Lake Constance
Arts & Sciences Association

How to apply successfully in Germany, Liechtenstein, Austria and Switzerland

A manual for international dual career partners in the area of the Lake Constance Arts & Sciences Association

IMPRINT

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HS Albstadt-Sigmaringen
HfM Trossingen
Deutschland
HS Furtwangen
PH Weingarten
HS Ravensburg-Weingarten
DHBW Ravensburg
HS Kempten
PH Schaffhausen
Universität Konstanz
HTWG Konstanz
PH Thurgau
Zeppelin Universität
DHBW Friedrichshafen
FHV Schloss Hofen
Schweiz
SHLR Rorschach
PHSG Rorschach
ZHAW Winterthur
Universität St.Gallen
OST St.Gallen
PHSG St.Gallen
FHV Dornbirn
ZHAW Zürich
PH Zürich
Universität Zürich
HfH Zürich
ZHdK Zürich
Österreich
PH Vorarlberg
Stella Vorarlberg
ZHAW Wädenswil
OST Rapperswil
OST Buchs
Universität Liechtenstein
Liechtenstein
Hauptstandort
Aussenstelle

Lake Constance Arts & Sciences Association

The major social challenges of our time do not stop at national or system borders. We are convinced that the best results come from the interaction of different perspectives. It is precisely innovative forms of collaboration between science and society that are needed in order to provide the best possible answers to social challenges.

The Lake Constance Arts & Sciences Association is Europe's largest cross-university network. It supports and facilitates cooperation between 25 higher education institutions around Lake Constance, across Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. World-leading research universities, universities of applied sciences, teacher training colleges, as well as music and art academies work together under our auspices, creating mutual synergies from their individual strengths and perspectives.

We develop innovative solutions for the region in transnational cooperation with industry and other non-academic partners. Close collaboration in these projects leads to long-term partnerships: we see our diverse approaches as a strength as we learn from one another and exploit new opportunities in knowledge transfer.

Until 2022, the network was a project of the International Lake Constance Conference under the name Internationale Bodensee-Hochschule. On January 1, 2023, the Lake Constance Arts & Sciences Association was founded.

This manual was developed by the working group Dual Career under the leadership of the University of Konstanz. The group is committed to dual career support in the region and supports partners moving with them in their job search in the region.

1. Language: Nothing else matters?

Only 3 % of job advertisements in Germany are written in English.[1]

How important is German for getting a job?
Very important. Even though the world is becoming increasingly international, most employers still expect their employees to speak the official language of the country.

In most cases, job postings are written in German and a good knowledge of German is also required. Even if your job takes place in an international environment and you communicate a lot in English, you should assume that the corporate language is German.

What language level am I expected to have?
As a rule, at least level B2 (Vantage, Upper Intermediate) is expected. For positions that require a university degree, an even higher language level may be necessary. But do not worry: you may already start applying with level B1 (Threshold, Intermediate). Once you are working in a German-speaking environment, you will improve quickly.

How can I improve my language skills?
The easiest way to improve your language skills is to attend a language course. Language schools offer courses and

[1] www.immigrantspirit.com/search

trainings for different language levels (A1 – C2) in different formats. In that way, everyone can find what suits them best, whether during the day or in the evening, as an intensive or part-time course. Online courses are now also frequently offered. In addition to improving German language skills, language courses are also a great way to make new contacts.

GERMANY

In the German IBH area, for example, there are the following language schools, whose offers can be viewed on the respective homepage:

- inlingua: www.inlingua.de
- Humboldt-Institut: www.humboldt-institut.org
- Volkshochschulverband Baden-Württemberg: www.vhs-bw.de

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Well-known language schools in Vorarlberg are:

- inlingua: www.inlingua.at
- Berufsförderungsinstitut (BFI) der Arbeitskammer Vorarlberg: www.bfi-vorarlberg.at
- Vorarlberger Volkshochschulen: www.vhs-vorarlberg.at
- Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut (WFI) Vorarlberg: www.vlbg.wifi.at

SWITZERLAND

There are also various language schools in Eastern Switzerland that offer different German courses:

- inlingua: www.inlingua.ch
- Haus der Sprachen (HDS): www.hds.ch
- Sprachschule Aktiv: www.sprachschule-aktiv.ch

LEARNING GERMAN ABROAD

If you are still abroad, the Goethe Institute, which operates worldwide, may have useful offers for you:

- Goethe Institut: www.goethe.de

Free online courses are offered by the Deutsche Welle:

- https://learngerman.dw.com

2. It's all about recognition

If you have completed your apprenticeship or studies abroad, you may need to get this qualification recognized, otherwise you will not be able to work in your profession. By having your qualifications recognized, you are on the safe side: employers can thus assess your qualifications and compare them with national courses of study or training.

