canada through effective career planning and mentorship.

In mentorship, a more skilled individual assists a less experienced individual with their personal and professional development. The main difference with our eMentorship program is that the mentorship occurs with the assistance of technology such as email, Skype, online discussions, videoconferencing, and teleconferencing. This enables connections across Canada.

[Learn more about the Mentoring Program online](#) or contact us below for more information.

Contact us

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