

Forensic Science Career Guide

Marshall University



FORENSIC SCIENCE



For Internship and Job Seekers

INTRO AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

This guide was created in partnership between the Marshall University Forensic Science Program and the Career Services Center.



FORENSIC SCIENCE

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with resources that will prepare you for your career search. It is suggested that you attend a one-on-one career coaching session prior to beginning your job/internship search. If you have additional questions, you can e-mail the Career Services Center at career-services@marshall.edu, or contact your academic advisor.



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FORENSIC SCIENCE

What can I do with this degree?

GENERAL AREAS	VARIOUS DISCIPLINES
Biology	
	DNA Profiling
	Paternity Testing
	Forensic Biology
Chemistry	
	Toxicology
	Drug Analysis
	Fire Debris & Explosives Analysis
	Chemical Trace Evidence
Crime Scene	
	Crime Scene
Computer Forensics	
	Computer Forensic Examination
	Mobile Phone Forensic Examination
	Information Security
	Criminal Investigation
Comparative Sciences	
	Questioned Documents
	Fingerprints
	Firearms/Toolmarks
	Microscopy

Employers

FEDERAL	STATE	OTHER
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives	State Crime Labs/State Police Departments	Insurance Agencies
Federal Bureau of Investigation	Coroner Offices	Private Lab Facilities
Drug Enforcement Administration	Medical Examiner Offices	Crime Scene Units
Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory	Law Enforcement Offices	

Secret Service	Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation	
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FORENSIC SCIENCE CAREER FIELDS

Forensic Science Tech Career

Forensic science techs work in crime labs to analyze the evidence collected from crime scenes. They may look at things such as hair, fibers, or weapons. They determine whether the evidence collected is important for the investigation. Forensic science technicians may need to write reports and appear in court to give testimony.

Forensic science techs should have a background in science and good problem solving skills. They should be comfortable working with a small group of people. They often do not need to interact with the general public.

Crime Laboratory Analyst Career

Crime laboratory analysts use their highly specialized scientific skills to examine the evidence that has been collected for a crime. They perform the experiments necessary to link evidence to a suspect and discover what really happened in a crime. They often have more specialized training than forensic science technicians.

Crime laboratory analysts should be detail oriented and have a background in science. Special training with scientific equipment will help those interested to get ahead. The work is occasionally repetitive, so those who wish to be crime laboratory analysts should like routines.

Forensic Pathologist Career

Forensic pathologists are medical doctors who perform autopsies on crime victims to determine the cause of death. They write reports that list the “manner of death” (including homicide, natural causes, accident, and undetermined). They are frequently called upon to testify in court cases.

Those who wish to be forensic pathologists must become medical doctors. They should have a keen eye for detail to allow them to determine the cause of death. It is not always the obvious answer. They also should be comfortable working with dead bodies.

Forensic Toxicologist Career

Forensic toxicologists analyze the bodily fluids of a deceased person to determine the presence of drugs, chemicals, or poisons. This can help to identify the cause of death. Additionally, forensic toxicologists also frequently examine the contents of the stomach in order to make qualitative statements regarding what the deceased person last ate and if there were any abnormalities.

Forensic toxicologists should have a background in chemistry. They should be very detail-oriented as the levels of chemicals found in a body may be quite small.

DNA Analyst Career

DNA analysts help to link potential DNA evidence to crime suspects. DNA can be found in blood, hair, or skin that's been left at the scene of the crime. This evidence is carefully collected and then analyzed. DNA evidence is increasingly important in convicting suspects of their crimes. Conversely, DNA evidence has also helped to exonerate formerly convicted suspects who were innocent.

DNA analysts should have a background in science with specialized training in DNA research. They should be detail-oriented and comfortable working with lab equipment. DNA analysts should like routines as the research work that they perform may be somewhat repetitive.

Digital Forensic Examiner Career

Digital forensic examination involves searching a suspect hard drive or cell phone for evidence of a crime. This work is often done in close association with Law Enforcement. Suspect devices are often forensically cloned, and tests are performed on the cloned devices. A written report is created by the examiner that outlines the step-by-step procedures taken, and gives detailed information about any evidence found on the device. Digital forensic examiners may need to appear in court to give testimony.

Digital forensic examiners should have a background in computers and operating systems, and should be detail oriented. They should be comfortable working alone or with a small group of people. The work is often repetitive but is very interesting. They often do not need to interact with the general public.

FORENSIC SCIENCE CAREER OVERVIEW

Forensic science uses science to aid in law enforcement, and in this pursuit forensic scientists work to give impartial, unbiased scientific evidence which can be used in courts and criminal investigations. Forensic science is very multidisciplinary, as it uses information acquired from a wide variety of fields and disciplines including chemistry, biology, physics, psychology, geology, information technology, and the social sciences. In recent years, shows like CSI and Law and Order have popularized both the field and the profession, and have served to increase the number of students pursuing forensic science degrees.

