As a former store manager for TJ Maxx and Marshalls, staffing was a major part of my job. I spent 20% or more of my week reviewing applications and conducting interviews. As a job seeker, you need to know this: hiring managers have jobs to fill. They want to hire someone, and that someone could be you. To move your application to the top of the pile, my recommendations are:

**General Application and Pre-Interview Guidelines**

* Unless you have extensive work experience, the resume should be one page, without typos.
* Before you submit your application, call the company and ask some version of this question “*If I was lucky enough to get an interview, who would I be speaking with?”.* Get the correct spelling and include the name on your cover letter (CV). That way you avoid the “To whom it may concern” or “Dear Hiring Manager” opening line. It’s more professional that way, and it shows you did a little research in advance.
* Fill out the application completely, including references and their contact information. DO NOT ENTER “References available upon request”. The reference section is on the application; therefore, they are requested!
* Your references cannot be family or friends. If you have never worked, teachers are great.
* Make sure your references know you listed them. And if you want a reference to tell a positive story about you, discuss that beforehand.
* Once you have an interview scheduled, call to confirm the time and location. You can also discuss expected dress code and express how excited you are for the interview. ONLY CALL ONCE. One call is professional, more may annoy the interviewer. This applies to in person and virtual interviews.
* Be five minutes early. If you are going to be late for reasons beyond your control, call as soon as you can, apologize, and ask to reschedule the interview.
* Bring two copies of your cover letter, resume, and the job description (one for you and one for the interviewer).

**Accommodation Guidelines**

* If you are bringing a work coach, let your interviewer know up front.
* Your work coach should have minimal involvement in the interview. You will be the employee, not them. Discuss that with the coach in advance.
* Work coaches must be in appropriate dress code for the interview.
* If you need an accommodation based on the job description, tell the interviewer what you need. Be polite, but direct. If you come to the interview with a solution, an employer will generally defer to your recommendation.

**Virtual Guidelines**

* Prior to the interview check your internet connection, double-check your audio, blur your background, and make sure you will have no interruptions. Ensure your name is correctly entered on the screen too!
* Email your cover letter, resume, and the company’s job description to your interviewer in advance. Do not assume they have it in front of them.
* If you are going to screen share documents, prepare them in advance.