Which professions are subject to recognition in Germany?

This applies to the so-called regulated professions. These are characterized by the fact that their activities are legally protected. They occur primarily in the following areas:

- Health (e. g. physicians, psychotherapists, nurses, pharmacists)
- Legal advice (e. g. lawyers, legal assistants)
- Engineering (especially architects)
- Education (e.g. teachers, educators, social workers)

In these professions, the country of origin is irrelevant – the recognition of the degrees must always take place.

Also, recognition of degrees is highly recommended for people who have obtained their qualifications outside the EU. Switzerland, by the way, works closely with the EU and participates in the European system of recognition of professional qualifications.

If, on the other hand, you would like to work in a non-regulated profession (e. g. as a computer scientist or economist), you do not need recognition. However, it is generally advisable to have every qualification acquired abroad translated and recognized. This is the only way for companies to get a clear picture of your qualifications and skills. If you do not have your qualifications recognized, you run the risk of having your application rejected for lack of comparability.

GERMANY

With the help of the Recognition Finder of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, you can check whether you need to get your degree recognized to practice your profession in Germany:

- Federal Ministry of Education and Research:
  www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de

Detailed information on the recognition procedure, the costs and the process can be found here:

- Make it in Germany: www.make-it-in-germany.com
- Federal Employment Agency: www.arbeitsagentur.de

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The Recognition Guide will help you find the right application or counselling centre in Austria for your degree:

- Berufsanerkennung.at: www.berufsanerkennung.at

SWITZERLAND

The contact point for the recognition of a foreign diploma in Switzerland is the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI):

- SBFI: www.sbfi.admin.ch

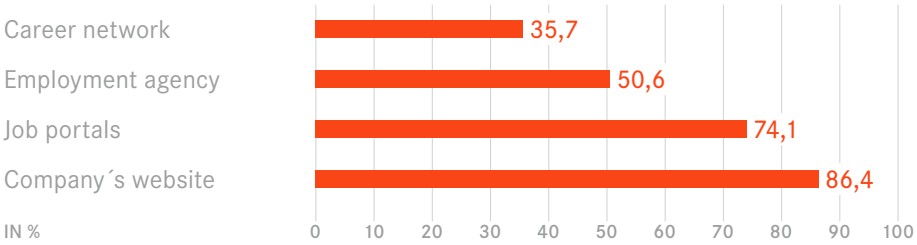
In a nutshell:

If you would like to work in a regulated profession, you must have your studies or training recognized. The same applies if you completed your training in a non-EU country.

3. First aid for the job search

Language course booked? Need for recognition checked? Now the quest for suitable jobs can begin!
According to statistics, companies use the following four channels for publishing job advertisements most often: [2]

Percentage of companies



Which job portals are useful?
The number of job portals keeps growing and an overview of it is almost impossible to give. In the following, we present the most popular job portals (with no claim to completeness):

GERMANY

Make it in Germany
Make it in Germany is a portal of the Federal Government for professionals from abroad. You will find general information for your job search, a quick check with which you can check which possibilities you have to work in Germa-

[2] statista (2021)

ny with your qualifications, workshops on job search, a hotline as well as job advertisements:

- Make it in Germany: www.make-it-in-germany.com

"Jobbörse" of the Employment Agency

The "Jobbörse" of the Federal Employment Agency is one of the largest job portals in Germany and is state-owned. Not only advertisements are published there, but you can also upload your own your own profile:

- "Jobbörse" of the Employment Agency: www.arbeitsagentur.de

Other platforms

Other frequently used platforms are e. g.:

- Indeed: www.indeed.com
- Jobbörse: www.jobbörse.de
- Jobware: www.jobware.de
- Monster: www.monster.de
- Stepstone: www.stepstone.de

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ABA – Work in Austria

ABA – Work in Austria is an Austrian online job platform for international professionals. Austrian companies can register there and advertise their vacancies internationally free of charge.