Forensic scientists are concerned with collecting evidence, and they use the evidence found at places like crime scenes to help solve crimes. Forensic scientists play a very important role in any investigative team, and they rely upon their extensive training and education to help ensure the accuracy of all the evidence collected. Communication skills are very important, as are analytical and computer skills. Details are something forensic scientists must be very concerned with, due to the fact that everything a forensic scientist does is extremely detail oriented – they must be able to identify and properly process tiny pieces of evidence such as a single piece of hair or one fingerprint. A short sample of a forensic scientist's duties are:

- Collecting evidence at the scene of a crime
- Performing tests on evidence
- Preparing reports documenting findings and giving them to investigators
- Giving testimony as an expert witness in court cases

Forensic science is a broad field that encompasses many different careers and specializations, some of which include:

- DNA forensics
- Forensics engineering
- Forensics dentistry
- Forensic Anthropology
- Digital Forensic Examiner
- Medical Examiner

- Crime Scene Examiner
- Handwriting Expert
- Ballistics Expert

Many forensic scientists work in labs, but some field agents do need to travel to crime scenes or to courtrooms. Long hours are not uncommon in this field, especially if evidence has to be collected and analyzed quickly for an important court case. Processing and analyzing evidence is a very meticulous, detail-oriented and time sensitive matter, so weekend work is not uncommon during particularly busy periods. Additionally, while some forensics scientists work full-time, others may work in different occupations and may be called in for forensic consulting work. Some work in forensics full time while others may work in other occupations and occasionally be called in to consult on forensics work.

*From www.guidetoonschools.com

CAREER AND JOB SKILLS PORTFOLIO

What is a job skills, job-search, or career portfolio? It is a job-hunting tool that you develop that gives employers a complete picture of who you are -- your experience, your education, your accomplishments, your skill sets -- and what you have the potential to become -- much more than just a cover letter and resume can provide. You can use your career portfolio in job interviews to showcase a point, to illustrate the depth of your skills and experience, or in the future when you are up for a promotion. It is important to keep track of all your experiences.

- Career Summary and Goals: A description of what you stand for (such as work ethic, organizational interests, management philosophy, etc.) and where you see yourself in two to five years.
- Professional Philosophy/Mission Statement: A short description of the guiding principles that drive you and give you purpose.
- Traditional Resume: A summary of your education, achievements, and work experience, using a chronological or functional format.
- Skills, Abilities and Marketable Qualities: A detailed examination of your skills and experience. This section should include the name of the skill area; the performance or behavior, knowledge, or personal traits that contribute to your success in that skill area; your background and specific experiences that demonstrate your application of the skill.
- List of Accomplishments: A detailed listing that highlights the major accomplishments in your career to date.
- Accomplishments are one of the most important elements of any good job-search
- Samples of Your Work: A sampling of your best work, including reports, papers, studies, brochures, projects, presentations, etc. Besides print samples, you can also include CD-ROMs, videos, and other multimedia formats.
- Research, Publications, Reports: A way to showcase multiple skills, including your written communications abilities. Include any published papers and conference proceedings.



- Testimonials and Letters of Recommendations: A collection of any kudos you have received -- from customers, clients, colleagues, past employers, professors, etc. Some experts even suggest including copies of favorable employer evaluations and reviews.
- Awards and Honors: A collection of any certificates of awards, honors, and scholarships.
- Conference and Workshops: A list of conferences, seminars, and workshops you've participated in and/or attended.
- Transcripts, Degrees, Licenses, and Certifications: A description of relevant courses, degrees, licenses, and certifications.
- Professional Development Activities: A listing of professional associations and conferences attended ~ and any other professional development activities.
- Military records, awards, and badges: A listing of your military service, if applicable.
- Volunteering/Community Service: A description of any community service activities, volunteer or pro bono work you have completed, especially as it relates to your career.
- References List: A list of three to five professional references (including full names, titles, addresses, and phone/email).

JOB/ INTERNSHIP SEARCH CHECKLIST

- Compile a background check portfolio. The information compiled will help you in creating a resume, filling out applications, as well as providing information for background checks.
- Create a resume and/or curriculum vitae (C.V.)
- Prepare a cover letter - Create a generic cover letter that you can customize for each job you are applying for.
- Have at least one person proofread your resume, CV, and cover letter, and give you suggestions for improvement. Remember, the average amount of time spent reading a resume is 45 seconds.
- Ask professors, employers, advisors, supervisors, coaches, etc., to be references
- Compile reference letters.
- Develop your professional network --Collect business cards and keep contacts.
- Use professors, bosses, friends, guest speakers, workshop presenters, etc.
- Develop job leads - Check the Career Center, newspapers, professors, Internet, friends, etc.
- Attend professional organization meetings and conferences. Create new contacts.
- Work on your interviewing skills - Attend an interview skills workshop at the Career Services Center.
- Purchase an "Interviewing" outfit - See the Dress for Success section.
- Search online job databases and job sites focused on your career field (many sites are listed at the end of this guide).
- Consider relocation options
- Send out Resumes/C.V.s
- Send a thank you letter after interviewing.

RESUME VS. CURRICULUM VITAE

Though the term Curriculum Vitae (CV) and Resume are generally interchangeable, there are some significant differences in the two. Curriculum Vitas involve in-depth and structured information about the professional experience and qualification of a person. Resumes are a very abridged summary of what would be written in depth and detail in the CV. This is why typically a CV would be 2+ pages, and the resume is normally limited to 1 – 2 pages.

CVs are the worldwide standard for job applications. CV content preference varies from country to country, and sometimes from company to company—so if you are applying worldwide, check on the preferred format before compiling your CV.

Resumes are the standard form for job applications in United States. Curriculum Vitas are the standard in the U.S. for jobs in the fields of science, higher education, and governmental job fields.

