

Ask Altis: JOB SEARCH ‘Icks’



ANY OF THESE ‘ICKS’ SOUND FAMILIAR? YOU:

- Called the interviewer the wrong name
- Spilled hot coffee on your interviewer’s lap
- And other cringe-worthy things

Now what???

Ask Altis. We can help.



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1. EEK, RESUME TPYOS!



Dear Altis,

I just realized I sent my resume with a typo in it—and it's a bad one. I spelled the company name wrong! How can I fix it? I really want to land an interview. Please help!

— Grammar Oops

Dear Grammar Oops,

First of all, deep breath. Whether it's a sneaky extra "the," a misspelled company name, or a tragic "manger" instead of "manager" (RIP credibility), typos happen, especially when you're rushing. Next time you wake up in the middle of the night realizing you wrote "detail-ornamented" in your cover letter, don't panic—this isn't necessarily a dealbreaker.

Fix it in the moment

- * **If it's a minor typo:**
Let it go. One small mistake likely won't torpedo your chances.
- * **If you're applying through a portal:**
Some systems let you re-upload your resume.
If that's an option, swap it out ASAP.
- * **If it's a big one**
(wrong company name, major misspelling in your job title, etc.): Consider following up with a quick, polished email.

Example:

Hi [Hiring Manager's Name],

I just realized that my application for [Job Title] had a small typo. I've attached the corrected version here. Apologies for the oversight—looking forward to the opportunity!

Prevent this 'ick' in the future

- ✓ **Proofread, then proofread again.**
Tip: Read your resume out loud. It helps catch errors your brain glosses over.
- ✓ **Phone a friend.**
A second pair of eyes can help catch what you miss.
- ✓ **Use tech to your advantage.**
Grammarly, ChatGPT or even reading your resume in a different font can help.
- ✓ **Slow down. Quality over speed!**

At the end of the day, hiring managers are human too.



By:

Gabriela Pineda

Senior Recruitment Partner

2. DEBBIE SELF-DOUBTER



Dear Altis,

I keep talking myself out of applying to jobs because every time I see “500+ applicants,” I get discouraged and think about the competition I’m up against. How do I break this cycle?

— Doubting Myself

Dear Doubting Myself,

I hear you. Job searching can feel like throwing your resume into a void, and when rejections pile up, it’s easy to let doubt take over, especially when you see that hundreds of applications have already been submitted. What’s the point, right? Wrong. Hiring isn’t just about numbers; it’s about finding the right fit, and you bring something unique to the table.

Fix it in the moment

- ★ **Apply anyway—and make it count:**
The number of applicants doesn’t tell the full story (they could be unqualified or bots). Your best bet is to tailor your application to the role as best as you can.
- ★ **Flip the script:**
Ask yourself, “What do I bring to the table?” Every time you reiterate your unique skills, you create a tangible reminder of your value.
- ★ **Stay positive.**
With perseverance, the right job will come. (Tip: We can help you find it!)

Prevent this ‘ick’ in the future

- ✓ **Celebrate small wins.**
Applied to a job? That’s a win.
Got an interview? Huge!
Recognize your progress.
- ✓ **Reframe rejection.**
Every “no” brings you closer to a “yes.”
It’s a redirection, not a failure.
- ✓ **Adopt a growth mindset.**
Ask yourself, “What can I learn from this?” Use feedback to refine your approach and keep improving.

Your confidence is a key part of job searching, so be kind to yourself.



By:

Brianna Babineau

Recruitment Partner

3. GHOSTED... AND GIVING UP



Dear Altis,

I've applied to hundreds of jobs, but I'm not hearing back from anyone. Am I doing something wrong?

— Ghosted by Hiring Managers

Dear Ghosted,

I get it. It's frustrating to feel like your applications are disappearing into the abyss. If you're not getting responses, the issue might not be the quantity of applications you're sending, but the quality of them. With so many candidates using AI to prep their resumes, hiring managers are being flooded with resumes that all look the same, so if yours doesn't specifically highlight why YOU are a good fit for the role, it's easy for them to pass over it.

*Quality over quantity
—make each
application count.*



By:

Austin Daya

Recruitment Partner

Fix it in the moment

* Tailor EVERY application.

Why are you interested in THIS role and company? How do your skills align with THIS job? Answer these questions, while weaving in key words from the ad. Avoid all fancy formatting—automated applicant tracking systems can't read them.

* Pause before applying.

