NEBRASKA FFA

Employment Skills Rules

Objective

To provide FFA members the opportunity to demonstrate their ability in completing a job application form, writing a letter of application, preparing a resume, interviewing, and completing a follow-up letter.

A. Rules and Regulations

1. The event is open to all FFA members in good standing who are regularly enrolled in an agricultural education course at or above the ninth grade level during one or both semesters of the current school year and who have not placed first in the state Employment Skills Leadership Development Event (LDE) previously.

2. Each district will determine the number of individuals per school allowed to compete at the district level. Ribbons may be awarded according to the guidelines on the results sheets. The top four participants shall be ranked, regardless of their ribbon assignment. Up to three receiving a purple ribbon rating at the district level may advance to the state round of competition. Advancing speakers are to be of high quality. Any identified alternate must have received a purple or blue ribbon rating.

3. Each participant shall wear the official FFA dress as defined in the FFA Manual: a white collared shirt or blouse, official FFA tie or scarf, black trousers or skirt, black shoes, and FFA jacket. Points may be deducted for variance from official dress.

4. In addition to the Employment Skills LDE, the participant may compete in only one of the following events in a given year: Conduct of Chapter Meetings (applicable to ninth and tenth grade participants), Parliamentary Procedure, or Agricultural Demonstration. They are not eligible to compete in any other individual (not team-based) Leadership Development Event in the same year in which they participate in Employment Skills.

5. The state-level Employment Skills event will consist of the following components:
   a. Submission and scoring of participant application, cover letter, resume, and list of references
   b. A preliminary face-to-face interview (conducted at the state convention)

c. Submission and scoring of a follow-up letter

d. Final face-to-face interview (for state finalists only)

Note: Districts may decide which of the above listed components they wish to include in the district- level event.

6. The event is developed to help participants in their current job search (for SAE program employment, part-time, and full-time employment). Therefore, the cover letter, resume, and references submitted by the participant must reflect their **current** skills and abilities and must be targeted to a job for which they would like to apply and for which they are qualified. In other words, participants cannot develop a fictitious resume for a fictitious job. Instead, they are expected to target the resume toward a real job for which they are currently qualified.

7. Each participant will fill out, electronically, a job application form that will be provided through a link on the Nebraska FFA Association website for the state level event. The electronic application may be used at the district level at the discretion of each district. The job application shall be completed by participants by the date designated on the Nebraska FFA Association website. Within the online application members will be required to upload the following items in pdf format to be evaluated in advance of the convention segment of the Employment Skills event:

a. **Resume** that shall be a maximum of two pages

b. **Cover letter** that shall be a maximum of one page and shall be addressed to the Nebraska FFA Advisor. Address for Cover Letter:
Nebraska FFA Association
Attn: Nebraska State FFA Advisor
P.O. Box 95067
Lincoln, NE 68509

c. **Reference page** should be a separate page with no more than five references listed.

8. Each participant will be interviewed by the evaluators who will be designated as the employers. Each participant will be allowed a maximum of 15 minutes for the interview; there is no minimum time for the interview.

9. Each participant may bring with them to the event a pad-folio or folder containing a resume, cover letter, list of references, personal business cards and writing utensils. Interview judges may refer to a copy of the resume, cover letter, and references page which the state office will provide to them.

These documents, however, will be scored prior to the interview round, and the scores shall be provided to the interview judges and used in determining finalists.

10. No cell phones or electronic devices with communication capabilities will be allowed in the holding room or competition room. Members found to have these items in their possession will be disqualified from the competition.

11. Due to the individual and personal nature of this event, no one will be allowed in the interview room except for the participant, timekeeper, and evaluators.

12. At the conclusion of the preliminary face-to-face interview, each participant will complete a follow-up letter to the interviewers. It must be handwritten, and each participant will have 12 minutes to complete the letter. Paper and pen will be provided.

13. At the state-level event, finalists from each preliminary interview room shall be identified to advance to the final round. The students with the highest cumulative scores (from application, resume, list of references, cover letter, and preliminary face-to-face interview scores) shall advance from each preliminary interview round to the final round. Finalist placings shall be determined using only the score of the final face-to-face interview.

14. Recording of LDEs

    a. There is no recording of the Employment Skills LDE at the district or state level.

