



Employment Skills

2026 Updates

Below is a summary of updates to the Conduct of Chapter Meetings Handbook for the 2026-2027 cycle.

HANDBOOK UPDATE:

Eliminate job application.

Cover letter to be addressed March 1 of the convention year in which the state contest is being held.

Purpose

The Tennessee FFA Employment Skills Leadership Development Event is designed for FFA members to develop, practice, and demonstrate skills needed for employment in the agriculture industry. Each part of the event simulates, as closely as possible, real-world activities that real-world employers use.

Event Rules

- FFA official dress is required for this event.
- All written materials, including a cover letter, resume, etc., will result from each participant's efforts.
- The job description, cover letter, and resume must be uploaded by the designated deadline as communicated by Tennessee FFA state staff. A 10% penalty will be assessed on documents submitted late. Any document that is submitted one week after the deadline will receive a score of 0.
- Contestants can be in possession of their resume, cover letter, and padfolio throughout the duration of the event.
- The event coordinator will check padfolios before competition to verify that the only printed materials the contestant has are as follows: business cards, cover letter, list of references, cover letter, and resume.
- The follow-up correspondence should only be completed during the follow-up correspondence portion of the event at State Convention.
- The top two contestants from each region will compete at the state contest.

Event Format

The event is developed to help participants in their current job search (for their Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs, internships, and part-time and full-time employment). Therefore, materials submitted by the participant must reflect their current skills and abilities and be targeted to a job they would like to apply for. In other words, participants cannot develop a fictitious resume; they must utilize their actual experience. They are expected to target the resume toward a real job for which they presently qualify.

Equipment

Participants are required to bring the following items to the event:

- Writing utensils.
- Laptop or tablet capable of a Wi-Fi connection

Participants are permitted to bring these items:

- Blank paper
- Copies of their resume and cover letter as submitted at the designated deadline for the event
- List of references
- Business cards
- Padfolio

The following items are **not** permitted:

- Letters of reference
- Samples of work
- Pictures
- Personal pages

Items to be electronically submitted before convention

Participants will electronically submit the following in PDF format:

- Job description
- Cover letter
- Resume
 - Statement of Authenticity — Added a “Statement of Authenticity” requirement to be signed by all students competing on the team, i.e.,

“I certify that all materials presented here are of my own creation and that any work adopted from other sources is duly cited and referenced as such.” — signature

A penalty of 10% will be assessed for documents received after the submission deadline. If the document is received more than one week later, they will be scored at a 0.

Job description

- The job description is required for the judges to score sections of the event. The job description will not be scored but is a required submission.
- Participants who fail to submit this component will be subject to disqualification.
- The job description should include a description of the position the student is applying for, desired qualifications for the job, and work experience.
- Sources for job descriptions can be found in the newspaper or online through job searches and company websites.

Cover Letter (100 Points)

The cover letter is to be typed, one page, single-spaced, left justified using Times, Times New Roman or Arial 10 to 12-point minimum font.

The letter must be dated March 1 of the current State Convention year in which the contest is being held and addressed to:

Mr. Ryan Inman
State FFA Advisor
Tennessee Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 40627
Nashville, TN 37204

Resume (200 Points)

The resume should not exceed two pages in total. If necessary, a complete list of references may be included on a third page, but references are the only information to be included.

The resume must be non-fictitious and based upon actual work history.

Items to be completed at convention

Personal Face-to-Face Interview (500 Points)

The personal face-to-face interview will be with a panel of judges. Each interview will last 15-20 minutes. This interview will focus on more in-depth questions about the students skills, work experience, expectations, leadership, problem-solving, decision-making, organizational skills, and any other questions deemed appropriate by the interview panel.

Follow-Up Correspondence (75 Points)

Participants will submit a follow-up correspondence via email after completing the interview. Participants will receive the necessary information and instructions to compose the follow-up correspondence. Participants will have 30 minutes to complete the follow-up correspondence.

Telephone Job Offer (100 Points)

Participants will participate in a follow-up phone call where they receive a job offer. They will be scored on their ability to collect information and negotiate. They will also be scored on their response to the offer and overall impression.

Tiebreakers

In the event of a tie in the preliminary round, the participant with the highest personal face-to-face interview score shall receive the higher rank.

If a tie still exists, the participant with the highest resume score will receive the higher rank.

Scoring

Preliminary Round	Individual Points
Resume	200
Personal face-to-face interview	500
Follow-up Correspondence	75
Telephone job offer	100
TOTAL POINTS	925

References

This list of references is not intended to be all-inclusive.