Before hitting submit, double-check that your resume reflects the key skills listed in the job description (while being truthful).

* Adjust and reapply.

If appropriate, ask the hiring manager for feedback on why you weren't selected.

Prevent this 'ick' in the future

✓ Make it personal.

Address the hiring manager by name, if possible, and mention why you're excited about this company and this role.

✓ Focus on value.

Showcase how you made an impact in past roles. Whenever you can, always quantify your achievements with success metrics.

✓ BONUS TIP: Boost your chances by working with a recruitment firm like Altis.

Recruiters:

- Never charge candidates for their services
- Often have access to jobs that aren't advertised
- Work with qualified candidates to tailor their applications for each suitable role, ensuring they stand out

4. THANKFUL (BUT FORGETFUL)



Dear Altis,

I forgot to send a thank-you email after my last interview with a company I really want to work with, and now I feel like I've ruined my chances. Have I missed the opportunity, or can I still follow up even though it's been a few days?

— Hopeful (and Forgetful)

Dear Hopeful,

Sending a thank-you email won't necessarily make or break your chances of getting a job. However, it's a great way to reinforce your interest and potential fit, even if you're late. And forgetting to follow up with your interviewer altogether can make you seem less enthusiastic or engaged—especially when other contenders send a follow-up.

Fix it in the moment

- ★ **If it's within 48 hours:**
Send the email ASAP. Keep it short, appreciative and professional.
- ★ **If it's been more than 3 days:**
It's best to acknowledge the delay and make your message meaningful.

Example:

Hi [Interviewer's Name],

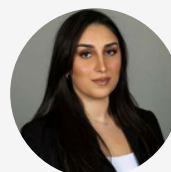
I wanted to take a moment to sincerely thank you for our conversation about [Job Title] last week. I apologize for the delayed follow-up and want to reinforce how much I truly appreciated learning more about [Company Name] and the team. I'm very excited about the opportunity and keen to contribute.

Thanks again!

Prevent this 'ick' in the future

- ✓ **Set a reminder.**
After every interview, set a calendar reminder to send your thank-you email within 24 hours.
- ✓ **Have a template ready.**
Keep a draft thank-you note handy, so you can quickly personalize and send it after each interview. Looking for ideas? [We've included samples on our blog.](#)
- ✓ **Make it a habit.**
Always follow up after every interview.

Following up is a small step that leaves a big impression.



By:

Lernik Baranian

Senior Recruitment Partner

5. WAY TOO EAGER BEAVER



Dear Altis,

I recently had an excellent interview, but ever since, the hiring process seems to have slowed down. I've followed up twice since the interview but still haven't heard back. I don't want to pester or annoy the hiring manager. What can I do?

— Eager Beaver

Dear Eager Beaver,

It's totally normal to feel a bit anxious when you're waiting to hear back about a role you're excited about. However, while it's great to be enthusiastic, there's a fine line between showing interest and coming across as overly eager.

Fix it in the moment

If you've already sent a couple of emails and haven't heard back yet, pause before sending another one. Here's what you can do instead:

★ **Give the hiring manager the benefit of the doubt:**

Maybe they're swamped or off sick or waiting for a key member of the decision-making team to return from vacation.

★ **Wait one more week:**

If you still haven't heard back after another week, try sending a gentle follow-up like this:

Hi [Hiring Manager's Name], I wanted to follow up regarding my application for the [Job Title] role. I remain very interested in the position and would love to hear if there's any further information I can provide. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Prevent this 'ick' in the future

- ✓ **Clarify expectations early.**
If possible, ask during the interview about the hiring timeline and key steps in the process. This gives you a concrete idea of when to follow up.
- ✓ **Give them space.**
After your initial follow-up, give the hiring manager 1-2 weeks to respond. If you still haven't heard back by then, you can reach out again politely.
- ✓ **Remember, patience is key.**
While it's natural to feel anxious, remember that hiring processes can take time. Resist the urge to send multiple follow-ups in quick succession.



By:

Mackenzie Black

Recruitment Partner

Waiting is hard, but handling it with grace and patience will leave a positive impression.

6. DREW A TOTAL BLANK



Dear Altis,

Halfway through my interview last week, I realized I couldn't answer a specific question about the company. Embarrassingly, I stumbled my way through a less-than-polished response! How can I recover?

— Feeling Flustered

Dear Feeling Flustered,

That's a tough situation, but rest assured, it happens to all of us. Interviews can be nerve-racking and time-consuming, with lots of prep to do in a short amount of time. Sometimes, you might skim over the company history or details of the role only to be asked about them during an interview. The key is staying calm and knowing how to recover in the moment.

*The more prepared you are,
the more confidently you can
handle unexpected moments.*



By: **Eric Myers**

Senior Recruitment Partner

Fix it in the moment

★ **Stay calm.**

It's okay to admit you don't know everything—you're human! You could say something like:

"I realize I might not have all the details on that aspect of the role and would love to learn more. Would you mind sharing a bit more about [specific topic] so I can gain a better understanding of how my skills and experience apply?"

★ **Offer to follow up with your response.**

If you don't have the answer ready, don't make it up. Instead, acknowledge that you'd like to think about it a bit more and will follow up with a detailed, thoughtful answer.

Prevent this 'ick' in the future

✓ **Do your homework.**

Research the company, the role and the interviewer (if you know who it will be). Read up on the company's major projects, latest announcements, new products and more—you never know when you'll be asked about them.

✓ **Practise your answers.**

Think about the most common interview questions and say your answers out loud (either with an AI tool like ChatGPT's Advanced Voice mode or with a friend). For tips, [see our advice on answering the most common interview questions](#).

✓ **Ask questions.**

When in doubt, ask questions about the company culture, team dynamics or role responsibilities—this shows you're interested and invested.

7. INTERVIEW TMI



Dear Altis,

Recently, I had my first job interview in a long time and realized I'm a bit rusty. I think I might have overshared because I caught myself talking about my favourite pasta recipe and my cat's recent trip to the vet. I could tell I lost the interviewer's attention. Did I totally blow it?

— Chatty Cathy

Dear Chatty Cathy,

While storytelling can be a great way to show your personality, encourage relatability and highlight your professional journey, wandering way off course can call into question your suitability for the role. The key is knowing how to recover and keeping it tighter next time.

Fix it in the moment

* Pause and pivot.

If you catch yourself oversharing, take a breath and say something like this:

"That was a bit of a tangent—let me bring it back to the role and how my skills align."

* Wrap it up smoothly.

A simple, "Long story short, my experience with [relevant point] makes me excited about contributing in this role," can help you refocus.

* If you shared something too personal, don't draw more attention to it—just move on confidently.

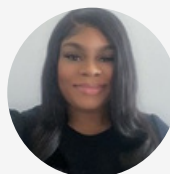
Prevent this 'ick' in the future

✓ **Keep answers brief and focused.**
Before your next interview, practise answering common questions in under two minutes. Record yourself, so you can see where to improve.

✓ **Stick to professional stories.**
Unless the interviewer specifically asks about your personal life, stick to answers that are relevant to the job or your skills.

✓ **Read the room (even when it's virtual).**
Be mindful of the interviewer's body language and cues indicating they're ready to move on to the next question. While silence can feel awkward, avoid filling gaps in conversation. Let the interviewer be your guide.

A little rambling won't tank your interview—the key is getting things back on track smoothly.



By:

Shenikia Clarke

Senior Recruitment Partner

8. CRINGEY INTERVIEW INTERLOPER



Dear Altis,

During a recent virtual interview, I realized my Zoom background included a rogue item: one of my bras was hanging from a chair off to the side. It was so distracting, I lost focus and all I could think was, "I hope they don't notice!" How do I recover from something so cringe-worthy?

— Mortified

Dear Mortified,

Yikes, that's definitely an 'ick' moment! But trust me, we've all been there. Whether it's an embarrassing clothing item, an accidental mute mishap or a pet with the sudden zoomies, these moments happen. The good news? They're rarely as big a deal as they feel in the moment. After all, your interviewer is human, too.

Fix it in the moment

★ **Stay calm.**

Acknowledge the 'ick,' try to correct it and move on. If it's something obvious and fixable, a lighthearted comment can ease the tension.

Example:

"My apologies, I see my background needs some attention. One moment while I adjust it. [Turn your camera off, fix it and turn it back on.] That's better! Now, where were we?"

★ **If it's something you said, don't over-apologize.**

Politely correct yourself and keep going. Confidence in how you recover says a lot about how you handle stress.

Prevent this 'ick' in the future

✓ **Prepare ahead.**

Before a virtual interview, check your background, test your lighting and ensure your space is distraction-free. Tip: Many public libraries offer quiet virtual interview rooms to reserve. [For further tips on acing virtual interviews, see the suggestions on our blog.](#)

✓ **Test your tech.**

Make sure Zoom/Teams, your mic and internet are all working. And be sure to install any software updates and restart your computer BEFORE the interview to avoid an unexpected shutdown.

✓ **Reframe the moment.**

Post-interview, instead of dwelling on your oops, remind yourself of what went well. Chances are the interviewer has already forgotten the slip-up!

As Taylor Swift says, shake it off and keep going!



By:

Cassandra Kent

Senior Recruitment Partner

9. WARDROBE MALFUNCTION



Dear Altis,

I'm trying to land my first job, so the whole idea of an interview gives me the 'ick,' TBH. However, I'm not sure I can recover from yesterday's fiasco. I rode my bike there, put my water bottle in my backpack and then placed it on my lap during the interview. I was so focused, I didn't realize water leaked all over my pants, and when I stood up at the end, it looked like I'd had a major "accident." I was so embarrassed, I fled the scene. What can I do?

— Wardrobe Malfunction

Dear Wardrobe Malfunction,

Yikes, this one's tough, but not insurmountable. Take a deep breath and remember, we're all human. Your best bet is to shrug it off and try to make light of it with the interviewer after the fact.

Everyone—including your interviewer—has had mishaps throughout their career.



By:

Sepehr Safi

Recruitment Partner

Fix it in the moment

★ Address it with grace.

Keep in mind, every interviewer wants to assess how you handle stressful situations, so this is actually your opportunity to shine! Instead of fleeing, acknowledge the 'ick' lightheartedly and move on.

Example:

"Yikes, I must have forgotten to close my water bottle properly. Thankfully, no dry cleaning required!"

If you notice something awkward after the interview (for example, your zipper was undone), try this:

★ Follow up with a professional email.

Send a well-written, prompt thank-you email to show you're a confident candidate. Avoid drawing further attention to the 'ick.'

Prevent this 'ick' in the future

✓ Prepare ahead.

Before heading into every interview—virtual or in person—give your appearance a quick once-over (i.e., your outfit looks polished, there are no remnants from breakfast or lunch in sight etc.)

✓ Reframe the moment.

Post-interview, instead of dwelling on the embarrassment, remind yourself of what went well. Chances are the interviewer has already forgotten the slip-up!

At the end of the day, small hiccups won't make or break your chances—how you handle them will.

10. SIDEWAYS SMALL TALK



Dear Altis,

I blew it in my final interview for my dream job. Everything was going great until the interviewer asked about my favourite AND least favourite travel spots. He smiled as I spoke, especially when I jokingly trashed Basel, Switzerland. Then, when I asked about his travels, it turns out he was born and raised in—you guessed it—Basel, Switzerland! I was so flabbergasted, I didn't know what to say. What now?

— Bashful re: Basel

Dear Bashful,

Chin up. It's normal to be taken aback when something totally unexpected like this happens, especially when you're keen to build rapport. Besides, sometimes quirky coincidences like this leave a lasting impression and land you the job. It all depends on how well you handle the flub.

Fix it in the moment

* Address it head on.

Instead of shutting down, try laughing it off with a lighthearted comment and move on.

Example:

"Interesting! I bet you know a much more exciting side of Basel than I saw during my short stay. What would you recommend I see next time?"

* Switch back to neutral territory.

Try to recover by asking the interviewer a question, they'll appreciate it!

Example:

"What a coincidence! You know, another coincidence I wanted to ask you about was [UNIVERSITY/COMPANY]. I see we both spent time there and wondered what your experience was like?"

Prevent this 'ick' in the future

✓ Do your research.

Check LinkedIn to learn as much as possible about your interviewer, including their career history.

✓ Don't cry over spilt milk.

It's easy to dwell on a mishap like this, but no amount of thinking about the past will change it. Focus on the solid answers you delivered and why you're a standout candidate.

Sometimes, a quirky coincidence leaves a lasting impression that lands you the job.



By:

Talya Perla

Senior Recruitment Partner

WANT ADVICE ON YOUR WORST JOB SEARCH ICK?

Ask Altis! Submit your job search fails, flubs and faux pas to candidatecommunity@altis.com or by filling out the anonymous form below. Your ick could be featured in our next guide!

[Submit an ick](#)

APPLY TO JOBS ON OUR PORTAL

Now that you know how to avoid the biggest job search icks, you can confidently apply to open roles and ace your next interview. Browse available opportunities on our Job Portal at the link below.

[Find my next role](#)