B.   *Suggested Guide for Conducting District Event*
Prior to the Event

Suggestion: Districts may follow the state-level guidelines and have a separate set of judges evaluate application letters and resumes prior to the interview event. These scores can be added to interview totals. Because this event consistently takes more time than planned at district events, the state office strongly encourages districts to consider this option.

1. Districts shall determine how their students' applications, resumes, and cover letters shall be collected (i.e., prior to the event, on-site, electronically, in print, etc.) and scored (i.e., by separate evaluators, by the interviewers, on-site, prior to the event, etc.).

2. The order of appearance to be used shall be determined in advance of the event.

3. Provide one of the following to each evaluator:
   a. Employment Skills Rules (this document)
   b. Judges Scoring Reference Sheet
   c. Score Sheet – One per Participant
   d. Official Results Sheet
   e. Order of Appearance Sheet
   f. Application, resume, and cover letter of each participant

Start Event

1. Each participant must be allowed the full 30-minute period to complete their job application form if not completed in advance of the interview. Participants should begin interviewing in15 minute intervals.

2. Each participant shall be introduced to the evaluators by the individual coordinating the event. Introductions will include the participant's name and chapter. Example: The following speaker is Alex Degree from the Blue and Gold FFA Chapter.

3. No one shall enter or leave the interview room once the event has started.

4. A maximum of 15 minutes will be allowed for the interview.

After the Event

1. Participants will submit a follow-up letter after the interview. Students will be provided paper for the letter and will have 12 minutes to complete it. The letter should be addressed to the evaluators and should be a response to the interview.

2. Each evaluator shall total each participant's score and arrive at the placing. Discussion between evaluators is allowed and encouraged. Participants shall not be present during evaluator discussion.

3. Ribbons may be awarded according to the guidelines on the results sheets. The top four participants shall be ranked, regardless of their ribbon assignment. Up to three receiving a purple ribbon rating at the district level may advance to the state round of competition. Advancing speakers are to be of high quality. Any identified alternate must have received a purple or blue ribbon rating.

4. A scoresheet with feedback shall be completed for each participant.

5. One copy of the results should be completed on the form provided to the judges. List the name and chapter of each participant. Fill out the digital results sheet from the State FFA Office.

C.   Official Score Card – Preliminary Round

Cover Letter	100
Resume and Reference Page	200
Application Form	100
Preliminary Face-to-Face Interview	500
Follow-up Letter	50
	Total 950

D.   Official Score Card – Final Round

Final Face-to-Face Interview	500
	Total 500

E.   Awards Recognition

1. District Awards: Participants meriting awards shall be rated as purple, blue, red, or white and the top four participants shall by ranked by number (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th). The top four participants shall be ranked, regardless of their ribbon assignment. Up to three receiving a purple ribbon rating at the district level may advance to the state round of competition. Advancing speakers are to be of high quality. Any identified alternate must have received a purple or blue ribbon rating.

2. State Awards: Participants in the state event will be designated as gold, silver, or bronze medal recipient.

Judges Scoring Reference Sheet: Employment Skills Materials

Use this sheet as a reference to complete the Student Score Sheet with feedback for each participant.

Cover Letter

Indicator	Very Strong Evidence of Skill is Present	Moderate Evidence of Skill is Present	Strong Evidence of Skill is Not Present
Format and General Appearance	• Does not exceed one page without overcrowding • Margins are acceptable • Font is readable (10-12 pt) • Uses appropriate business format • Date and address at top • Addressed to appropriate person • Appropriate signature block	• Does not exceed one page without overcrowding • Margins are acceptable • Font is readable (10-12 pt) • Uses appropriate business format • Date and address at top • Not addressed to appropriate person • Inappropriate signature block	• Exceeds one page • Margins are inappropriate • Font style is unreadable and too small or large • No signature • No date or address • Not in appropriate business format
Introductory Paragraph	• Identifies position they are applying for • States how they heard about the position • States why they are interested in the position • Uses wording to attract reader's attention	• Identifies position they are applying for • Does not state how they found the job • Vaguely describes why they are interested in the job • Introduction is bland and not attention catching	• Does not clearly identify position they are seeking • No description of how they heard about the position • Does not grab reader's attention
Skills and Experiences	• Identifies 2-3 strongest qualifications for the job • Indicates how education has prepared them for this job • States why they are interested in the position • Skills and experiences are consistent with resume • Makes reference to resume	• Identifies 1-2 qualifications for the job • Indicates how education has prepared them for this job • Provides a vague explanation of why they are interested in the job • Skills and experiences are somewhat consistent with resume • Makes reference to resume	• Does not identify relevant qualifications for the job • Does not indicate how education has prepared them for this job • Does not state why they are interested in the job • Skills and experiences are not consistent with resume • Does not mention resume
Closing Paragraph	• Thanks reader for taking time to read • Provides appropriate contact information • Makes appropriate provisions for follow up	• Thanks reader for taking time to read • Provides contact information but makes reader to assume a follow up	• Does not thank reader • Does not mention a plan for follow up • Does not provide any contact information
Spelling/Grammar	• Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are extremely high quality with two or less errors in the document.	• Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are adequate with three to five errors in the document.	• Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are less than adequate with six or more errors in the document.