Curriculum Vitae (CV)

- Systematical and has a specific order
- Length can vary from 2-5 pages (or more if necessary)
- Presented in reverse chronological order (i.e. the latest achievements first)
- List of all your professional experience (Up until the date you submit it)
- Description of experience normally written in detailed paragraph form
- Includes all relevant experience - whether paid or unpaid (Voluntary, internship, shadowing, workshop and training experience)
- Always accompanied by a cover letter, which summarizes your CV and points out your relevant
- Skills / experience with the job listing/description.
- Worldwide and scientific standard for job application.

Resume

- Brief—1-2 pages
- Order and content can vary (chronologically and topically)
- Contains experience strictly relevant to the job applied and nothing else
- Bullet pointed summary of job duties, tasks, and achievements
- Highlights skills and achievements
- Purpose is for fast scanning and processing of key words (normally matched with words from the job description).
- Can be submitted without a cover letter in certain instances.
- U.S. Standard for job application.

RESUME WRITING TIPS

1. Be Specific About Your Qualifications
2. Focus on Your Accomplishments. Make sure action verbs reflect past-tense since they have already been achieved.
3. Incorporate Keywords
4. Match Your Resume to Your LinkedIn Profile
5. Put the most important information first
6. Use 11 Or 12 point - TIMES NEW ROMAN or other serif font
7. Margins should be about 1" on all sides. You can reduce the margins if you need extra space, but do not make them smaller than 1/2." If the margins are too small, your resume will look too crowded.
8. Avoid underlining, italics, shading, and fancy graphics. They can interfere with electronic scanning.
9. Bold each category heading (ex. CAREER OBJECTIVE).
10. Check spelling, punctuation, grammar, and word usage.
11. Have someone with solid editing skills look over your resume.
12. Use a laser-quality printer or a high-quality photocopier to print your resume.

Basic Resume Worksheet

NAME

address,
phone
email

CAREER OBJECTIVE

(List type of job you are seeking. Example: To obtain a position as a where I could utilize my education and experience in,,,)

SKILLS

(List several of your strengths or skills that are relevant to the position you are applying for.)

- xxxxxxxxxxxx
- xxxxxxxxxxxx
- xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

EDUCATION

Institution name,

Location, State

Degree type, i.e. B.S.

Major ..., minor

Graduation date

GPA

INTERNSHIP

(List internships, or other relevant experiences)

WORK EXPERIENCE (List employers, list most recent experience first and work back in reverse chronological order)

Employer name,

Employer location, state

Position title

Employment dates (from - to)

- job duties
- job duties

Employer name,

Employer location, state

Position title

Employment dates (from - to)

- job duties
- job duties

HONORS & ACTIVITIES

List your accomplishments, honors, memberships, volunteer work, etc.

REFERENCES

“Provided upon request” or “Attached”

Resume Example

JANE REYNOLDS
233 Mortimer Drive
Huntington, WV 25708
(304) 555-5500 - reynolds399@marshall.edu

OBJECTIVE

To obtain a position with the West Virginia State Police Forensic Laboratory.

SKILLS

- Three years of experience working in medical/science environments.
- Excellent computer skills using Cytoscription, DNA Perspective, Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point.
- Strong attention to detail; precise and timely in work assignments.

EDUCATION

Marshall University, Huntington, WV
M.S., Forensic Science, Emphasis: DNA Analysis

Graduated - May 2009

Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA
B.S., ISAT: Biotechnology, Minor: Criminal Justice
GPA: 3.92,

Graduated - December 2006

INTERNSHIP

Las Vegas Metro Police Department, Las Vegas, NV

Cytology Lab Assistant

Spring 2007

- Prepared blood slides for type analysis and DNA testing
- Created and maintained detailed records of testing processes

WORK EXPERIENCE

West Virginia State Police, Winfield, WV

Summer Crime Lab Assistant

Summer 2008

- Performed DNA sequence analyses
- Prepared DNA reports for potential trial presentations

Marshall University, Huntington, WV
College of Science

Graduate Assistant

August 2007 - May 2008 •

- Prepared slides for blood-typing tests for cytology lab classes
- Proctored lab tests, assisted students as needed

River Park Hospital, Huntington, WV

Recreation Assistant

July 2005 - August 2007

- Supervised patients during recreation periods
- Escorted patients to psychiatric and observation appointments

HONORS

- American Legion Leadership Award, 2005

CURRICULUM VITAE

Content

The following is some of the information that can be included in your curriculum vitae. The elements that you include will depend on what you are applying for, so be sure to incorporate the most relevant information to support your candidacy in your CV.

- * Personal/Contact Information
- * Name, address, phone number(s), e-mail
- * Academic Background
- * Postgraduate work, graduate work/degree(s), major/minors, thesis/dissertation titles, honors, undergraduate degree(s), majors/minors, honors
- * Professional Licenses / Certifications
- * Academic/Teaching Experience
- * Courses taught, courses introduced, innovation in teaching, teaching evaluations
- * Technical and Specialized Skills
- * Related/Other Experience
- * Professional/Academic Honors and Awards
- * Professional Development
- * Conferences/workshops attended, other activities
- * Research/Scholarly Activities
- * Journal articles, conference proceedings, books, chapters in books, magazine articles, papers presented/workshops, e-zine articles, work currently under submission, work in progress
- * Grants
- * Service (Academic, Professional, Community)
- * Academic/Research Interests
- * Affiliations/Memberships
- * Foreign Language Abilities/Skills
- * Consulting
- * Volunteer Work
- * References