- ABA – Work in Austria: www.workinaustria.com

Federal Ministry Republic of Austria Labour

Further information on labour migration can be found here:

- Federal Ministry Republic of Austria Labour: www.bma.gv.at

Other platforms

Bekannte Portale für Stellenanzeigen in Österreich sind:

- karriere.at: www.karriere.at
- jobs.at: www.jobs.at
- Monster: www.monster.at

SWITZERLAND

Pages of the government

Information from the Swiss government for people who want to work in Switzerland can be found, for example, on the site of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA):

- FDFA: www.eda.admin.ch

Other platforms

If you are interested in a job in Switzerland, the following portals might be interesting for you:

- Careerjet: www.careerjet.ch

- jobs.ch: www.jobs.ch
- Jobportal für die Ostschweiz: www.ostjob.ch

How do I use career networks in my job search?

The best known career networks are probably Xing and LinkedIn. While XING is particularly well known in Germany, but also in Austria and Switzerland, LinkedIn has a more international reach.

In the respective career networks, you will not only find suitable job offers, but you can also indicate that you are looking for a job and in which areas you are interested. Recruiters can view your profile and contact you directly.

In addition, you can also build your own network. Perhaps you already have contacts in your network who work for a company that could be of interest for you. Ideally, your contacts recommend you directly to recruiters.

- LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com
- XING: www.xing.com

4. The application process

Have you found a suitable position? Then it is time to get ready for the application process and prepare your application documents.

The application process usually involves three steps:

4.1. The application documents – Making a good impression

With your application documents, you advertise yourself and, in the best case, arouse the interest of the selection committee to invite you for an interview.

The classic application documents are the following:

- Letter of motivation
- Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Certificates and diplomas

Only 60 seconds!
That's how long recruiters look at an applicationon average![3] In most cases, the CV is looked at first, which decides whether the rest of the documents are also looked at.

Therefore, unclear layouts and content that are not very informative are quickly sorted out. Investing time and energy in setting up your application documents can really pay off!

4.1.1 The Letter of motivation – Advertising in own business

The aim of your motivation letter is to show that you are the right person for the advertised position on one page.

The job advertisement sets the plot for your story line:

- Mandatory requirements ("We expect ..."): What competences do I need to have? How did I develop them?
- Desirable requirements ("Ideally, you have ..."): What other competences should I have?
- Other: What else seems to be important for the job or the company? What values or virtues (e. g. flexibility, service orientation, openness) are important to the employer?

[3] Rösler (2015)

In a nutshell:

You do not have to meet all requirements to apply. As a rule, it's sufficient if you meet 70 % of the required skills. If you are unsure whether it makes sense to apply, contact the employer first.

What should I pay attention to in terms of form and content?

Pay attention to the following:

- Find out the contact person and do not address your cover letter to "To whom it may concern".
- The letter of motivation does not reflect the career history, but contains information that is not apparent from the CV.
- The letter should not be longer than one page.
- It has the same layout as the CV (font type / size etc.).
- The language is active and lively; passive constructions are the exception.
- Address the employer directly ("You are looking for someone for …", "I could support you by …")

In which language do I apply if I'm not yet fluent in German?

If the job advertisement is in German, you should submit your application in German. Many recruiters find it easier to evaluate documents if they are written in their mother tongue. In this case, make it clear that you are still learning German and thus avoid creating false expectations.

Alternatively, you can check directly with the company to see if documents in English are also welcome before you start preparing them.

4.1.2 Crux of the matter: CV – complete and goal oriented

With your curriculum vitae (CV) you present your skills, experience and qualifications. In any case, you should align these with the required criteria from the job description.