Resume and Reference Page

Indicator	Very Strong Evidence of Skill is Present	Moderate Evidence of Skill is Present	Strong Evidence of Skill is Not Present
Contact Information	• Includes name, address, email, and phone number • Name stands out on resume • Provides professional email	• Names does not stand out • Email is too casual	• Missing name, address, email, or phone number • Email used is inappropriate or unprofessional
Employment Objective	Focused objective that states how employee will help company achieve its goals	Focused objective that states what applicants wants from the company	No objective identified
Education or Relevant Coursework	• Contains complete information, listed in reverse chronological order • Dates formatted correctly • GPA listed in correct format • Includes appropriate honors and awards	• Contains information, listed in reverse chronological order • Dates formatted correctly, may show gaps in work history • Inappropriate GPA listed • Includes appropriate honors and awards	• Information not listed in reverse chronological order • Important information missing • Information not listed in correct format
Relevant Experience and Skills	• Entries are listed in reverse chronological order • Company name, title, location, and dates are included • Strong action verbs used with correct verb tense • Personal pronouns and extraneous words are omitted • Bullets are concise, direct, and indicate one's impact or accomplishments • Results are quantified • Bullets are listed in order of importance	• Entries are listed in reverse chronological order • Entries have a pattern of one type of error • Action verbs are weak • Verb tenses are inconsistent • Bullets are not concise or direct and do not indicate impact • Bullets are written in complete sentences	• Entries are not reverse chronological order • Most entries do not include company name, title, location, and dates are included • Bullets are written in complete sentences • Verb tenses are inconsistent • Bullets are wordy, vague, or do not indicate one's impact • Bullets are not listed in order of importance to the reader • Results are not quantified when appropriate, irrelevant, or outdated information is listed.
Achievements and Honors	• Appropriate and relevant achievements listed • Achievements and honors related to career goal	• Appropriate and relevant achievements listed • Achievements and honors related to career goal	• Achievements and honors not listed in reverse chronological order • Inappropriate or irrelevant achievements listed

	• Provides specific details related to achievements and honors • Listed in reverse chronological order	• Lacks specific details related to achievements and honors • Listed in reverse chronological order	• No achievements or honors are listed
References	Listed appropriate references and provide complete contact information for references	References are listed but not all may be appropriate or not all contact information for references is included	Inappropriate references are listed, no contact information listed
Spelling/Grammar	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are extremely high quality with two or less errors in the document	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are adequate with three to five errors in the document	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are less than adequate with six or more errors in the document
Format and General Appearance	• Does not exceed two pages without overcrowding • Margins are acceptable • Font size and style is readable (10-12 pt) • Headings reflect content and content substantiates headings • Resume is targeted to job	• Does not exceed two pages • Appears overcrowded • Margins are acceptable • Font size and style is readable (10-12 pt) • Headings don't reflect content and content substantiates headings • Resume is targeted to job	• Exceeds two pages • Margins are inappropriate • Font style is unreadable • Font size is too small or large