JANE REYNOLDS
233 Mortimer Drive
Huntington, WV 25708
(304) 555-5500 - reynolds399@marshall.edu

EDUCATION

Master's of Science in Forensic Science (DNA Analysis Emphasis), 2005
Marshall University, Huntington, WV

Bachelor of Science in Biology, 2003
Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

WORK HISTORY

Forensic Scientist II
New York State Patrol, Buffalo Crime Laboratory, Buffalo NY
July 2007- Present

- Completed the majority of training in body fluid identification and DNA analysis. Conduct routine analysis to include: laboratory examination in which the items to be tested require a single specific examination or a standard battery of examinations or analyses, the results of which lead to a conclusion acceptable to experts in the field. Interpret analytical results and prepare written opinion reports. May testify as an expert witness in courts of law.
- Safety Officer for the DNA Casework Section- perform routine safety duties to ensure compliance with chemical hygiene, safety, and blood-borne pathogen principles by providing current information, monitoring the use of chemicals and other hazardous processes, and conducting and documenting regular safety checks of the section.

Forensic Scientist I
New York State Patrol, Buffalo Crime Laboratory, Buffalo, NY
July 2005- July 2007

- Worked in a training capacity and under close supervision performing beginning level analysis of physical evidence in criminal cases submitted to the forensic laboratory. With on-the-job training, learned entry level analysis of casework in body fluid identification and DNA analysis. Interpreted analytical results and prepared written opinion reports.
- Safety Officer for the DNA Casework Section- perform routine safety duties to ensure compliance with chemical hygiene, safety, and blood-borne pathogen principles by providing current information, monitoring the use of chemicals and other hazardous processes, and conducting and documenting regular safety checks of the section.

Graduate Assistant
Marshall University Forensic Science Center (MUFSC), Huntington, WV
August 2003-May2005

- Performed routine physical, chemical, and biological analysis following clearly defined laboratory procedures. Prepared, sterilized and quality checked reagents used in laboratory testing. Operated and performed routine maintenance on laboratory analytical equipment to include: centrifuges, autoclave, 9700, 7000/7500, 3100/3130 and other laboratory equipment. Prepared, washed and sterilized laboratory glassware, pipettes, tubes and other laboratory supplies. Performed other duties as required.

TRAINING

- Moot Court, National Forensic Science Technology Center, Vancouver, NY June 6-11, 2008
- Statistics and Population Genetics for Forensic DNA Analysis, National Forensic Science Technology Center, Vancouver, NY February 19-22, 2008

- Court Testimony Techniques: Success Instead of Survival, Ron Smith & Associates, Inc. Criminal Justice Training Center, Burien, NY January 28-29, 2008
- President's DNA Initiative (PDI)-DNA Analysis Training, National Forensic Science Technology Center, Key Largo, FL November 2007- Present
- Infectious Disease Regional Training 2007, online refresher, Buffalo, NY, October 2007
- STR Training Program, New York State Patrol, Buffalo, NY November 2007-present
- Body Fluid Identification, Pacific Coast Forensic Science Institute, New York State Patrol, Vancouver, NY September 2007
- Biochemical Analysis Training, New York State Patrol, Buffalo, NY July 2007-Present
- Independent Study: "Filtration Based Differential Extraction," Marshall University Forensic Science Center, Huntington, WV, May 2006 to August 2006
- Advanced DNA Training Course (GeneMapper ID), Marshall University, Huntington, WV, April 2006

PRESENTATIONS GIVEN

"Detection of Latent Fingerprints on Items Recovered from Water," New York State Patrol, Buffalo Crime Laboratory, August 2008

"A Filtration Based Differential Extraction Method Tested on Simulated Sexual Assault Evidence", 59th Annual AAFS Meeting, Young Forensic Scientists Forum Poster Session, February 20, 2007

"Internal Validation of the AmpFester MiniFiler Amplification Kit", Journal Article Review, Marshall University, 2005

WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

Applied Biosystems 2008 Future Trends in Forensic DNA Technology Seminar Series, Buffalo, NY

Applied Biosystems 2007 Future Trends in Forensic DNA Technology Seminar Series, Buffalo, NY

59th Annual AAFS Meeting, San Antonio, TX, 2007

- "Mitochondrial DNA Analysis" The Foundation and the Fundamentals at the Leading Edge", 59th Annual AAFA Meeting, San Antonio, TX
- "Young Forensic Scientist Forum", 59th Annual AAFS Meeting, San Antonio, TX

AWARDS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Academic

- Graduated with Honors, Summa Sum Laude, BS in Biology
- Member in good standing of Alpha Chi National Honor Scholarship Society
- Treasure of The Virginia Tech Biology Club
- Presidential Scholar

Military

- The Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for outstanding performance of duty while serving as a Cryptological Direct Support Element Training Department Data Base Entry Coordinator and Assistant to the Command Language Program Manager
- Letter of Appreciation for outstanding professionalism
- Letter of Appreciation for initiative and dedication for outstanding job performance
- Letter of Appreciation for generous efforts to support the community

COVER LETTER

The purpose of a cover letter is to introduce yourself to a prospective employer. It should be enclosed with every C.V./resume you send.

Since your cover letter is usually the first contact you have with a potential employer, it should be well written and neat, with no typing or grammatical errors. The importance of neatness cannot be overemphasized. When employers or personnel directors begin to look through cover letters and C.V.s, they often begin by eliminating those that look messy or contain misspelled words and errors in grammar.