How is a CV structured?
A CV is roughly divided into four categories:

1. Your personal data:
In addition to your contact information, you can decide what other information you would like to disclose about yourself at this point of time. The most common items are:

- First name and surname
- Your address
- Email address and / or phone number
- Date / place of birth (optional)
- Marital status (optional)
- Nationality (optional)

2. Your professional experience:

- Build up your information in a table: The time span is to the left (month / year), the content to the right.
- Start with your current or last job.
- State the exact period of time during which you held the respective job: month / year-month / year. If the information refers to a period longer than ten years ago, it is sufficient to state only the years.
- State the name of the employer, the place of work and your position.
- Below this, briefly specify the tasks und duties you are or were responsible for.
- Focus especially on tasks that are also relevant to the job you are applying for.
- For jobs that have nothing or very little to do with the position you are targeting now, it is sufficient to state the period, the employer and the position. In this way, you draw attention to what is important and you can score points for the new job with your strengths.
- Your information should be complete. State what you have done from the end of your schooling to the present day. Small interruptions of a few months (e. g. between two jobs) do not need to be justified.

3. Your education and training:

- Again, start with the most recent training or education.
- On the left is the time span; on the right is the name of the university, school or academy, the subject or the content, and the degree obtained.
- Only list information that is important for the job you are applying for.

4. Your other skills:
If, in addition to your professional experience and qualifications, you have other

skills that might be of interest to the employer, let them know!

Possible areas are e. g.

- Language skills (with indication of the respective language level)
- IT-skills (with indication of the respective user level)
- Interests, hobbies and / or voluntary work. Here you can communicate additional information about yourself that distinguishes you as a person and make you stand out from the rest of the applicants. But remember: less is more!

Concrete examples of CV design:
You can find more concrete suggestions and examples on the design and structure of a CV here:

- Bewerbungsratgeber der ETH Zürich: www.ethz.ch
- DAS AKADEMIE: www.das-akademie.de
- Visual CV: www.visualcv.com
- CV samples and templates: www.lebenslaufmuster.de

In a nutshell:

A CV should be concise and clear. It should not exceed two pages (three pages for professionally experienced applicants). Therefore, place the emphasis on qualifications and former positions that are important for the new employer. Put the information in such a way that the recruiters can see at a glance how well you fit for their position!

4.1.3 Certificates and diplomas – Backing up your story

Certificates and work references are the evidence of the qualifications you have obtained (e. g. degree, further education) and of your professional experience. This is how you prove the truthfulness of your information in the CV.
Therefore, your application should include all relevant certificates and references for the job.

An employer's reference letter usually contains the following information:

- Length and type of employment
- Description of tasks and duties
- Performance appraisal

What can I do if my documents and certificates are written in another language?

GERMANY

For many official documents that have to be presented to a public authority, it is required that they are professionally translated by a sworn translator. Therefore, you should have your documents and certificates translated into German by certified translators.

On the homepage of the German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators (BDÜ) you will find translators for more than 80 languages in various fields:

- BDÜ: www.bdue.de

AUSTRIA

In Austria, a certified translation is always required when official documents have to be presented to the Austrian authorities or other public institutions. Since a certified translation has to meet certain formal criteria, it is carried out by so-called court interpreters. You can find a list for the individual languages here:

- Österreichischer Verband der allgemein beeidigten und gerichtlich zertifizierten Dolmetscher (ÖVGD): www.gerichtsdolmetscher.at

SWITZERLAND

Offices or other public institutions in Switzerland require the submission of an officially or notarial certified translation. There are various contact points for this.

- TRADUCTA Switzerland: www.traducta.ch
- semiotic transfer: www.semiotictransfer.ch

What can I do if I do not have any reference letters?
If you do not have any reference letters of former employers, you can alternatively provide references of supervisors who have worked with you in the past. The potential new employer can then contact them directly. Put their contacts under the headline "References" at the end of your CV, but do not forget to ask them first whether they are willing to serve as your references.

4.1.4 The application photo – Yes or no?

It is up to you whether you want to apply with an application photo or not. In order to prevent discrimination, a photo application is not compulsory. Nevertheless, it is still quite common for applicants to include a photo of themselves on a cover sheet or in their CV. For the members of the selection committee, this has the advantage that they get a face to put on the documents, which - in the best case - builds up sympathy and secures you an advantage.

If you decide to apply with a photo, make sure that this is a professionally taken application photo in which you appear competent and friendly. It is best to get advice from a photo studio. Self-taken snapshots or holiday photos are unsuitable for applications.

4.1.5 Country-specific differences in application documents

On the whole, the application documents in Austria, Germany and Switzerland are very similar. This is especially true for the structure and the documents to be submitted. However, there are also some fine differences that you should be aware of.

What you should pay special attention to when applying in Germany
In Germany, the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) applies. No one may be discriminated against on the basis of e. g. gender, origin or age. This also has an impact on the application documents: Personal details such as birthday, place of birth or marital status do not have to be provided, as in Austria, and an application photo does not have to be included. However, it is still common for applicants to provide this information, which is why many companies expect this unspoken.
Another aspect concerns German language skills. As a rule, employees are expected to speak the national language. This

also applies if the working environment is international, and you do not need to know German for business purposes. Many companies use German as the company language. Even amongcolleagues, it is common to speak in German. Therefore, start to learn German as soon as possible and show in your application that you are motivated to learn the national language.
Regarding formalities, it is common in Germany to sign both the cover letter and the CV at the end. Therefore, prepare a high-quality scan of your signature that you can use when sending your documents digitally. The CV also contains the current date to the left of the signature.

Further information about applying for jobs in Germany can be found here:

- Make it in Germany: www.make-it-in-germany.com

Differences when applying in Austria

In Austria, formality and etiquette are very important. This applies, for example, to the mention of academic titles. They have a much higher value than in Germany and Switzerland and should therefore be mentioned, if known, both in the address field and in the salutation.

In addition, the etiquette is reflected in the fact that - as in Germany - the CV is finalised with a date and signature.
For your personal details, your title, first name and surname as well as your contact details are sufficient. Further personal information like date and place of birth, marital status or nationality can be provided, but do not have to be mentioned due to the Equal Treatment Act applicable in Austria.

When applying in Austria, special emphasis is placed on the personality and character of the applicant.[4] Therefore, you should not only state personal information about hobbies and private interests, but also explain how these promote the desired job.
However, applicants should be careful to find the right balance between self-promotion and modesty.

Further information about applying for jobs in Austria can be found here:

- Arbeitsmarktservice (AMS): www.ams.at
- Austrian Business Agency (ABA): www.workinaustria.com
- Just landed: www.justlanded.com

[4] richtiggutbewerben.de (2019)

What to look out for when applying for a job in Switzerland

As in Austria, applicants in Switzerland also convince with a good degree of restraint und humility. However, this also applies to the mention of academic titles below the PhD. Anyone who states "Mag." or "Dipl.-Ing." can quickly be considered vain. Knowledge should also be stated truthfully and not interpreted generously. In multilingual Switzerland, for example, anyone who claims to speak French, even though they haven't spoken French for a long time, will be caught out in the interview and will be dismissed.

Qualification certificates are usually only sent on request; instead, reference lists and letters of recommendation are more important and should be included with the application in any case. Further differences concern formalities:

- In Switzerland, the date is left-justified and not right-justified, as is usual in Germany, for example.
- Information on marital status and nationality should be provided in Switzerland.
- In contrast to Germany and Austria, the CV is not dated and not signed.

If you submit your documents in German, please note that some details differ from German or Austrian language use:

- The letter "ß" doesn't exist in Swiss German, which is why it is replaced by "ss".
- There is no comma after the salutation.
- In Switzerland, the driving license is called "Führerausweis der Kategorie B" instead of "Führerschein Klasse B".
- Last but not least, use "Zivilstand" in stead of "Familienstand"and "Beilagen" instead of "Anlagen".

Further information about applying for jobs in Switzerland can be found here:

- PROSPECTS: www.prospects.ac

4.2 The job interview – Convince in person

You have received an invitation to a job interview? That is great! It is a good sign that they are interested in you, but keep in mind that it is not a commitment yet. A good preparation will help you to overcome this obstacle.

The most common forms of an interview are the following:

- Face-to-face interview
- Telephone interview
- Video interview

[4] richtiggutbewerben.de (2019)

Did you know that, according to a survey, around 23 % of job interviews lead to an employment contract? [5]

Depending on the company and the job, you may go through several interviews during the application process. It is also possible that you start with a telephone or video interview and the personal interview will follow in the next round.

4.2.1 Preparing for a classic job interview

How do I prepare for my interview?