Application

Indicator	Very Strong Evidence of Skill is Present	Moderate Evidence of Skill is Present	Strong Evidence of Skill is Not Present
Consistent with Resume	Name, education, experience and other personal information matches information provided on resume	Name, education, experience, and other personal information generally matches information provided on resume	Name, education, experience, and other personal information do not match information provided on resume
Spelling, Grammar, and Punctuation	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are extremely high quality with two or less errors in the document	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are adequate with three to five errors in the document	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are less than adequate with six or more errors in the document
Form Completed	Entire application was completed with "N/A" indicated where appropriate	Majority of the application was completed with few blank fields	Several blank spaces are present and there is information that is missing
Overall Impression	Application was consistent and appropriately highlighted candidate's qualifications for the position	Application was consistent and generally highlighted candidate's qualifications for the position	The application was not consistent and did not highlight candidate's qualifications for the position

Student Score Sheet: Employment Skills Materials

Chapter: _____ Participant: _____

Cover Letter – 100 possible points

Indicator	Strong	Moderate	Low	Total Points	Comments
Format and General Appearance *20 points max*	14-20	7-13	0-6		
Introductory Paragraph *20 points max*	14-20	7-13	0-6		
Skills and Experiences *20 points max*	14-20	7-13	0-6		
Closing Paragraph *15 points max*	11-15	6-10	0-5		
Spelling/Grammar *25 points max*	17-25	8-16	0-7		
			Total Points		

Resume and Reference Page – 200 possible points

Contact Information *10 points max*	8-10	4-7	0-3		
Employment Objective *10 points max*	8-10	4-7	0-3		
Education or Relevant Coursework *35 points max*	25-35	13-24	0-12		
Relevant Experience and Skills *45 points max*	31-45	15-30	0-14		
Achievements and Honors *25 points max*	17-25	8-16	0-7		
References *10 points max*	8-10	4-7	0-3		
Spelling/Grammar *25 points max*	17-25	8-16	0-7		
Format and General Appearance *40 points max*	28-40	14-27	0-13		
			Total Points		

Application – 100 possible points

Consistent with Resume *20 points max*	14-20	7-13	0-6		
Spelling/Grammar *30 points max*	21-30	11-20	0-10		
Form Completed *20 points max*	14-20	7-13	0-6		
Overall Impression *30 points max*	21-30	11-20	0-10		
			Total Points		

Judges Scoring Reference Sheet: Employment Skills Interview

Use this sheet as a reference to complete the Student Score Sheet with feedback for each participant.

Face-to-Face Interview

Indicator	Very Strong Evidence of Skill is Present	Moderate Evidence of Skill is Present	Strong Evidence of Skill is Not Present
Appearance	Professional dress/groomed, follows standard dress code, polished shoes, clothes pressed, and conservative accessories	Not as professional and "put together," shoes clean, but not polished	Dirty shoes, not wearing black shoes, very disheveled
First Impression	Appropriate salutation and firm handshake, states name and chapter, smiling and pleasant, does not sit until invited, confident in manner	Confident, but uneasy, soft handshake, states name only when asked, rarely smiles; cologne or perfume is distracting	Does not use salutation, very informal, fails to introduce self, fails to shake hands with interviewer, obnoxious cologne or perfume, chewing gum
Responses to Questions	• Used appropriate language for career • Cited relevant examples • Strong knowledge of career field • Knows education and experience required • Discussed skills gained through school or past jobs and relevance • Abilities described match the resume • Concise and logical responses • Response do not sound "canned" • In-depth description of skills • In-depth response to questions responses provide a "theme" that overall describes their abilities	• Knew terms associated with the position • Some holes in knowledge were present • Cited several relevant examples • Knew about career but conveyed incomplete picture • Unsure of education or experiences required for position • Incomplete list of skills gained through school and past jobs • Abilities mostly matched resume • Responses seemed rehearsed and somewhat unorganized • Provided some depth of skill descriptions	• Knew some language of the position, but used incorrectly • Unable to cite or shared few relevant examples • Education and requirements unknown or do not match applicant's skill set • Unable to related previously learned skills • Abilities hardly match resume • Responses were rehearsed • Unable to see an overall theme of person's abilities
Communication Skills	• Persuasive: Led the interview in a direction that enabled them to expand so their skills were expressed, took initiative	• Was able to expand somewhat on skills that are a fit for the position and volunteered some additional information to questions asked	• Minimal responses offered, did not expand on skill set • Did not appear comfortable, clearly nervous, slouched