Whenever possible, always address your cover letter to a specific person rather than "Dear Sir or Madam" or "To Whom it May Concern." If you don't know a specific name, telephone the company and request the name and title of the appropriate person to receive your letter.

The cover letter should not exceed one page. It should be a "highlight reel" of your most significant accomplishments, relevant skills, and experience. In your own style, it should tell the employer you are interested in the job and desire an interview. You should use keywords from the job listing that are relevant to your experience. Also, make sure you reference the source where you got the job lead or listing from.



Cover letters are not necessary for interviews when arrangements for an interview have already been made.

Jack Shephard
675 Crest Avenue
Los Angeles, CA USA 90001

September 12, 2009

Mr. Charles Widmore Hiring Manager
Ann Arbor Police Department 7821 Cornerstone Blvd.
Ann Arbor, MI USA 48103 Dear Ms. Widmore:

Dear Mr. Widmore,

Please accept my cover letter and my resume as an application for the Forensic Science Technician, which was posted on the ASCLD website.

My experience includes investigating crimes by collecting and analyzing physical evidence with a specialty in DNA analysis. I have worked with other forensic science technicians during my time with the Leebrook Forensic Lab.

If you're interested in speaking to me about this job and meeting me in person, please call me at 555-555-4815 to set up a time that fits your calendar. I look forward to meeting you and hopefully, joining the department. I appreciate your taking time to go over my resume.

Sincerely,

Jack Shephard

Enclosure: resume

BACKGROUND CHECK INFORMATION

The following is some of the information that can be included in a full background check. Knowing this information ahead of time can help you to develop a portfolio that will help you not only with the background check information, but with composing resumes, C.V.s, and documents for promotions.

- Current contact information
- Citizenship information
- Addresses you have lived at and the name of someone (non-related) who knew you there
 - All roommates names, possibly their contact information (if known).
- Schools Attended and name of someone (non-related) who knew you there
- Employment
 - Name, address, phone, pay, dates, supervisor, title, duties, reasons for leaving, reprimands
 - Periods of unemployment and reasons
- Marital Status
- Immediate Family
 - Name, date of birth, where they were born, citizenship
 - Parents, siblings, spouse, spouses immediate family
- People who have known you for X number of years
- Foreign Contacts- non-US citizens
- Foreign business and professional activities
 - Countries visited with dates
- Mental and emotional health
 - Therapist or counseling
 - Medications
- Police/Criminal record
- Use of drugs/drug related activity
- Use of alcohol
- Previous background checks / revocation of security clearance
- Financial record/ credit check
- Involvement in non-criminal court actions

Background Check Portfolio

- Why a Portfolio?
- Handy for interviews- you look more professional
- Keeps everything together and organized
- Should be in a nice binder
- Everything in plastic pages (no holes punched)
- Table of Contents with tabs to separate sections
- Originals in front with copies you can give out behind them
- Have everything scanned or saved. Keep on a CD or thumb drive for backup



Creating a Background Check Portfolio:

- Begin collecting this information as soon as possible
 - Often you're on a deadline. The sooner the background check is completed the sooner you can start working
- Background checks require information from at least 7-10 years back. It is best to start from the beginning and keep it updated
- Need detailed information
 - Dates, addresses, phone numbers, full names

Portfolio Components:

- Transcripts (all colleges)
- Diplomas (copies)
- SAT/ACT/GRE test scores
- Immunization Records
- Marriage license or name change paperwork (especially if some of your records are in a different name)
- Detailed Job History
- Training/ conference/ workshop certificates
- Professional Memberships
- CV, Resume
- Evaluations (seminar, internships)
- Research, Examples of writing, Posters (especially if they are listed on your CV)

RESEARCHING AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

It is very important to know basic facts about the organizations you are interviewing with; it is essential to getting ahead in an interview. There are many types of agencies or organizations (government, corporation, non-profit, etc.), so make sure you know which one you are dealing with before entering an interview. The first step in researching a company is to visit their website. Another step would be to type the company's name into a search program with an asterisk (*) before and after the name, and see what the news or general public has to say about the organization.

RESEARCHING THE AGENCY OR ORGANIZATION

Learn as much as possible about the laboratory, agency, or facility and the community— its people, its size, its problems, and so forth—before the interview. The more knowledge you have about the lab, the better you will perform in the job interview, and the greater your chance of receiving a job offer. If it becomes evident to the interviewer that you know nothing about the lab, it may cost you a job offer.

Your knowledge of the lab, company, or facility should include but not be limited to the following:

- Accreditation
- History/Background of the Organization
- Laboratory Facilities
- Instrumentations
- Divisions
- Benefits
- Culture
- Advancement opportunities
- Financial status
- Strategic plans/goals
- Leadership
- Diversity
- Community involvement
- Owner/President/CEO

DRESS FOR A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

Dos and Don'ts for Women

- Do wear a skirt or pants suit. Preferably navy, gray, brown, or black.
- Do wear a business-like dress, if a suit is not an option.
- Do wear a blouse in white or contrasting color and a tailored jacket or blazer.
- Do wear shoes in a conservative color with a medium heel and closed toe.
- Do have a neat appearance, combed hair and clean hands with groomed nails.
- Don't overdo perfume, makeup, or jewelry.
- Don't wear textured or colored hose. Skirt length should be appropriate for a business office.



Dos and Don'ts for Men

- Do wear a suit, solid or pinstripe; navy, gray, brown, or black are best.
- Do wear a dress shirt in white or light blue with a well-ironed collar.
- Do wear a tie that comes down to your belt buckle.
- Do wear shined shoes that are black or brown with matching socks.
- Do have a neat appearance, clean shaven face, combed hair with trimmed beard, and clean hands with groomed nails.
- Don't wear jewelry or excessive cologne.
- Don't wear turtlenecks or leisure suits.
- Don't wear gaudy ties or big belt buckles.
- Don't wear loafers, boots, or sandals.
- Don't wear shoes with badly worn heels.



HOW TO BEHAVE IN AN INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW! The word itself can strike terror into the hearts of job seekers or at the very least cause sweaty palms and nervous anxiety.

Most job applicants know that the interview is the most important 60 minutes in a job search. By preparing yourself for a job interview, you can have a strong advantage over other job applicants who do not take the time to learn how to present themselves well to a prospective employer.

Five Key Factors in Successful Interviewing

1. Make a positive impression: Arrive early, dress appropriately, eat a mint so your breath is fresh, offer a firm handshake, smile, and make eye contact; know some facts about the organization, and present a neat and effective C.V. or resume.
2. Communicate your skills: Answer questions completely and honestly, emphasize your skills and personal strengths, ask insightful questions about the company or job, and never ask about salary or benefits unless the interviewer brings them up first.
3. Answer problem questions: Anticipate problem questions by rehearsing answers in advance, turn your weaknesses into strengths, and never say anything derogatory about a previous employer.
4. Let the employer know why he/she should hire you: A job interview is not the time to be modest. Offer specific examples of how your skills will be valuable to the employer.
5. Follow up after the interview: Always send a thank you letter. Stay in touch even if you did not get a job offer.

COMMONLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

General HR Questions:

- Tell me about yourself
- Describe your ideal supervisor.
- Tell us about the project, what did you do to ensure that the project was being completed by the deadline, as well as the outcome.

General Science and Lab Related Questions:

- What is Quality Assurance and what should a lab do in order to make sure Quality Assurance is in place?
- What would you do if you have a co-worker that likes to talk to you while you're performing a task that requires your total concentration?
- What would you do if you think you might have contaminated a sample?



Technical Job-Related Questions:

- Please describe to us how you would examine a piece of evidence for the presence of biological materials, such as semen, blood, saliva, urine, and feces. Please describe the process as if you're speaking to a group of middle school students.
- Please describe the principles behind capillary electrophoresis.
- What is a presumptive test? What is a confirmatory test? Please give an example of each.

Good vs. Bad Questions

Good—Open ended, specific, asks about past experiences, non-hypothetical, focuses on your actions rather than on good intentions.

Examples:

- Please tell me about a time when you had to make a tough decision when there was no company policy or external set of rules to guide you.
- Please describe how you made the decision and explain the outcome.

Bad—Non-specific, hypothetical, focuses on what you WISH you might have done, would have done, or what others might have done.

Examples:

- If you caught your co-worker stealing office supplies, what would you do?
- If you were in a situation where there is conflict between you and a co-worker, what would you do to resolve the issue?
- Describe your most rewarding and worst job experience.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY ASK POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

Most forensic laboratories expect you to show an interest in them by asking intelligent questions about the job or the lab. Some questions you might ask include:

- What technology, instruments, and kits are you currently using?
- What are the avenues for growth in this position (promotions, raises, etc.)?
- What are your policies on continuing education, conferences, and seminars?
- Is this a new position? How long has this position existed?
- How many people have held this position in the last two years?
- Who would be my supervisor? To whom would I report? Whom will I supervise?
- With whom will I be working most closely?
- What do you like about working for this company?
- Are there current plans for expansion or cutbacks?
- What is this company's culture? (Ex: Is it rigid and formal or relaxed and flexible?)
- What are the current problems facing the company (or my department)?
- What do you like the most about working for this company? The least?
- What is the philosophy of the company?
- What do you consider to be the company's strengths and weaknesses?
- What are the company's long and short term goals?
- Describe the work environment.
- What attracted you (the interviewer) to this organization?
- Describe the typical responsibilities of the position.
- What are the most challenging aspects of the position?
- Describe the opportunities for training and professional development.
- Will I receive any formal training?
- Are there opportunities for advancement within the organization?
- When can I expect to hear from you?

PHONE INTERVIEW TIPS

Phone interviews are considered to be difficult since you are not able to read your interviewers' facial expressions and body language.

The way you prepare for a phone interview is not that different from the way you would prepare for a face-to-face interview with a few additional prep steps.

Here is what to do:

- Take the phone interview seriously, just as you would a face-to-face interview.
- Get a high-quality phone or at least, make sure that your cell phone is fully charged and that your location has a reliable and clear signal.
- Dress up as if you would for a face-to-face interview. This will set you in a right frame of mind.
- Stand or, or sit up straight at a table. Research has shown that you project yourself better when you're standing up.
- Cheat a little! Have your resume and other reference documents spread out (easily accessible) so, you don't have to sift through them while on the phone.



VIDEO INTERVIEW TIPS

A few days before:

- Do a trial run with a friend on the other end to give you feedback.
- Wear the outfit you'll wear for the interview.
- Is the shirt pattern/color playing oddly on your camera?
- Are you talking too loudly or not loudly enough?
- How is the lighting and the background?
- If you wear makeup -
Determine how much makeup you may need. Computer cameras tend to create the appearance of being tired.



The day of your interview:

- Start early, as if you would for an onsite interview.
- Log in early to allow enough time to troubleshoot any last minute problems.

Consider this:

- Position yourself correctly - sit a bit farther back so that your face and upper shoulders are framed in the shot.
- Use the highest-speed Internet connection you can.
- Look up into the computer camera, not the monitor screen. Looking into the camera will give the effect that you are speaking eye to eye.
- Wear what you normally would for a face-to-face interview.

Cheat a little...

- Have a copy of your resume, cover letter or any talking point you want to cover posted somewhere that you can see it without breaking eye contact with the camera.
- DON'T pull the reference documents on the screen - you don't want to risk the possibility of accidentally ending the interview with a wrong click.

THANK YOU LETTER

Purpose

Following an interview, promptly (within 24 hours) write the interviewer a letter expressing appreciation and thanks for the interview. The purpose of this letter is to:

- Show appreciation for the employer's interest in you.
- Reiterate your interest in the position and in the organization.
- Review or remind the employer about your qualifications for the position.
- If you thought of something you forgot to mention in the interview, mention it in your follow-up / thank-you letter.
- Demonstrate that you have good manners and know to write a thank-you letter.
- Follow up with any information the employer may have asked you to provide after the interview.

Typed, handwritten or e-mail?

Thank-you letters can be typed, handwritten or e-mailed.

Thank You Letter Example

Jane Oakley
7 Shawnee Road
Short Hills, NJ 07078
201-555-0303

October 7, 2009

Mrs. Mary Walter
Mellish Greenley Corp., Inc.
1010 Madison Avenue New York, NY

Dear Mrs. Walter:

Thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedule to interview me for the DNA Lab Analyst position. After our interview, I'm convinced that I have what you're looking for in your DNA analysts. After meeting you and the members of your team, I was impressed with the depth of knowledge and experience there. I believe that I would be an asset to your lab.

As we discussed during my interview, my internship last year had responsibilities very similar to those required for this position. I believe that this position is an excellent match for my talents, and experience.

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with me about this position. Please let me know if there is any additional information I can provide for you. I look forward to hearing from you very soon.

Sincerely,

Jane Oakley

POTENTIAL INTERNSHIP LOCATIONS

Sponsor	City	State
ATF Field Office	Charleston	WV
ATF Forensic Science Laboratory	Beltsville	MD
ATF Forensics Lab	Walnut Creek	CA
ATF Western Lab	San Francisco	CA
Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences	Florence	AL
Alaska State Crime Lab	Anchorage	AK
Allegheny County Coroner's Office	Pittsburgh	PA
Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory	Rockville	MD
Bureau of Criminal Identification & Investigations	London	OH
Commonwealth of Virginia Dept of Criminal Justice Service		VA
Erie County Department of Central Police Services Laboratory	Buffalo	NY
Erie County Medical Examiner	Buffalo	NY
Florida Department of Law Enforcement	Fort Myers	FL
Forensic Science Service	Cambridgeshire	UK
Huntington Fire Department	Huntington	WV
Illinois State Police Forensic Science Center	Chicago	IL
Kentucky State Police Eastern Regional Laboratory	Ashland	KY
Las Vegas Metro Police Department	Las Vegas	NV
Lifecodes Corporation	Stamford	CT
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department	Los Angeles	CA
Marshall University CODIS Laboratory	Huntington	WV
Marshall University MISDE Laboratory	Huntington	WV
Massachusetts State Police	Boston	MA
Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime Laboratory, Trace Evidence Section	Jefferson City	MO
New Orleans Police Department Crime Lab	New Orleans	LA
N.C. State Bureau of Investigation Crime Lab, Molecular Genetics Section	Raleigh	NC
Phoenix Police Department Crime Lab	Phoenix	AZ
Texas Medical Examiner's Office		TX
Virginia Division of Forensic Science	Richmond	VA
West Virginia Fire Marshal's Office, Arson/Explosives Division	Charleston	WV
West Virginia State Police Forensic Science Laboratory, Latent Print Section	Charleston	WV
West Virginia State Police, DNA Laboratory	Charleston	WV
West Virginia State Police, Trace Evidence/Toxicology/Firearms Section	Charleston	WV
West Virginia State Police, Digital Forensic Unit	Huntington	WV

JOB SEARCH WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

Association Websites:

- American Academy of Forensic Science (AAFS): www.aafs.org
- AAFS Young Forensic Scientists: www.aafs.org/yfsf
- American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors: www.asclld.org / www.asclld-labs.org
- American Society of Questioned Document Examiners: www.asqde.org
- California Association of Criminalists: www.cacnews.org/jobs/jobs.shtml
- International Association of Identification (IAI): www.theiai.org
- Mid-Atlantic Association of Forensic Scientists: www.maafs.org
- Midwestern Association of Forensic Scientists: www.mafs.net
- National Association of Medical Examiners: thename.org
- Northeastern Association of Forensic Scientists: www.neafs.org
- Northwest Association of Forensic Scientists: www.nwafs.org
- Society of Forensic Toxicologists: www.soft-tox.org
- Southwestern Association of Forensic Scientists: www.swafs.us

Government/Civil Sites:

- Army Criminal Investigation Command: www.cid.army.mil
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF): www.atf.gov/careers
- California Dept. of Justice: www.ag.ca.gov/careers/exams.htm
- CIA: www.cia.gov/careers
- Federal Job Search: www.federaljobsearch.com
- FBI: www.fbijobs.gov
- National Institute of Justice: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij
- NCIS: www.ncis.navy.mil
- UNjobs: unjobs.org
- USA Jobs www.usajobs.gov
- U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA): www.usdoj.gov/dea/resources/job_applicants.html
- Virginia Dept. of Forensic Science: www.dfs.virginia.gov/jobs/index.cfm

Lab Sites:

- ASCLD (www.asclld.org): Lists all accredited crime labs
- Program on Network Governance- List of Forensic Labs in US: www.hks.harvard.edu/netgov/html/research_dna_cj_labs.htm

Science Job Search Sites:

- Crime Science Investigator.net: www.crime-scene-investigator.net/employment.html
- New Scientist Job Search: www.newscientistjobs.com/jobs
- Forensic Magazine Job Search: jobs.forensicmag.com

- Forensic Hub (Discussion Board): www.forensicHUB.com
- MedZilla: www.medzilla.com
- Police Employment: www.policeemployment.com
- Science Careers, From the Journal of Science: sciencecareers.sciencemag.org

Internship Programs:

- FBI Honors Internship Program: www.fbijobs.gov/231.asp
- NCIS Honors Internship Program: pia.gmu.edu/internships/documents/NCIS.pdf
- Forensic Science Internships: people.rit.edu/gtfsbi/forensics/internships.htm

General Job Search Sites:

- Monster.com: Largest Job Search Engine
- Indeed.com: A Meta Search Job Engine
- USA.gov: Government Jobs
- CareerBuilder.com: Job Search Engine with great job advice and job resources
- Dice.com: A technology only job search engine
- LinkUp.com: Searches within company websites
- Yahoo! HotJobs: hotjobs.yahoo.com
- SimplyHired.com: Meta Search Engine for Jobs
- LinkedIn.com: Job search/ social network

FORENSIC SCIENCE CERTIFICATION OPPORTUNITIES

- Forensic Document Examiner <http://www.abfde.org/Certification.html>
- Forensic Toxicology Specialist <http://www.abft.org/Specialist.asp>
- CSI & Other Certifications <http://www.theiai.org/certifications/>
- Forensic Science (Student) Assessment Test
<http://www.criminalistics.com/pdf/announcements/FSAT2009.pdf>
- Various Certifications through the American Board of Criminalistics
http://www.criminalistics.com/cert_ovw.cfm

Diplomate (D-ABC) Certification as a Diplomate of the ABC, denoted by the designation D-ABC, is awarded to individuals with a BS/BA in a natural science, two years of forensic laboratory or teaching experience and upon successful completion of any ABC Examination. The examinations are: Comprehensive Criminalistics Examination (CCE), Drug Analysis (DA), Molecular Biology (MB), Fire Debris Analysis (FD), Trace Evidence- Hairs and Fibers (THF) and Trace Evidence – Paints and Polymers (TPP). The CCE is a comprehensive examination covering all disciplines found in a crime laboratory as well as the areas of safety and ethics. Diplomate status is designed for laboratory directors, supervisors, educators, or where Specialty Examinations have not been planned or developed, (e.g. explosives, soils, etc.) or those no longer able to maintain the proficiency testing requirement for their Fellow status.

Fellow (F-ABC) - Certification as a Fellow of the ABC, denoted by the designation F-ABC, is awarded to successful completion of any of the ABC examinations, successful performance on a proficiency test, and a minimum of two years' experience in the specialty area. The specialty areas currently covered are Molecular Biology, Drug Analysis, Fire Debris Analysis and Trace Evidence – Hairs and Fibers and Trace Evidence – Paint and Polymers. An ABC Fellow certificate signifies that the analyst is qualified to conduct examinations in the specialty area.

Affiliate Status - An individual who meets all requirements for certification except for the two year forensic laboratory or teaching experience may sit for any examination and upon successful completion of the examination they become "Certification Eligible" until they complete their two years' experience in the specialty tested.

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY CAREER SERVICES CENTER

Finding a good forensic science job after graduation requires a lot of hard work, and sometimes, even a little bit of good luck. Fortunately, Marshall University students and graduates can turn to their Career Services for help in conducting an effective job search.

Our skilled career counselors and coaches can help guide you through the confusing maze of C.V.s, resumes, cover letters, interviews, salary negotiations, and other career-related issues. Take advantage of the competitive edge you will gain by registering with your Career Services Center!

We offer a wide variety of career planning and professional development services to help you attain your career goals. Visit our office soon or call (304) 696-2370 to schedule an appointment with one of our career counselors.

Services Available to Students/Alumni:

- Career Fairs
- On-campus Interview Opportunities
- Marshall JobTrax
- InterviewStream
- Career Counseling
- Career Testing
- Job Placement Consulting
- Resume /C.V. Preparation
- Mock Interviews
- Business Resume Cards



- **Phone:** 304.696.2370
- **Fax:** 304.696.2251
- **Email:** career-services@marshall.edu
- **Website:** <http://www.marshall.edu/career-services>
- **Hours:** Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- **Location:** 1681 5th Avenue Huntington, WV 25755

JOBTRAX ACCESS

1. Log in to myMU
2. In the upper left corner, click on JobTrax icon –



If you experience login problems, please call or e-mail:

- o **Phone:** 304.696.2370
- o **Email:** career-services@marshall.edu