

# AJCjobs | MONSTER

CAREER MOVES

## Understand jobs before you apply

Positions, descriptions can be vague, inflated, downright confusing.

By Jon Simmons  
Monster.com

Anyone who has ever searched for a job knows the confusion that surrounds job titles.

Coordinator? Specialist? Associate? Senior associate?

How do you determine which job you should apply for?

Luckily, Monster career experts have come up with five strategies that can help you uncover the truth behind the title. These tips will show you what to look for in job postings to figure out which position would suit you best.

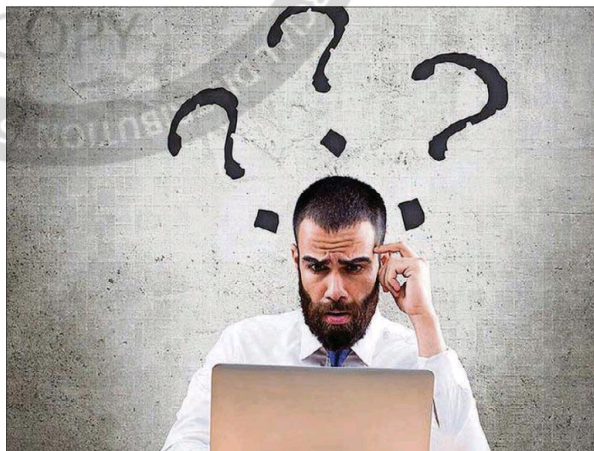
### Identify job description keywords

It's good to be ambitious and apply for a few "reach" positions when you're looking for jobs, but you need to know how exactly the title will translate to responsibilities, no matter the seniority.

Know how to decipher a job ad. "If you see words like administrator, coordinate, process—those are indications of individual contributor positions, not management-level positions, regardless of title," says Greg Szymanski, director of human resources at Geonercio Management in Seattle. "Whereas, lead, influence, collaborate, direct, partner with, head, and synthesize are words that indicate higher-level responsibilities."

### Compare your experience to the job duties

Your resume should be updated regularly with relevant work experience



Cut through the confusion of what job title you should apply to. MONSTER.COM

if it's not, check out how to refresh your resume. Use it as a quick reference check to see if your experience lines up with the job description.

"Are they duties you've performed recently? Duties that your boss normally performs?" asks Kelly Donovan, principal at Kelly Donovan & Associates, a career guidance service in Lake Elsinore, California. "You don't need to have performed every duty listed [to apply], but you should have experience with most of them."

### Research job titles on the employer's website

There are no rules for creating job titles, so they may vary widely between companies. The best place to investigate how a com-

pany uses the titles, and what people in those positions are responsible for, is oftentimes the About Us or Company tab on the hiring company's website.

"Maybe they call everyone VPs or have unusual titling conventions," says Ilana Youngheim, account executive at PMBC Group, a public relations firm in Los Angeles. "It helps to do a little research on a company before applying, to target the right job, and also to demonstrate in your cover letter that you know something about them, that you did your research. This earns lots of points with recruiters and hiring managers," Youngheim explains.

### Ask revealing questions

Got called into an interview,

or maybe they'd like to set up a phoner first? Great! This is the perfect opportunity to gather more information about that cryptic job title and get more details about the position's responsibilities.

"In the interview, ask pertinent questions about the day-to-day responsibilities, job training, expectations, and managerial needs (if applicable), along with short-term and long-term goals," says Christina VanBuskirk, a recruiter at Sasha the Mensch, a recruiting firm in New York City. "Be honest and confident about your own experience. Even if the HR manager deems that you're not the right fit for a current role, if you leave a great impression and have good rapport with the team, they will likely keep you in

mind for future opportunities."

An example of a revealing question to ask is: What does a typical day look like?

"That will get the conversation moving in the right direction," says Justin Smith, founder of Outerbox, a web design company in Akron, Ohio. "If you're passionate about spending your time in a specific way, tell your potential employer, don't be shy. Remember, it's a two-way street, and they want to hire you to work on tasks you'll be passionate to work on."

### Broaden your search to include common job titles

Running into too many flashy titles that are blatantly inflated? It might be time to broaden your search, centering it around more common terms like "sales rep" as opposed to "sales officer," or "bartender" instead of "cocktail artist."

"As long as your skills and talents match up with what you'll be doing (in that particular job), apply to it, regardless of title," recommends Stephanie Troiano, talent acquisition manager at The Hire Talent, a talent assessment company in Brea, California.

### Stay up to date on current job openings

One of the most important aspects of conducting a job search is staying current on openings as soon as they're posted. The more job descriptions you read, the better you'll get at deciphering them. Sign up to be a Monster member and get weekly alerts on jobs available in your area. You'll also get expert career advice, including resume tips, interview hacks, and negotiation strategies.