	to add information beyond questions asked • Confident: Exhibited confidence in self with body language and verbally • Appropriate volume: Spoke with proper volume for room to be heard clearly, n o t too loud, not too soft • Enunciation and grammar: Avoided words like "git", "agin", "'cause", or other slang; used proper words when speaking • Concise: Avoided run-on sentences and answered with logical and organized thoughts • Sincere: Expressed true interest in the position being sought • Poise: Avoided distracting mannerisms such as drumming fingers or overuse of filler words • Discretion and tact: Shared appropriate information and did not create an awkward situation through responses	• Exhibited some nervousness, voice and body langue showed some uncertainty • Did not modulate volume to express answers, difficult to hear • Some language not appropriate, used some slang • Some rambling, but point was made, thoughts were logical but somewhat unorganized • Uncertain of authenticity • Seemed comfortable, some nervousness, aware of mannerisms, rare use of filler words • Mostly professional in tone, shared information that did not create awkwardness	• Hard to hear answer or volume too loud for room • Used overly complex or simplistic language, slang overused • Rambled and used run-on sentences, answers poorly organized, thought process unclear • Uninterested in the position and distracted • Demonstrated distracted mannerisms, excessive use of filler words • Shared information that may be seen as personal about someone else, unprofessional
Conclusion	Posed appropriate questions of interviewer, clarified next steps, asked for business card, thanked interviewer, stood and shook hands prior to exiting the room	Posed somewhat appropriate questions of interviewer, incomplete inquiry into next steps, asked for business card and shook hands, but seemed uncertain as to how to end and exit the interview	Limited or no questions asked, or questions were not appropriate; ended interview abruptly or awkwardly; exits without thanks for shaking hands

Follow-up Letter

Indicator	Very Strong Evidence of Skill is Present	Moderate Evidence of Skill is Present	Strong Evidence of Skill is Not Present
Format	Document was directed to the appropriate person with an appropriate address and salutation, level of formality	Document was directed to the appropriate person with an appropriate address and salutation with minor errors,	Document was not directed to the appropriate person, no address or salutation was

	was appropriate for the type of correspondence	level of formality was generally appropriate for the type of correspondence	included, level of formality was not appropriate
Content	Effectively expressed appreciation and appropriately reiterated their qualities, expressed interest and appropriately stated provisions for follow-up	Attempted to express appreciation and generally reiterated their qualities, generally expressed interest and attempted to state provisions for follow-up	Did not attempt to express appreciation, did not attempt to reiterate their qualities, did not attempt to express interest or state provisions for follow-up
Spelling/Grammar	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are extremely high quality with two or less errors in the document	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are adequate with three to five errors in the document	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are less than adequate with six or more errors in the document
Overall Impression	Writing was legible and length was appropriate	Writing was difficult to read and length was generally appropriate	Writing was illegible, length was inappropriate

Student Score Sheet: Employment Skills Interview

Chapter: _____   Participant: _____

Interview – 500 possible points					
Indicator	Strong	Moderate	Low	Total Points	Comments
Appearance *50 points max*	34-50	17-33	0-16		
First Impression *75 points max*	51-75	26-50	0-25		
Responses to Questions *150 points max*	100-150	50-99	0-49		
Communication Skills *150 points max*	100-150	50-99	0-49		
Conclusion *75 points max*	51-75	26-50	0-25		
Follow-up Letter – 50 possible points					
Format *10 points max*	8-10	4-7	0-3		
Content *15 points max*	11-15	6-10	0-5		
Spelling/Grammar *10 points max*	8-10	4-7	0-3		
Overall Impression *15 points max*	11-15	6-10	0-5		
			Total Points		

General Comments:

Student Score Sheet: Finals Employment Skills Interview

Chapter: _____   Participant: _____

Final Interview – 500 possible points					
Indicator	Strong	Moderate	Low	Total Points	Comments
Appearance *50 points max*	34-50	17-33	0-16		
First Impression *75 points max*	51-75	26-50	0-25		
Responses to Questions *150 points max*	100-150	50-99	0-49		
Communication Skills *150 points max*	100-150	50-99	0-49		
Conclusion *75 points max*	51-75	26-50	0-25		
			Total Points		

General Comments: