PRACTICAL GUIDE

OLIVER MICHAELIS

Job Hunting, Applications and Interviews with AI

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITION



A practical guide to CVs, cover letters, job hunting and interview preparation

With detailed guidance on dismissal and employee rights in Germany



SECURE YOUR RIGHTS



IMPROVE YOUR CV



WRITE COVER LETTERS



FIND JOBS



PREPARE FOR INTERVIEWS

m!

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The designated prompt templates and worksheets may be used and adapted to prepare your own job applications.

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The guidance, templates and examples provide general information on German employment law, job hunting, applications and interview preparation. They do not assess individual legal cases and do not replace advice tailored to the individual circumstances.

For ease of reading, the masculine form is used throughout. It refers to people of every sex.

Foreword



Anyone looking for a new job after many years in employment needs practical answers to specific questions.

What should you do first after a dismissal? Which aspects of your professional experience belong in your CV? Where can you find suitable vacancies? How do you prepare for an interview when your last application was a long time ago?

This book brings together two tasks that often arise at the same time in practice. **Part I** explains the general legal position concerning formal warnings, dismissal and job loss. **Part II** guides you through a career transition, right through to assessing an offer. You can start with whichever part you need at the moment. The brief guide on the following pages shows you where to begin.

Our fictional protagonist, Thomas Witzigmann, follows the entire application process. He brings many years of experience in retail. Alongside him, Dr. Anna Schreiber illustrates the differences involved in a legal career. Both characters, their employers and the offers described are constructed teaching cases. The eventual start of a new job provides a conclusion to the learning example; it is not a documented placement success.

AI can now organise material, suggest wording, compare information and simulate an interview. However, it knows your experience only through the information you provide. A convincingly worded sentence can still be wrong. Every important step therefore needs a factual basis, a drafting stage and a specific check. Incorrect outputs are identified as such in the book and improved in a way you can follow.

You do not have to use every prompt or work through the entire book in a fixed order. Choose the task that is in front of you now. Keep a record of the checked result and use it again later. In this way, individual steps come together to form a coherent application that you can explain and stand behind yourself.

Düsseldorf, November 2026
Oliver Michaelis

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Finding your way through this book

Start with the issue you are currently facing. Clarifying the legal position and looking for work can proceed alongside each other. Do not let an urgent deadline pass simply because your application documents are not yet ready.

Table 1: Where to start

Your situation	Suitable starting point
Dismissal, a formal warning or pressure to sign	Chapter 1; in the case of dismissal, especially section 1.3
You are looking for a job again after a long time	Chapter 2
Your CV is out of date	Chapter 3
You do not have a professional profile	Chapter 4
You are finding too few suitable vacancies	Chapter 5
You are preparing a specific application	Chapter 6
A job interview has been arranged	Chapter 7
You have received an offer	Chapter 8

Source: Michaelis, author's own illustration.

Each chapter explains its practical purpose. The numbered prompt boxes appear alongside the task they address. Replace the information in square brackets with your own details. Omit any fields you do not need. The prompt contains an instruction for the AI; checking the result remains your responsibility.

The overview of prompts and the alphabetical index at the end of the book direct you to the relevant passages. A reference to an earlier chapter means that you can reuse its result. Common foundations are not explained again in detail.

Nine prompts to guide you through your application

Choose according to your current position. Results you have already checked are reused in the next step. The overview connects the most important tasks; you will find additional prompts directly in the relevant chapters.

Table 2: Nine prompts for the application process

Prompt and task	Basis and result
9 Create a professional fact file	Existing CVs, your own duties and evidence you are permitted to use **Result:** A checked professional fact file with outstanding points clearly identified
14 Develop a realistic target profile	Fact file from Prompt 9, preferred duties and personal limits **Result:** A reasoned target profile to guide the rest of your search
27 Draft a complete master CV	Approved fact file from Prompt 9 and the preferred basic structure **Result:** A complete master CV as the basis for the job-specific version from Prompt 42
63 Record job facts and requirements in a structured way	An actual, complete job advertisement, including its reference number, source and date checked **Result:** A job overview covering duties, requirements, conditions and missing information
64 Compare your suitability with the requirements	Job overview from Prompt 63 and checked fact file from Prompt 9 **Result:** A suitability overview showing evidence, transferable experience and genuine gaps
42 Create a job-specific version of your CV	Checked master CV and selected job advertisement **Result:** A job-specific CV with traceable changes