Other sources may be utilized, and teachers are encouraged to make use of the very best instructional materials available. Make sure to use discretion when selecting website references by only using reputable, proven sites. The following list contains references that may prove helpful during event preparation. The most current edition of resources will be used.

- Past CDE materials and other resources are available on FFA.org.
- Open Colleges – How to Write a Resume, <http://www.opencolleges.edu.au/careers/resumes/how-to-write-a-resume>
- 8 Subtle Ways to Ace the Interview, <http://www.businessinsider.com/subtle-ways-to-ace-the-interview-2015-2>
- 9 Tips to Help You Prep for a Virtual Interview, <https://learn.uvm.edu/blog/blog-business/nine-tips-to-help-you-prep-for-a-virtual-interview>
- Sending Your Thank You After the Job Interview, http://www.job-hunt.org/job_interviews/job-interview-thank-you.shtml
- How to Accept a Job Offer,

<https://www.theforage.com/blog/basics/accept-job-offer>

- How to Negotiate a New Job Offer -
<https://www.payscale.com/salary-negotiation-guide/im-negotiating-new-job-offer>
- The Professional's Guide to Negotiating a Job Offer -
<https://www.learnhowtobecome.org/career-resource-center/negotiate-job-offer/>
- Tips for Networking Events,
<https://grad.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/PDFs/NetworkingEvents.pdf>
- How to Network Effectively: 15 Tips You Can Start Using Today,
<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/the-ultimate-guide-to-non-awkward-effective-networking>
- References from the career center at the land-grant university in your respective state.

Cover Letter Rubric

100 POINTS

Name _____

Member Number _____

Chapter _____

State _____

INDICATOR	Strong evidence of skill 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
Format and General Appearance	Does not exceed one page without overcrowding; margins are acceptable; font size and style are 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 size and style are 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; font size is too small or too large; no signature; no date or address; no inside address; not in appropriate business format		X 4	
Introductory Paragraph	Clearly 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 you heard about the position; does not grab the reader's attention		X 4	
Skills and Experiences	Identifies two to three qualifications for the job; indicates how their education has prepared them for this job; states they are interested in the position; skills and experiences are consistent with resume; refers to resume	Identifies one to two qualifications for the job; indicates how their 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; refers to resume	Does not identify relevant qualifications for the job; does not indicate how their 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		X 4	
Closing Paragraph	Thanks reader for taking time to read their cover letter; provides appropriate contact information; makes appropriate provisions for follow up	Thanks reader for taking time to read their cover letter; provides appropriate contact information, but leaves reader to pursue a follow up	Does not thank reader for reading their cover letter; does not mention a plan for follow up; does not provide any contact information		X 3	
Spelling/ Grammar/ 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		X 5	
TOTAL POINTS						

Resume Rubric

200 POINTS

Name

Member Number

Chapter

State

Indicator	Strong evidence of skill 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
Contact Information	Includes name, address, email address and phone number; name stands out on resume; provides professional e-mail address	Name does not stand out; email address is too casual	Missing name, address, email address or phone number; email used is inappropriate or unprofessional		X 3	
Education and Relevant Coursework	Contains complete information (listed in reverse chronological order) with relevant courses listed; dates formatted correctly; GPA listed in correct format (if appropriate), includes appropriate honors and awards	Contains information (listed in reverse chronological order) with relevant courses listed; dates formatted correctly; inappropriate GPA listed, includes appropriate honors and awards	Information not listed in reverse chronological order; important information missing; information not listed in correct format		X 7	
Relevant Experience and Skills	Entries are listed in reverse chronological order; company name, job title, location, and employment 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/accomplishments; results are quantified; bullets are listed in order of importance	Entries are listed in reverse chronological order; company name, job title, location, and employment dates are included; 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 in reverse chronological order; most entries do not include company name, dates, location, or position title; 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 or importance to the reader; results are not quantified when appropriate; irrelevant or outdated information is listed		X 10	
Achievements and Honors	Appropriate and relevant achievements and honors listed; achievements and honors related to career goal; provides specific details related to achievements and honors; listed in reverse chronological order	Appropriate and relevant achievements and honors listed; achievements and honors related to career goal; lacks specific details related to achievements and honors; listed in reverse chronological order	Achievements and honors not listed in reverse chronological order; inappropriate or irrelevant achievements listed; no achievement or honors are listed		X 5	

Indicator	Strong evidence of skill 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
References	Listed appropriate references and provided complete contact information for references	References are listed, but not all are appropriate or not all contact information for references is included	Inappropriate references are listed; no references listed; no contact information listed		X 2	
Spelling/ Grammar/ 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		X 5	
Format and General Appearance	Does not exceed two pages without overcrowding; margins are acceptable; font size and style are readable (10–12 point); headings reflect content and content substantiates headings; resume is targeted to job – No penalty for references listed on 3rd page. See pg. 4 of handbook.	Does not exceed two pages; appears overcrowded; margins are acceptable; font size and style are readable (10–12 point); headings don't necessarily reflect content and content substantiates headings; resume is targeted to job - No penalty for references listed on 3rd page. See pg. 4 of handbook	Exceeds two pages; margins are inappropriate; font style is unreadable; font size is too small or too large - No penalty for references listed on 3rd page. See pg. 4 of handbook.		X 8	
TOTAL POINTS						

Follow-Up Correspondence Rubric (E-mail)

75 POINTS

Name _____

Member Number _____

Chapter _____

State _____

INDICATOR	Strong evidence of skill 5-4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3-2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1-0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Score
Format	Follow-up was directed to the appropriate person with an appropriate salutation and title. The level of formality and tone was appropriate for the type of correspondence.	Follow-up was directed to the appropriate person with an appropriate salutation and title with minor errors. The level of formality and tone was generally appropriate for the type of correspondence.	Follow-up was not directed to the appropriate person. No salutation or title was included. The level of formality and tone was not appropriate.		x 3	
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		x 5	
Grammar/ Punctuation/ Spelling	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.		x 4	
Overall Impression	Follow-up was appropriate length, provides complete follow-up information, follows appropriate netiquette guidelines (avoids ALL CAPS, sarcasm, and exclamation points)	Follow-up was appropriate length, provides most follow-up information, follows appropriate netiquette guidelines (avoids ALL CAPS, sarcasm, and exclamation points)	Follow-up was too short, no follow-up information provided, does not follow netiquette guidelines (uses ALL CAPS, sarcasm, exclamation points)		x 3	
TOTAL POINTS						

Personal Interview Rubric

500 POINTS

Name _____

Member Number _____

Chapter _____

State _____

INDICATOR	Strong evidence of skill 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
Appearance	Professionally dress/groomed: Follows standard dress code, polished shoes, clothes pressed, conservative accessories	Dress appropriately: Just not as professional and “put together”; shoes clean, but not polished; conservative accessories	Very disheveled: Dirty shoes, not wearing black shoes, inappropriate accessories		x 8	
First Impression	Greeting: Appropriate salutation and firm handshake Introduction: States name Body language: Smiling and pleasant, does not sit until invited, confident in manner	Greeting: Confident but uneasy, soft handshake Introduction: States name only when asked Body language: Rarely smiles, cologne or perfume is distracting	Greeting: Does not use salutation, very informal Introduction: Fails to introduce self, fails to shake hands with interviewer Body language: Obnoxious cologne or perfume, chewing gum		x 13	
Responses to Questions: Position Knowledge	Used appropriate language for position; cited relevant examples; knowledge of career field evident (talk the talk); knows education and experience required for position	Seems to know terms associated with position; cited several relevant examples, but list is incomplete; knew about position, but conveyed incomplete picture; unsure of education or experience required for position	Knew some of the language of position, but used incorrectly or did not show understanding of terms; unable to cite or provided few relevant examples; position education and requirements not known or does not match applicants' skill set		x 10	
Responses to Questions: Skills Related to Position	Discussed skills gained through school or past jobs and how they are relevant to current position applied; abilities described match the resume	Described incomplete list of skills gained through school and past jobs and relevance to current position applied; abilities mostly match resume	Unable to relate skills learned in school or past jobs and relevance to position applied; abilities hardly match resume		x 10	

INDICATOR	Strong evidence of skill 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
Response to Questions: Communication Details	Responses are concise and logically communicated; responses are not “canned”; provided in-depth description of skills, not just a list; provided in-depth response to questions, not yes/no responses to questions; established a “theme” that describes overall abilities	Responses seem rehearsed and somewhat disorganized; provided some depth to description of skills; provided some depth to responses to questions; provided some yes/no responses; was able to tie some abilities together to form a picture of qualifications.	Responses were “canned” with little logical progression; mainly provided list of skills with little explanation; provided yes/no responses; unable to see an overall theme of persons' abilities		x 10	
Communication Skills: Non-Verbals	Maintained optimal eye contact; used appropriate nonverbal communication cues (nods and smiles) to demonstrate level of engagement; exhibited poise (cool under pressure)	Maintained appropriate eye contact; seemed nervous under pressure, which impacted poise, pleasantness	Interview lacked engagement as evidenced by lack of eye contact; appeared very nervous, not poised (cracks under pressure)		x 4	
Communication Skills: Persuasiveness	Persuasive: Led the interview in a direction that enabled them to expand so their skills were expressed, took initiative to add information beyond question asked.	Persuasive: Expanded somewhat on skills that are a fit for the position, volunteered some additional information to questions asked.	Persuasive: Answered yes or no to most questions; did not expand on skill set		x 5	
Communication Skills: Verbal	Appropriate volume: Spoke with proper volume for room to be heard clearly; not too loud, not too soft Enunciation/grammar: Enunciated clearly and avoided informal dialect; used proper words when speaking (didn't use 10-dollar words when a 5-dollar word would do) Concise: Avoided run-on sentences and answered with logical and organized thoughts	Appropriate volume: Did not modulate volume to express answers; could be heard sometimes, but was quiet when unsure of response and was hard to hear Enunciation/grammar: Some language not appropriate for position applied; used some slang and exhibited some dialect. Concise: Some questions were answered in a rambling fashion, but made point; thoughts were logical but somewhat disorganized	Appropriate volume: Volume was either too soft to hear answers or too loud for the room Enunciation/grammar: Used overly complex or simplistic language; sprinkled in slang and exhibited dialect. Concise: Rambled and used run-on sentences; answers were poorly organized and thoughts not clearly expressed		x 13	

INDICATOR	Strong evidence of skill 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
Communication Skills: Poise and Confidence	Confident: Exhibited self-confidence with body language and verbal communication Sincere: Expressed true interest in the position they were seeking Poise: Avoids distracting mannerisms, such as drumming fingers or overuse of “um” and “you know” Discretion/Tact: Shared appropriate information and did not create an awkward situation through responses	Confident: Exhibited some nervousness, but <i>recovered</i> well; voice and body language showed some uncertainty Sincere: Seemed somewhat interested in the position and was slightly distracted Poise: Seemed comfortable with some nervousness; caught self before exhibiting distracting mannerisms; rarely used “um” or “you know” Discretion/tact: Most professional in tone and shared information that created little, if any, awkwardness	Confident: Did not appear comfortable; was nervous; slouched in chair Sincere: Seemed uninterested in the position and was distracted Poise: Demonstrated distracting mannerisms such as tapping foot, drumming fingers, cracking knuckles, etc.; displayed excessive use of “um” and “you know” Discretion/tact: Shared information that may be seen as personal about someone else that created awkwardness; appeared unprofessional		x 12	
Conclusion: Participant Questions	Posed appropriate questions (e.g., when notification of selection will occur and how); clarified next steps, inquired next step in interview process (e.g., if there will be additional interviews, etc.)	Questions posed were somewhat appropriate; some had no relevance to interview; incomplete inquiry of the next steps in the interview process	Asks no questions or if questions were asked, questions have no relevance to next steps in the interview process		x 10	
Conclusions: Next Steps	Asked for business card, thanked interviewer, confidently stood and shook hands prior to exiting room	Asked for business card, thanked interviewer, and shook hands, but seemed uncertain how to end the interview and exit	Did not ask for business card; ended interview abruptly or awkwardly; exited without expressing thanks or shaking hands		x 5	
TOTAL POINTS						

Telephone Job Offer Rubric

100 POINTS

Name _____

Member Number _____

Chapter _____

State _____

INDICATOR	Strong evidence of skill 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
Response to Offer	Expressed appreciation; upbeat; sincere; shows excitement for the offer	Seemed caught off guard; attempted to be sincere; showed excitement for offer	Unengaged; insincere; showed little excitement for offer		X 4	
Gathered Appropriate Information	Provisions for follow up expressed; posed appropriate questions (start time, date, who to report to); got contact information	Somewhat expressed provisions for follow up; attempted to pose appropriate questions (start time, date, who to report to); asked for contact information	Poorly expressed provisions for follow up; did not pose appropriate questions (start time, date, who to report to); did not ask for contact information		X 5	
Negotiating Points	Negotiating points appropriate; exhibited appropriate poise and professionalism while negotiating points; accepted results with an appropriate response and maturity	Negotiating points were posed but were a little inappropriate; exhibited some poise and professionalism while negotiating points; accepted results with a mostly appropriate response.	Negotiating points were inappropriate/ none were stated; did not exhibit appropriate poise and professionalism; was disgruntled with results.		X 8	
Overall Impression	Exhibited poise; was pleasant; professional; courteous; ended call appropriately	Exhibited poise with some nervousness and attempted to be pleasant and courteous; Ended call with a thank you or just said bye	Seemed nervous; forced conversation; just hung up.		X 3	
TOTAL POINTS						