No matter what form the interview takes, the following points should always be considered:

- ☐ Obtain information about the company, the industry, and its current developments.
- ☐ Think about questions about the company, the job or the industry or business field in advance.
- ☐ Try to obtain information about the people who will be the interviewers (e.g. about the exact position, their educational background, studies, etc.).
- ☐ Read the job description and your documents again to communicate your qualifications convincingly during the interview.
- ☐ Prepare yourself for the usual questions like “Why did you apply to us?”, “What are your strengths for this position?” or “Why are you the right person for us?”.
- ☐ Practice in advance with family or friends and simulate the interview together.

What rules of conduct should I take care of?

Be sure to observe the following rules of conduct:

- ☐ Be on time for your interview and plan more time to get there or to log in to the online meeting.

[5] Bitkom Research (2018)

- ☐ Respect the dress code. With dressing appropriately, you enhance your own personality. Furthermore, you show the necessary appreciation to the interviewers. Information on the dress code in the respective company can be found on its homepage.
- ☐ Be prepared to take notes and bring them something to write with.

There's only one chance for the first impression. Often people decide in a few seconds whether they want to see a person again or not! [6]

What should I pay attention to regarding manners and body language?

To leave a good first impression, you should consider the following points::

- ☐ Before the Corona pandemic, it used to be common to greet each other with a handshake. If someone wants to handshake with you, your hand should be warm and dry and your handshake should be firm but not painful.
- ☐ Maintain eye contact with the person you are talking to.
- ☐ Be self-confident in the way you express yourself. Avoid soft statements like "I think..., I would..." and use phrases like "I know..., I can..." instead.

4.2.2 Preparing for a telephone interview

What does a telephone interview look like?

The telephone interview is a pre-stage to the face-to-face job interview and is

[6] Universität zu Köln (2015)

becoming increasingly popular with recruiters.

Usually, the telephone interview is much shorter than a face-to-face interview. The goal is to briefly get to know each other. Afterwards, a decision is made whether you will be invited to an interview. Expect it to last about 15 – 30 minutes.

What should I keep in mind when preparing for the telephone interview?
Just think of the telephone interview as a small job interview.

- ☐ Prepare it in the same way as you would for a personal job interview.
- ☐ Choose a quiet place with a good reception.
- ☐ Have your application documents as well as something ready to write.
- ☐ Excitement is reflected in the voice: we become faster, we speak more highly, and we get lost more easily, which leads to more excitement. Therefore, make sure that you speak clearly and not too fast, and that your voice sounds full and bass-heavy.

4.2.3 Preparing for a video interview

What happens during the video interview?
Since the Corona pandemic, online job interviews have become common. Usually, these take place via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Skype.

The planned duration of the video interview gives you an indication of the aim of the interview. Shorter interviews of about 20 – 30 minutes are usually a first pre-selection; longer interviews (60 – 90 minutes) are comprehensive interviews.

How can I prepare for the video interview?
Prepare well by keeping an eye on the following:

- ☐ Follow the same points as for the preparation of personal and telephone interviews.
- ☐ Get familiar with the software used (e.g. Zoom, MS Teams).
- ☐ Make sure you have a good and stable internet connection. Switch off all applications that you do not need for the interview.

- ☐ Use a place free of disturbance. Switch off the phone and turn off the doorbell to avoid interruptions.
- ☐ Pay attention to your background here. It should be quiet and tidy and not too private.
- ☐ Make sure you have good lighting. The light should ideally come from the front, so that you are visible enough and your image is not too dark.
- ☐ It is best to use an external microphone. This will transmit your voice more comfortably and reverberation and background noises will be softened.
- ☐ Test your audio and video in advance with family or friends.
- ☐ Wear appropriate clothes. Even if the other person can only see your upper body, you should still dress as you would for a personal interview.
- ☐ Maintain eye contact and always look directly into the camera.

5. The interview is over. What's next?

After the interview, it is in some cases a good idea to send a short follow-up mail to the relevant contact person. Do not wait too long and send the mail to your contact person within a few days after the interview.

First of all, thank them for the interview and their time. Refer to a topic from the interview. Is there a specific question that you have been thinking about again? Refer to it! Finally, express that you would like to work for them and that you would appreciate positive feedback.

Sources

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Additional literature tips

Now, we wish you good luck in your job search! In the following you will find further infor-mation on applying for a job.

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