Prompt and task	Basis and result
81 Create an individual cover letter from verified information	Advertisement, suitability overview from Prompt 64 and confirmed application details **Result:** An individual cover letter, where requested or useful in explaining your suitability
117 Simulate a complete job interview	Preparation based on the invitation, advertisement, submitted application and available company dossier **Result:** Your own practice dialogue, followed by an assessment and specific improvements
124 Compare two complete offers	Complete actual offers, your own criteria, weightings and essential conditions **Result:** A transparent comparison of offers with outstanding questions for the decision

Source: Michaelis, author's own compilation of the prompts in this book.

Anna and Thomas



Thomas Witzigmann is 52 and lives in Cologne. After completing vocational training as a management assistant for retail services, he worked in sales. From October 2001 to September 2026, he worked in the household goods department of a department store. The branch closed. He has been unemployed since October 2026 and is looking for a new role in sales or customer advice.

Dr. Anna Schreiber is 47 and also lives in Cologne. Following legal training, a doctorate and positions in a law firm and in companies, her most recent role in the teaching case is Senior Legal Counsel. Her position is eliminated as a result of a company insolvency. She is looking for a role in compliance and business law in Düsseldorf.

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PART I

1. Safeguarding your rights

1. Safeguarding your rights	2. Clarify your career objective	3. Writing your CV	4. Building your profile
5. Finding vacancies	6. Create your application	7. Prepare for interviews	8. Examine offers

Topics in this chapter	Practical value
• First steps and receipt • Deadlines and formal warnings • Multiple dismissals and termination agreements • Sickness and annual leave • Evidence • Court proceedings and costs	Recording letters and events concerning receipt in a traceable way Distinguishing rights, deadlines and courses of action Understanding the court process and costs

For employees

If your job is at risk or has already been lost, you need a clear sequence: understand the letters, safeguard deadlines, organise the facts and obtain appropriate support. This chapter explains the general legal foundations and guides you through specific teaching cases.

The career transition covered in Part II can begin at the same time.

1.1 Clarifying the situation and organising the first steps

When your employer delivers unwelcome news, you first need to establish what he has actually stated. A discussion about cost savings, an informal reprimand, a formal warning and written notice of dismissal are different matters. Place the letter you received beside your note of the conversation. First read what you are being accused of or told, and what your employer is asking you to do. Only then choose your response.

An HR department may present its position with great confidence and still overlook important conditions. Conversely, a dismissal is not invalid simply because the employee considers it unfair. What matters is the actual circumstances, the applicable rules and a timely response.

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This chapter helps you put the situation in context, understand documents and prepare your next steps. It provides general legal information. A particular dismissal may involve special circumstances that cannot be identified from a single sentence or conversation.

Anyone preparing for a legal assessment should therefore have the entire letter, the employment contract, any applicable collective agreement and the actual circumstances of receipt available. The law as at November 2026 forms the basis of this book. A date from a general example must not be adopted for another case without checking it.

1.1.1 From the initial shock to an orderly decision

Suppose the branch manager asks Thomas into the office after his shift and says that the department is closing. At first, all Thomas takes in is that his job is at risk. For the next step, however, it matters whether the branch manager is announcing a change, handing over a signed dismissal letter or presenting an agreement for signature. Thomas must distinguish these three situations. A document he is simply asked to take away calls for a different decision from a contract he is asked to sign himself.

Start with a single page. Write the date at the top and four details underneath:

1. Who spoke to you?
2. What exactly was stated or handed over?
3. What are you being asked to do?
4. By when are you expected to do it?

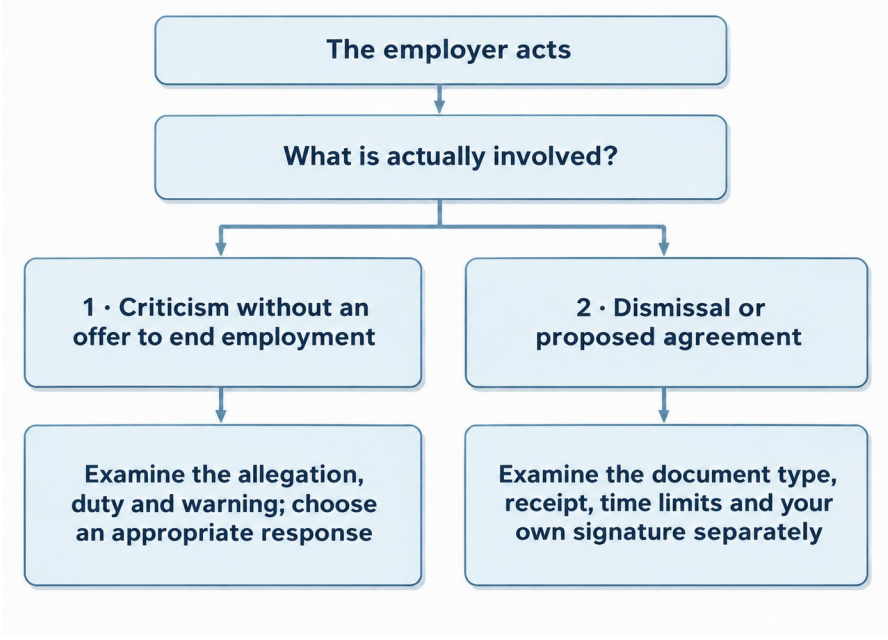
Mark uncertain information as uncertain. This is more useful than a long report in which you only reach the actual letter after many paragraphs.

Then create three separate tasks: check your rights against your existing employer, complete the necessary notifications to the Employment Agency and prepare for your next job. Each task has its own recipient. A message to HR is not a notification to the Employment Agency. Speaking to a lawyer does not mean that a claim has been filed. At the end of each contact, therefore, ask expressly who will take which next step and by when.

You do not need to produce a completed legal assessment when you first read the document. Your first task is to identify the situation correctly and avoid overlooking any deadline that may be running. To do this, preserve the complete document, the actual sequence of the handover and the

declaration you are being asked to make. The following sections show which details become decisive for each type of action by an employer.

Fig. 1: Identifying the employer's action and choosing the correct assessment route



Source: Michaelis, author's own illustration; legal foundations and illustrative variations in the associated section.

Case variation 1: Closure is announced, but there is no dismissal letter

1

Starting position: On Tuesday, the branch manager tells Thomas that the department is expected to close at the end of September. He does not hand over a notice of dismissal. Thomas receives a general circular email about the financial situation.

Your approach: Thomas saves the circular email and records the statement. He asks objectively which specific decision affects his job and whether he should expect a separate letter. Until this is clarified, he does not treat his existing work obligations as lifted. At the same time, he checks which notification to the Employment Agency is already required on the basis of the information he

Case variation 1: Closure is announced, but there is no dismissal letter

knows.

The consequence of this variation: An operational announcement is recorded as an announcement in his own overview. It does not become written notice of dismissal merely because he chooses to label it that way. Thomas leaves the situation open while remaining able to act. As soon as another letter arrives, it receives a separate entry with its actual date of receipt. (§ 623 BGB; § 38(1) SGB III)

Case variation 2: The employer presents a termination agreement

2

The same starting point: The department is to close. This time, the branch manager presents Thomas with a document for both parties to sign. It contains a termination date, a payment and a declaration that all mutual claims will then be settled.

Your approach: Thomas obtains a complete version and first clarifies what kind of document it is. He does not sign merely because the financial situation is difficult or the proposed payment sounds attractive. He has the termination date, remuneration, annual leave, employment reference, full and final settlement clause and possible consequences for unemployment benefit examined as an overall package. He records any decision deadline stated by the employer separately from statutory time limits.

The consequence of this variation: The matter now concerns an agreement entered into by the employee himself. The decision therefore involves more than receiving someone else's letter. Thomas can ask questions, negotiate amendments or reject the agreement. The consequences of the different options are assessed on the basis of the entire offer. The statutory written form requirements arise from § 623 BGB; section 1.5 explains the details.

1.1.2 Two people, two different starting points

Example 1: Thomas Witzigmann: the job disappears

B 1

Thomas is 52 and lives in Cologne. He completed vocational training as a management assistant for retail services and has worked in the household goods department at Rheinbogen Warenhaus GmbH since October 2001. He advises customers, operates the till, receives goods and prepares stocktakes. When his branch is scheduled to close, he personally receives notice of dismissal on operational grounds on 26 February 2026, taking effect on 30 September 2026. He has been unemployed since 1 October.

Thomas has not written a job application for a long time. He knows his work, but the new situation requires different knowledge: What does receipt of the dismissal notice mean? Which time limit must he check? Must he sign an acknowledgement of receipt? His professional experience does not automatically answer these questions. This is a gap in knowledge that can be addressed specifically. The basic case does not assume that he wins court proceedings or that the dismissal is invalid. It serves to trace the path from job loss to the next job.

Example 2: Dr. Anna Schreiber: even specialist knowledge does not replace taking stock

B 2

Anna is 47, also lives in Cologne and most recently worked as Senior Legal Counsel at Rheinblick Technologie GmbH. Her duties include commercial contracts, compliance processes and internal legal advice. Her position disappears in the course of the company's insolvency. Her employment relationship ends on 30 September 2026. She too has been looking for new employment since October.

Anna has legal experience. Nevertheless, she must assess her own situation on the basis of the documents. Insolvency, dismissal, release from duties and the end of actually performing work are not interchangeable terms. Her knowledge can help with the assessment; it replaces neither missing facts nor a procedural

Example 2: Dr. Anna Schreiber: even specialist knowledge does not replace taking stock

step initiated in time. All people, employers and events described in this book are constructed teaching cases. Later case variations, expressly identified as such, change individual circumstances to make different problems understandable.

1.1.3 Job loss does not always involve the same legal process

With notice of termination, one party declares that the relationship is to end. With a termination agreement, both parties are intended to enter into an agreement. A formal warning objects to conduct and warns of possible consequences; it does not in itself end the employment relationship.

Release from duties initially means that the employee is not expected or required to perform his work. Whether it is paid, covers annual leave or may be revoked depends on its terms and legal basis. Anyone who confuses these processes can easily respond to the wrong question. The first step is therefore to identify which document is actually present.

Nor does a poor financial position end the employment relationship by itself. This applies in particular to insolvency. § 113 InsO contains special rules on terminating a contract of service under which the debtor is entitled to receive the services. However, the provision does not replace the declaration of termination or turn the opening of insolvency proceedings into an automatic end to the contract. For Anna, it must therefore be clear which declaration or agreement ends her employment relationship. Insolvency-related questions may also arise concerning pay, the filing of claims and insolvency benefit. These questions require additional examination; they do not alter the fact that termination under employment law is a separate process.

§

STATUTORY QUOTATION

“Tenancies and leases entered into by the debtor in respect of immovable property or premises, and contracts of service entered into by the debtor, shall continue in effect for the insolvency estate.”

(§ 108(1), sentence 1, InsO)

§

STATUTORY QUOTATION

“A contract of service under which the debtor is entitled to receive the services may be terminated by the insolvency administrator and by the other party irrespective of an agreed contractual duration or an agreed exclusion of the right to ordinary termination. The notice period shall be three months to the end of a calendar month unless a shorter period is applicable. If the administrator gives notice of termination, the other party may claim damages as an insolvency creditor for the premature termination of the contract of service.”

(§ 113, sentences 1–3, InsO)

The example also shows why blanket statements such as “In insolvency, three months always applies” are too imprecise. The statutory wording itself contains the qualification concerning an applicable shorter period.

Which rules apply in the specific proceedings depends, among other things, on the stage of the proceedings and the person giving notice. Anna therefore places the dismissal letter together with the information on the insolvency proceedings. She does not treat a mere circular email about the insolvency application as a substitute for notice of dismissal.

Table 3: Which process is involved?

Process	What is being declared?
Notice of termination	One party declares that the relationship is to end.
Termination agreement	Both parties are intended to agree that the relationship will end.
Formal warning	Conduct is criticised; a warning is given of the consequences of repetition.
Release from duties	Work is not expected or required to be performed for the time being.

Source: Michaelis, author's own illustration based on section 1.1.3; § 623 BGB; §§ 108(1), 113 InsO.

1.1.4 Protective rights exist, but their conditions must be met

General protection against dismissal is subject to conditions. § 1(1) KSchG concerns an employment relationship that has existed in the same establishment or company without interruption for more than six months. In addition, the scope of application in relation to the establishment under § 23(1) KSchG must be considered. The size of the establishment must not be estimated merely by counting the people in the company. Part-time employees are weighted according to the statutory rules; special provisions apply to certain older employment relationships. Thomas started before 2004. This circumstance is relevant to an assessment, but it does not, on its own, permit a complete conclusion about his protection against dismissal.

§

STATUTORY QUOTATION

“The dismissal of an employee whose employment relationship has existed in the same establishment or company without interruption for more than six months shall be legally ineffective if it is socially unjustified.”

(§ 1(1) KSchG)

Anyone covered by general protection against dismissal can, in particular, have it examined whether the dismissal is supported by a legally recognised reason. In Thomas's basic case, operational circumstances are involved. In other cases, conduct or personal circumstances are central. A detailed explanation in the letter is not the same as actual justification. Equally, the absence of general protection against dismissal does not mean that every dismissal is permissible. Written form, time limits and, where relevant, special protective provisions remain important. The rules on bringing an action in time must not be ignored even in a small establishment; § 23(1), sentences 2 and 3, KSchG expressly excludes §§ 4 to 7 KSchG from the exceptions set out there.

Table 4: Assessing general protection against dismissal in stages

Assessment stage	Question
Length of employment	Has the employment relationship existed for **more than six months**?

Assessment stage	Question
Scope of application in relation to the establishment	Does the establishment fall within the scope of § 23 KSchG?
If applicable	Examine the reason for dismissal and the other requirements.

Source: Michaelis, author's own illustration based on § 1(1) and § 23(1) KSchG; section 1.1.4.

1.1.5 Clarifying the legal position and finding new work proceed together

Thomas does not have to wait until every dispute with his existing employer is over before looking for a new job.

The legal assessment concerns the existing employment relationship. The job search concerns his future employment. Both can be organised at the same time.

This prevents an ongoing dispute from also turning into a career break lasting months. A new job may itself have legal consequences for claims. He therefore informs his adviser of a possible start date instead of leaving this circumstance out of the legal overview.

Fig. 2: Anna separates clarifying the legal position and job hunting into two task lists



Source: Michaelis, author's own illustration.

Notification to the Employment Agency also proceeds independently of your own view of the dismissal. Anyone who believes he will later win in court must not postpone notification for that reason. The law expressly separates this social security law process from the dispute over continued employment. Registering as a jobseeker and registering as unemployed are different steps. Early registration as a jobseeker becomes relevant as soon as the end date is known; the actual onset of unemployment is a further point in time.

§

STATUTORY QUOTATION

“Persons whose training or employment relationship is ending are obliged to register as jobseekers with the Employment Agency no later than three months before it ends, providing their personal details and the date on which the training or employment relationship ends. If fewer than three months lie between learning of the end date and the end of the training or employment relationship, they must register within three days of learning of the end date. The obligation to register exists irrespective of whether the continuation of the training or employment relationship is being asserted in court or held out as a possibility by the employer.”

(§ 38(1), sentences 1–3, SGB III)

Practical tip: the first documents at a glance

Put the new letter, envelope, employment contract and any existing amendments together. Record when and how the letter reached your hands or your letterbox. For a personal handover, include the place, approximate time and people present. Keep the original. If a date is uncertain, mark the uncertainty rather than later replacing it with a recollection that merely seems to fit.

Make an immediate note that receipt and the time limit for bringing an action must be checked. If several dates of receipt are possible, work with the earlier one as a precaution until the question has been clarified by someone qualified. Do not rely on an AI response as legal reassurance in its own right where a statutory time limit is involved. Well-organised documents can speed up the assessment; they do not perform that assessment.

Only sign a new agreement once you have understood its entire contents. Receiving a dismissal notice does not mean agreeing that it is valid. Signing a termination agreement, by contrast, is a legal declaration of your own. These differences are examined in more detail in sections 1.2 and 1.5.

1.1.6 Turning the reason for dismissal into questions that can be checked

An initial legal assessment becomes useful when the employer's general explanation is turned into specific questions. Saying that a department must make savings does not yet explain which work will disappear, when the change will be implemented or which employment opportunities have been examined.

First, therefore, record the reason asserted in a few words of your own. Alongside it, set out what you have observed yourself. Distinguish expressly between a statement by management, your own observation and speculation among colleagues.

Where general protection against dismissal applies, the asserted disappearance of duties and the absence of another employment opportunity must be examined separately. § 1(2), sentence 1, KSchG distinguishes reasons relating to the person, conduct and urgent operational

requirements. Other vacant employment opportunities may preclude dismissal to end employment, where appropriate even on changed terms. Reasonable training is not an entitlement to any further training one chooses: suitable vacant employment must be established or sufficiently certain to be foreseeable. A known vacancy is therefore a specific point for examination, but not an established outcome. (cf. § 1(2) KSchG; BAG, 8.5.2014 – 2 AZR 1001/12, paras. 12–13, 21)

Table 5: Three groups of reasons for dismissal

Group	What the assessment focuses on
Person	Reasons relating to the employee's person
Conduct	Reasons relating to the employee's conduct
Operations	Urgent operational requirements

Source: Michaelis, author's own illustration based on § 1(2), sentence 1, KSchG; section 1.1.6.

Describe any other work you know of as precisely as possible: establishment, department, duties, working hours and when the position is to be filled. Add where the information comes from and which qualification is required. Anyone who has merely heard about a supposedly vacant position should make that clear too.

Such information can be checked specifically. The assertion that someone is always being recruited somewhere in the group, by contrast, leaves essential questions unanswered and may obscure an employment opportunity that is actually suitable.

Table 6: Describing other employment specifically

Area to examine	Information required
Position	Establishment, duties and when the position is to be filled
Suitability	Qualifications required and qualifications held

Area to examine	Information required
Conditions	Possible change in working conditions
Information basis	Source of the information and outstanding points

Source: Michaelis, author's own illustration based on § 1(2) KSchG; BAG, 8.5.2014 – 2 AZR 1001/12, paras. 12–13, 21.

For selection on social grounds, § 1(3), sentence 1, KSchG specifies length of service, age, maintenance obligations and severe disability, as well as information on the reasons for selection on request. Sentence 2 permits exceptions in the legitimate operational interest. In principle, the comparison is between objectively interchangeable employees of the same establishment; this also involves skills and the contractual ability to transfer them. Record which duties you can compare and where information is missing. A private ranking alone cannot replace the legal identification of the comparison group. (cf. § 1(3), sentences 1–2, KSchG; BAG, 20.6.2013 – 2 AZR 271/12, para. 12)

Table 7: Selection on social grounds: comparison group and selection criteria

Point to examine	Content
Dismissal on operational grounds	Identify the comparison group within the same establishment.
Objective interchangeability	Examine skills, knowledge and the contractual ability to transfer employees.
Social factors	Take account of length of service, age, maintenance obligations and severe disability.

Source: Michaelis, author's own illustration based on § 1(3) KSchG; BAG, 20.6.2013 – 2 AZR 271/12, paras. 12–13.